

How, then, *are* we to hear the parables so that we may understand them and act up to them?

1st. By grasping the central truth in each. *There is one.* Let us discover *what* it is. Sometimes Christ himself tells us plainly what it is. Sometimes the context tells us. Sometimes it has to be made to tell itself by consecrated hard thinking: for as Matthew Henry sagely puts it, a parable is a "shell that keeps good fruit *for* the diligent but keeps it *from* the slothful." Come at it how we may, one thing is sure: a central truth does sound from every parable and we should listen well that we may hear it. We shall be more liable to do so:

2d. By avoiding extremes in the interpretation of details. Perplexity, when there is any, generally concerns the details, and the tendency all along has been either to press them too far, or else ignore them altogether. Neither extreme represents the proper attitude. Whilst we must beware of hearing too much, we must also beware of hearing too little.

3d. We shall profit most of all by

waiting in humility and prayer for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The parables, no doubt, considered as mere literary productions, were calculated to impress the minds of men and linger in their memories: and yet as a matter of fact we know they were not really understood even by the apostles till the Holy Spirit in all his illuminating power called them to remembrance. So too, may they fill *our* eyes and ears: so too, linger in *our* memories: but however closely we may scan them, however intently listen for their meaning, they cannot move, they cannot rule, without the energizing influence of the Holy Spirit. For hearing revealed truth to purpose always implies relying on it and acting in accordance with it. If we come to the parables in faith, they will come to us in power. May the Holy Spirit, who testifies of Christ, enable us, every time we concentrate our thoughts upon these wonderful analogies, to see Jesus and hear Jesus pronouncing over us the gracious benediction, Blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear.