

WEEK 14: PARABLES

HIGH SCHOOL

GOALS

Why does Jesus teach in parables?
What do the parables teach us?

LESSON

Materials Needed: Bible

Extended Learning Opportunity for Teachers:

The Gospel of Matthew: Torah for the Church by Fr. Lawrence Farley, pgs 179-194

The Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to Matthew by Blessed Theophylact, pgs 110-121

PARABLES

Read Matthew 13:10-35

And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?"

Jesus spoke in parables because not everyone was ready or willing to hear the message He was sharing. For those who were humble-minded, they understood the parables. For those who were proud, they did not understand the parables.

Jesus is being merciful to the crowds who follow Him. If one of your parents told you to do something and then you didn't do it, your parents would ask you, "Why did you ignore the instructions I gave you?" There are other times when your parents purposely do not give you instructions to do something - like load the dishwasher when you're 3 or drive to the store to pick up dinner when you're 14 - because they know you're not ready yet.

Jesus knew there were only a few in the crowd who were ready to hear and do the instructions He was giving to the people. Those people understood the parables and the rest did not. He also explains to the disciples that when we ask God in prayer to teach us something, He will teach us. It may not always be the way in which we expect, but He will teach us, IF we have a desire and willingness to learn.

The parables teach us about the Kingdom of Heaven. This is not an easy concept to teach us because heaven is like nothing we've ever experienced here on earth. How do you describe to a blind person, who has never seen a day in their life, the sunset in front of you?

The parables also teach us who will enter the Kingdom of Heaven and who will exclude themselves from entering. Each and every one of us is invited to join God for eternity. Unfortunately, not everyone chooses to include God in their daily life. Explain some ways we choose to include God in our day? Explain some ways we choose to exclude God from our daily life?

Jesus chose His parables carefully and shared them in ways that the people would easily understand - farming, seeds for planting, and leaven used for making their daily bread. These are still concepts we can understand today, as well, even if we don't have direct experience with working on a farm, gardening, or making bread.

PARABLE OF THE WHEAT AND THE TARES - MATTHEW 13:24-30

For those of us who are not wheat farmers, it is important to understand why tares are not wanted amongst your crop of wheat. A tare, or bearded darnel, is a plant that looks just like wheat, except that it is grayish black in color rather than a golden brown. Additionally, tares are bitter in taste and slightly poisonous. This is not something you want growing with your wheat, but they oftentimes grow next to each other. It is extremely difficult to tell the difference between wheat and tares until they are mature plants. The farmer has to go in and painstakingly take out the tares before harvesting the wheat, otherwise you contaminate your crop.

The Jews had assumed that when the Messiah came He would immediately separate the righteous from the sinners. Instead, Jesus explains that the righteous and sinners will continue living side by side until the Last Judgment.

Additionally, the evil one is not content to leave the seeds that fell on good soil alone. (This would include people who grew up going to church every Sunday.) The evil one would attempt to turn away as many people as possible from God, especially when we are "sleeping". Therefore, we have to stay vigilant. We have to fast, pray, give alms, read the Bible, show love, mercy, and care to others, learn about our faith, and participate in the services and sacraments of the church from now until the end of our lives.

PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED & PARABLE OF THE LEAVEN -
MATTHEW 13:31-35

The mustard seed is an exceptionally small seed, but it can grow to be as large as a tree!

Leaven is a yeast starter. It is what was used throughout all of history before you could buy yeast at the store. You would mix flour and water together and allow the fungus in the air to colonize and grow in your yeast starter over several days. Then you would either keep your starter in a jar and “feed” it daily or you would tuck your starter in dry flour to preserve it until the next time you made bread. When we make a loaf of bread, even today, you use a small amount of yeast in comparison to the amount of flour. After kneading, the yeast is diffused throughout the dough and transforms what would otherwise be nothing more than hard tack (made with flour, water, and sometimes salt - and would be so hard you absolutely had to soften it with a liquid, either from the moisture in the air or your drink) into a soft, delicious loaf of bread that we enjoy eating.

Both of these parables teach us that small beginnings can lead to something great that spreads far and wide over time. Think about how Jesus began teaching - just one man. Then the twelve apostles traveled even greater distances than Jesus to teach more people about God. Then additional apostles set out to teach....until people on every continent came to know about Jesus. These parables teach us that one single person has the potential to make a huge impact on those around them and lead others to Christ. We see this in action through the lives of the saints.

PARABLE OF THE WHEAT & TARES

Matthew 13:24-30



Top: Wheat

Left: Tares

“The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way...”

PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED

Matthew 13:31-32



Mustard Seeds

“The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come to nest in its branches.”

PARABLE OF THE LEAVEN

Matthew 13:33-34



Left: Bread made with leaven ~ Right: Leaven

“The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened.”

WEEK 14: PARABLES

ALL OTHER GRADES

GOALS

Why does Jesus teach in parables?
What do the parables teach us?

LESSON

Materials Needed: Bible, leaven, flour, water, salt, bowl, tea towel, tape, Dutch oven

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PARABLE OF THE LEAVEN - MATTHEW 13:32-35

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This parable teaches us that small beginnings can lead to something great that spreads far and wide over time. Think about how Jesus began teaching - just one man. Then the twelve apostles traveled even greater distances than Jesus to teach more people about God. Then additional apostles set out to teach....until people on every continent came to know about Jesus. These parables teach us that one single person has the potential to

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ACTIVITY

We will be rotating amongst groups of kids in the hall. Each group will meet at the designated table and we will be:

- Reviewing: What is a parable?
- Learning: Why did Jesus use parables?
- Seeing: What is leaven? How is it used?
- Hands on: Mixing the yeast starter into the flour and water; What happens with a little bit of time?

Recipe:

45 g active leaven or 3 tsp active dry yeast
1 1/4 cup warm water (between 105 - 115 degree F)
485 g bread flour or 3 1/4 cups
2 tsp kosher salt

*Have the children wash their hands and give everyone a turn to knead the dough.

1. Mix and then knead the dough well. Place in the bowl or clear container and cover. Let rise until doubled, about 30-60 minutes, depending on the temperature of the room. If you are using a clear container, mark on the side with tape the height of the dough. This is done for a concrete visual for the kids to see the dough rising.

2. Explain to the kids that the small amount of yeast that was used has now been diffused throughout the entire dough ball when they kneaded it. **All of the apostles traveled and diffused through different lands. This is how Christianity spread - through Jesus, then the apostles, and then many people who dearly loved God. We are all called to live our Orthodox Christian faith and, in doing so, we will also draw people to Christ. One person can make a huge difference!**

3. If you have time, continue by letting the kids knead the dough a second time. (If not, let the lesson end here and you can finish making the bread yourself.) Shape the dough into a ball and let rise again. Preheat your oven to 450 degree F with the Dutch Oven inside.

4. Carefully remove the Dutch Oven using pot holders the entire time. Remove the lid and quickly flip the dough ball into the pot. Recover and place in the oven. Bake covered for 30 minutes at 450 F.

5. Remove the lid and continue baking uncovered for 12-15 minutes.

6. Remove pot from the oven and carefully tip out the bread onto a cooling rack.