

Gospel Doctrine Sunday School Lesson

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Slippery Rock Branch

Volume 3, Issue 11

Today's Word: parable

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Are You:

- Attending Meetings Regularly?
- Keeping Our Hearts Open to the Promptings of the Spirit?
- Praying Daily?

Today's Scriptures

Matthew 13

Next Week:

Lesson 12:

"I Am the Bread
of Life"

John 5-6

Mark 6: 30-44

Matthew 14: 22-33

W.W. Austin
Gospel Doctrine Teacher
wendywarrenaustin@hotmail.com
<http://ideawarehouse.blogspot.com>

Lesson 11:

"He Spake Many Things unto Them in Parables"

Interpretation and Application

"Discovering how to interpret and apply the parables of Jesus is essential to getting the most from them. To interpret a parable, one must study what it meant to *them, there, then*. To apply a parable, one must ponder what it means to *me, here, now*. . . The most important helps in making a proper interpretation are the explanations given by the Savior Himself. They are usually given in the same chapter as the parable, just before or after the parable. For example, after the Savior gave the parable of the sower and the parable of the wheat and tares, He explained each of them to His disciples. It is also helpful to learn the background and setting of each parable. We can do this by finding answers to such questions as: To whom was Jesus talking? Why did He address this parable to this particular audience? What was the concern or question that caused Jesus to give this parable? How did this parable answer that question or situation?

"Be cautious in identifying the symbols and their meanings, asking the Lord in prayer to help you understand. Guard against overinterpretation—trying to press every little detail of the parable for a precise meaning. Jesus' parables were intended to be understood by the Spirit, in a straightforward and simple manner." (Frank F. Judd Jr., "Parables of Jesus: The Priceless Parables," *Ensign*, Jan 2003, 56).



Parable of the Sower

1557 oil painting by Pieter Bruegel the Elder

Questions to Ponder

- Why do you think the parable of the sower focuses more on the ground than on the sower or the seed?
- How might we use something like parables to teach in our own families?

The Parables—Strung Together Like Beads on a String

"Some have wondered why these parables were placed together like beads on a string. The finest explanation can be found in the *Documentary History of the Church*, where the Prophet Joseph explains that this discourse is an outline of the events of the kingdom, from Jesus' own day until his second coming. (*DHC*, vol. 2, pp. 264–72.) The importance of "leavening" the world is apparent in these parables.

"The parable of the sower describes the gospel going forth. The parable of the tares describes the apostasy. The parable of the mustard seed describes the rise of the Church in the last days. The parable of the leaven suggests revelation in the Church, which ultimately permeates the whole. The parable of the pearl teaches about an inheritance in Zion, and the parable of the fishnet suggests that the descendants of Joseph are taking the gospel throughout the earth. The meaning of these parables cannot be restricted to one place or one nation." (Robert C. Patch, "The Gospel in the Gospels," *Ensign*, Sep 1974, 38).