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# Teachers' Preparation Leaflet

LESSON 10.

DECEMBER 9th, 1894.

4th QUARTER.

## Christ Teaching by Parables. LUKE 8: 4-15.

(Commit to memory verses 11-15.)

### GOLDEN TEXT.

"The seed is the Word of God." Luke 8: 11.

### PROVE THAT

God's Word is precious. Ps. 119: 72.

### SHORTER CATECHISM.

Quest. 105. *What do we pray for in the fifth petition?* In the fifth petition (which is, and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors), we pray that God, for Christ's sake, would freely pardon all our sins; which we are the rather encouraged to ask, because by His grace we are enabled from the heart to forgive others.

### LESSON HYMNS.

CHILDREN'S HYMNAL, Nos 115, 114, 250, 112.

### DAILY PORTIONS.

(The Selections of the I. B. R. A.)

MONDAY Christ Teaching by Parables. Luke 8: 4-15.

TUESDAY—Occasion for Parables. Matt. 13: 10-17.

WEDNESDAY—The Seed. Ps. 19: 7-14.

THURSDAY—Wayside Hearers. Acts 14: 8-20.

FRIDAY—On Rocky Ground. John 6: 59-66.

SATURDAY—Among Thorns. Mark 10: 17-27.

SABBATH—Good Ground. Acts 8: 26-39.

## WHAT IS A PARABLE?

(From Handbook on St Luke's Gospel, by Prof. Lindsay, D. D.)

The word means—(1) in classical Greek (a) a placing together, (b) a comparison, and (c) the simplest argument from analogy; (2) in Hellenistic Greek, what the Jews call *mashal*, or similitude. Hence the word parable is used

I. In the *Old Testament* for (a) a very short proverb, 1 Sam 10: 12; (b) a dark, prophetic utterance, Num. 23: 7-10; (c) an epigrammatic maxim; Ps 78: 2; (d) a metaphor expanded into a narrative, Ezek. 20: 49.

II. In the *New Testament* for (a) a short, pithy saying, Luke 4: 23; Mark 7: 17; (b) the figurative character of the Levitical ordinances, Heb. 9: 8, 9; (c) a mere comparison without narrative, Mark 13: 23; (d) an earthly story with a heavenly meaning, as the parables of our Lord.

The parables of our Lord differ from *fabls* by their higher spiritual aim, and the natural character of their incidents; from *myths* by their truthfulness; from *proverbs* by their expanded form; from *allegories* in being complete and yet not always self-interpreting.

## NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

INTRODUCTORY. The parable of the sower contained in our lesson is the first recorded as spoken by Jesus. It belongs to a group of eight (Matt. 13: 1-53; Mark 4: 1-34; Luke 8: 4-25), and was spoken on the afternoon of the day on which he was accused of being in league with Satan (Lesson 8). Great multitudes pressed around him, and, sitting in a boat, he spoke to the crowds on the sloping hillside on shore. The season was autumn, and, as November is the month of ploughing and sowing in Palestine, very likely Jesus pointed, as he spoke, to some one engaged in sowing his grain near by. Parallel passages, Matt. 13: 1-23; Mark 4: 1-20.

LESSON PLAN. I. The Wayside. vs. 4, 9, 10, 5, 11, 12. II. The Rocky Ground. vs. 6, 13. III. The Thorny Ground. vs. 7, 14. IV. The Good Soil. vs. 8, 15.

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I. THE WAYSIDE. 4. Out of every city—the numerous towns of Galilee. The popularity of Jesus had reached a climax, but there were not wanting signs of a reaction. A sifting process was necessary, so our Saviour changes his method of instruction. This parable is the first of the new series of teachings. He no longer delivers lengthened discourses, but, presenting the truth in a popular form, and one familiar from the methods of the rabbis, he at the same time veils its deeper significance from the spiritually obtuse. These stories would remain long in the memory, would be frequently suggested to the mind by the objects out of which they were constructed, and might be long pondered over, rewarding the serious meditations of earnest minds with deeper and deeper meanings. They were parting legacies of truth from one who saw the close of his earthly ministry approaching.

9. His disciples asked him—when they were alone (Mark 4: 10). Matthew tells us that their first question was, "Why speakest thou unto them in parables?" (13: 10). They are struck with the change in his method of communicating truth, and are specially puzzled to understand this parable. Both questions are answered in our lesson.

10. The mysteries—the secret things of Christ's kingdom. Those deeper truths which the uninstructed and dull-hearted could not understand. "A mystery," in the Bible meaning of the word, is not something that cannot be understood, but a truth once hidden and now revealed. (Col 1: 26; 1 Tim. 3: 16; Matt. 11: 25, 26; Rev. 17: 5; Rom. 16: 25; 11: 25; Eph. 3: 3, 4, 9.) Seeing they might not see—Read carefully Matt. 13: 12-17. It would contradict all we know of Christ's gracious design in proclaiming the gospel to say that his primary object in adopting the parabolic method was to perplex and exasperate the unresponsive, and prevent them from understanding that which would save them. His primary aim was to clothe the truth in a new form, that it might serve the purpose of captivating the fancy, stimulating thought and drawing closer around him those who were prepared to receive his doctrine. But blessings misused become curses. If the gospel is not "a savor of life unto life," it must be "a savor of death unto death." Unwillingness to see results in incapacity to see. The natural punishment of spiritual perversity is spiritual blindness. (Lindsay.) This is expressed in Matt. 13: 12.

5. The sower (R V).—i. e. the sower of my parable. He represents Christ himself in the first place, then the apostles and all who try to win an entrance for the truth into human hearts. His seed—vs. 11, "the Word of God." Compare Col 1: 5, 6; 1 Cor.

3: 6; Jas. 1: 21; 1 Pet. 1: 23. "There was the undulating cornfield descending to the water's edge. There was the trodden pathway running through the midst of it, with no fence or hedge to prevent the seeds from falling here and there on either side of it, or upon it; itself hard with constant tramp of horse, mule and human feet. There was the "good" rich soil which distinguishes the whole of that plain and its neighborhood from the bare hills; elsewhere descending into the lake, and which, where there is no interruption, produces one vast mass of corn. There was the rocky ground of the hillside protruding here and there through the cornfields, as elsewhere through the grassy slopes. There were the large bushes of thorn, the 'nabk,' that kind of which tradition says that the crown of thorns was woven, springing up, like the fruit trees of the more inland parts, in the very midst of the waving wheat." (Stanley.) The wayside—(verse 12). The wayside hearers are "they that hear," and Matthew adds "but understand it not" (13: 19), "do not take it in." Their minds and affections are pre-engaged. "The heavy baggage wagons of commerce, the light cars of pleasure, merry dancers and sad funeral processions, have all used that way, and each footfall has beaten the once loose soil a little firmer." (McLaren.) The fowls of the air—(vs. 12) "the devil;" Matt. "the wicked man;" Mark, "Satan cometh immediately" "His agents are those light-winged thoughts that flutter around the hearer as soon as the sermon or the lesson is over. Talk of the weather, criticism of the congregation, or of the sower's attitude as he flung the seed, or politics or business, drives away even the remembrance of the text, before many of our hearers are out of sight of the church" (McLaren.)

II. THE ROCKY GROUND. 6. A rock—covered with a thin layer of earth. The rock would become warmed during the day and hasten the sprouting of the grain while the rainy season lasted, but when the dry weather came its moisture would soon evaporate.

13. Receive the word with joy—Their imagination and their emotional nature are aroused, but intellect and conscience have not been reached. "Quick-sprouting things are soon-dying things. Readily stirred emotion is transient. Brushwood catches fire easily, and burns itself out quickly. The persons meant are those of excitable temperament, whose feelings lie on the surface, and can be got at without first passing through the understanding or the conscience." (McLaren.) Joy is the ultimate result of the reception of the gospel, but not its first result. There should

be first "the sorrow that worketh repentance not to be repented of." **These have no root**—Matt. "no root in himself," he has not the stability which personal conviction gives. He comes forth "at the call of a shallow enthusiasm, and through the epidemic influence of a popular cause" (Edward Irving) In time of temptation—When anything comes to put their religion to the test they show that they are not willing to sacrifice their pleasure or their gain to the demands of truth and conscience. (Ps 106: 12; Isa. 58: 2; Ezek. 33: 31, 32; Hosea 6: 4; John 5: 35; Gal. 4: 15;) "There is another profound truth in this picture. The hard, impenetrable rock lies right under the thin skin of soil. The nature which is over-emotional on its surface is utterly hard at its core. The most heartless people are those whose feelings are always ready to gush; the most unimpressible are those who are most easily brought to a certain degree of emotion by the sound of the word." (McLaren) (Matt. 24: 10; 26: 31; 2 Tim. 4: 16.)

**III. THE THORNY GROUND 7. Among thorns**—the stout roots of thorny plants remaining in the soil. These would grow faster than the grain and choke it. (Jer. 4: 3.) **Cares and riches and pleasures**—"Prosperity destroys the word in the heart as much as persecution does, and more dangerously because more silently; the stones spoiled the root, the thorns spoil the fruit." (M. Henry.) (1 Tim. 6: 9, 10; 2 Tim. 4: 10; 1 John 2: 15-17). **No fruit to perfection**—The straw may be stout but the ear is chaff. This is the "double-minded" man (Jas. 1: 8). "His will is divided—not decided for good and against evil, but now on one side, now on the other; serving God today, serving mammon tomorrow; very religious and also very worldly. The ear will be green when it should be ripe. He is a misthriven Christian, a spiritual failure. His influence is zero, or worse—mischievous." (Bruce.) "He is trying to grow both corn and thorns on the same soil. He has some religion, but not enough to make thorough work of it. He is endeavoring to ride two horses at once. Religion says 'either—or,' he is trying 'both—and!' The human heart has only a limited amount of love and trust to give, and Christ must have it all. It has enough for one—that is, for Him; but not enough for two—that is, for Him and the world" (McLaren.) (Luke 14: 16-24; Matt 10: 23.)

**IV. THE GOOD GROUND. 8. Into the good ground** (R. V.)—deep, fertile and free of weeds. **An hundred fold**—In Matthew's version three degrees of fertility are specified—"an hundred-fold, sixty-fold, and thirty-fold." All who receive the word have

not the same capacities and opportunities. Nor do all make proper use of what they have.

**15. An honest and good heart**—"Honest" is here in the sense of "noble." "One whose mind is raised above moral vulgarity, and is bent, not on money-making, and such low pursuits, but on the attainment of wisdom, holiness and righteousness. 'Good' denotes generous self-abandonment in the prosecution of such lofty ends—large-heartedness, magnanimous, overflowing devotion"—(Bruce.) "We here see that the principal qualification for hearing the Word of God, and for rendering it capable of bearing fruit in us, is an honest and a good heart, a heart clear from prejudice, pride and self-conceit, sincerely disposed, and earnestly desirous 'to find the truth; and firmly resolved to embrace it when found; ready to acknowledge its own ignorance, and weakness, and corruption, and to receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save the soul.'" (Bp. Porteus.) **Keep it**—Matthew says, "he that heareth the word and understandeth it," lit. "takes it in." Biblical usage does not regard "understanding" as a purely intellectual process, but rather as the action of the whole moral and spiritual nature. (McLaren.) (Ps. 119: 11) "The precise distinction of the perfect hearer is this,—that he receives and retains the word *alone* in his mind. He is characteristically single-minded and whole-hearted in religion. He loves God, and seeks the kingdom of God in accordance with the high requirements, 'with *all* thine heart, and with *all* thy soul, and with *all* thy might.' He is wholly given up to, devoted to, the kingdom; for him, as for the Preacher, to 'fear God and keep his commandments' is 'the whole of man' (Ecc. 12: 13, lit.) (Bruce.) **And bring forth fruit**—Matt. reads "which also beareth fruit." "The force the of Greek is "who of course (indeed, certainly) bring forth fruit" "The fruitfulness of such a hearer Jesus regarded and represented as a matter of course." (Bruce.) **With patience**—"perseveringly" (Rom. 2: 7; Matt. 24: 13; Jas. 1: 4). "The fourth class must not be understood as a decided, well-marked company excluding all the rest. For the soil is *not good by nature*. The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; but every disposition to receive them is of God." (Alford.) "We must ever bear in mind that the good soil comes as much from God as the seed which is to find there its home. God's secret and preventing grace runs before the preaching of the word of the kingdom; and thus, when that word comes, it finds some with greater readiness for receiving it, as the word of eternal life, than others." (Trench.) (Matt. 10: 22; 24: 13; 2 Pet. 1: 5-8.) The conclu-

sion of the parable is in the last clause of verse eight.

in the R. V.); Luke 14: 33, 35, and here. Turn up the passages and see what it was that Jesus wished to have remembered in each case. "The parable describes four kinds of Christians: (1) Christians with merely an outward religion; (2) Christians with a shallow religion; (3) Christians with a half religion; (4) Christians with a true religion."

3. He that hath ears to hear let him hear — This was a common expression among the rabbis for calling the attention of their scholars to something important Christ uses it eight times. Matt. 11: 14, 16; 13: 43; Mark 4: 23; 7: 16 (this one is omitted

## SUMMARY AND REVIEW.

The parable is so simple and the lessons so obvious that an extended summary and review is not called for. Describe the scene. The Teacher seated in the boat. The multitude on the sloping shores. The sower in a field within sight scattering the seed. It was the beginning of the rainy season, about November, when, in that winterless country the farmer sows his grain. Having made the picture vivid proceed at once to the interpretation. The Sower? The Seed? The Soil? The seed is all good—the different results arise from the nature of the soil. Draw four outline hearts on the blackboard and write in each the hindrances to the growth of the seed. The first will be the **HARD** heart, the second the **ROCKY** heart, the third the **WEEDY** heart, and the fourth the **WILLING** heart. In the Hard Heart you would write, after eliciting them from the scholars by questions, the things that make the heart inattentive—business, pleasure, ambitious plans, etc., and around it outline birds (two curves ~ will suffice) and name them after the things that divert the mind and destroy good impressions—whispering and smiling in church, thinking about the people around you instead of the sermon, frivolous words and comments on the way home, etc. In dealing with the Rocky Heart, emphasize the need of sorrow for sin as a prelude to lasting joy. When you come to the Weedy Heart, deal with it similarly to the first, particularizing the thorns and weeds that choke the word—worldly gain, love of pleasure, love of money, etc. The Good Heart itself comes from God. Commit to memory: and quote Ezek, 11: 19; 36: 26; Ps. 51: 10.

## THE SEED IS THE WORD OF GOD

WHICH FALLS ON

**HARD**

**ROCKY**

**WEEDY**

**HEARTS**

Which is  
Yours?



**WILLING**

"By their fruits ye shall know them."

### Ten Minutes Normal Drill

based on the text-book, "The Sabbath School Teacher's Handbook; or, the Principles and Practice of Teaching, with special reference to the Sabbath School," and prepared by Principal Kirkland of the Toronto Normal School.

### TELLING AND QUESTIONING. (CHAPTER VII.)

(Continued.)

#### VI. Manner of Questioning—Earnest, Animated, Impromptu.

- 1—Never reject an answer given in good faith.
- 2—Always accept an answer in the scholar's own words.
- 3—Train your scholars to make their answers complete sentences.
- 4—Do not repeat the answer after the scholar.