

# The Parables of Jesus

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Words, Words, Words, What do they all mean?

Metaphor

Allegory

Fable

Parable

Simile

Words, Words, Words, What do they all mean?

## Metaphor

- ◆ a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable
- ◆ "The Lord is my shepherd." - Psalm 23

Words, Words, Words, What do they all mean?

## Simile

- ◆ a phrase that uses the words like or as to describe someone or something by comparing it with someone or something else that is similar
- ◆ “Look, I am sending you out as sheep among wolves. So be as shrewd as snakes and harmless as doves. - Matthew 10:16

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## Allegory

- ◆ a story in which the characters and events are symbols that stand for ideas about human life or for a political or historical situation
- ◆ So the Lord sent Nathan the prophet to tell David this story: "There were two men in a certain town. One was rich, and one was poor... Then Nathan said to David, "You are that man!" - 2 Samuel 12:17

# Judges 9: 7-15

Fable or Parable?



# Judges 9:8-15

8 Once upon a time the trees decided to choose a king. First they said to the olive tree, 'Be our king!' 9 But the olive tree refused, saying, 'Should I quit producing the olive oil that blesses both God and people, just to wave back and forth over the trees?'

# Judges 9:7-15

10 "Then they said to the fig tree, 'You be our king!'

11 But the fig tree also refused, saying, 'Should I quit producing my sweet fruit just to wave back and forth over the trees?'



# Judges 9:7-15

12 “Then they said to the grapevine, ‘You be our king!’

13 But the grapevine also refused, saying, ‘Should I quit producing the wine that cheers both God and people, just to wave back and forth over the trees?’

# Judges 9:7-15

14 "Then all the trees finally turned to the thornbush and said, 'Come, you be our king!' 15 And the thornbush replied to the trees,

'If you truly want to make me your king, come and take shelter in my shade, If not, let fire come out from me and devour the cedars of Lebanon.'"

Luke 15: 3-7

Fable or Parable?



## Luke 15:4-7

4 "If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them gets lost, what will he do? Won't he leave the ninety-nine others in the wilderness and go to search for the one that is lost until he finds it? 5 And when he has found it, he will joyfully carry it home on his shoulders.

## Luke 15:4-7

6 When he arrives, he will call together his friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep.' 7 In the same way, there is more joy in heaven over one lost sinner who repents and returns to God than over ninety-nine others who are righteous and haven't strayed away!



# The Trees vs. The Lost Sheep

Fables or Parables?

# Fables vs. Parables

## Fable

- ◆ A brief story illustrating a moral or revealing general truths about human nature
- ◆ Often include talking animals or animated objects as the principal characters

## Parable

- ◆ A short story designed to allegorically teach some religious principle, moral lesson, or general truth
- ◆ Includes real or literal occurrences to which anyone can relate

# Parables in the Bible

- ◆ Not unique to Jesus
  - ◆ Aramaic – mashal/mathla
  - ◆ Greek – parabolē
- ◆ 'Proverbs' – Hebrew word for parable
- ◆ Many parables, allegories, and analogies in the Old Testament (e.g. Judges 9:7-15)



# Parables in Jesus' Teaching

- ◆ Jesus' goal was to reveal a picture of the Kingdom of Heaven
  - ◆ His parables
  - ◆ His actions
- ◆ 46 parables or parabolic images in the synoptic gospels

"At its simplest a parable is a metaphor or simile drawn from nature or common life, arresting the hearer by its vividness or strangeness, and leaving the mind in sufficient doubt about its precise application to tease it into active thought."

- C.H. Dodd

# 5 Steps in Interpreting Jesus' Parables

1. Understand the setting of the parable
2. Uncover the need that prompted the parable
3. Analyze the structure and details of the parable
4. State the central truth of the parable and its relationship to the kingdom
5. Respond to the intended appeal of the parable