

引言 INTRODUCTION

We will start a new series on the study of Jesus' parables. Here is a definition of a parable: it is a short and fictional story that conveys a moral lesson. Some of us listened to Aesop's Fables when we are kids. For example, "The Rabbit and the Turtle" and "The Boy Who Cried Wolf" etc. We learn good virtues from those stories. Similarly, Jesus expected a positive response from listeners when He told parables. We need to keep three things in mind as we interpret those stories. First is the **CONTEXT**. Knowing some background of the Jews in Jesus' time will be helpful. Also, what happened right beforehand may give us some clues why Jesus told a parable. Second is the **CONTENT**. What are the key characters? What had happened? What was the outcome? Third is the **INTENT**. What is the lesson? How does it apply to our situations? Also, we should not pay unnecessary attention to minor details. A rock and a tree may not refer to anything in particular. We should not make simple things complicated. Here are two steps that will help you interpret a parable. First, summarize the story in your own words. Two: figure out its main lesson.

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 講比喻的原因 Reasons for Telling Parables

Before we dive into today's story, let us consider the reasons for Jesus to tell parables. The disciples and some people asked Jesus for an explanation after hearing this parable. Jesus replies in verse 11: **And he said to them, "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables."** Jesus separated the listeners into the "insiders" and "outsiders." The insiders were the disciples and people who showed interest in the truth. Jesus taught them in direct language. He called the knowledge about God's Kingdom a secret. The same word is translated as "mystery" elsewhere in the Bible. It refers to information about God's Kingdom that was hidden until God disclosed it. The outsiders were the rest of the audience. Jesus used parables when speaking to them. We see their reaction after they heard the parables in verse 12: **So that "they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven."** They saw Jesus' miracles and heard His teaching. But they did not respond with faith. Here, Jesus was quoting from Isaiah chapter 6. God revealed Himself to the prophet in the passage. Later, He sent Isaiah to deliver a message to His people. But God told the prophet upfront that they would reject it. We may ask: "Then why bother?" There are two reasons. First, people would have no excuse that God did not give them any warning ahead of time when His judgment finally came. Second, God's prophecy was also a message of hope. He would bless the remaining Israelites after the punishment. Old Testament Jews, Jesus' audience and people today are equally stubborn and rebellious. They may find the gospel vague. Jesus' identity and works are like fairy tales to them. God became a man and was born of a virgin. An innocent man died on the cross for the sins of mankind, then He rose three days later. Those who put their trust in Jesus by faith will be saved. We must explain the gospel before people can know it and accept it. Just like what Jesus did, we can use parables. The Bible itself is actually full of imageries. Jesus redeemed us like paying off our debts and setting us free. He reconciled our broken relationship with the Father, similar to resolving an argument between

friends. Jesus also justified us and considered us righteous, as if we were declared not guilty in court. Salvation grace is a free gift God presents to us. All we need is to accept it by faith. It is also priceless because no one can offer anything to exchange for it. You can come up with other examples that seeker friends can echo with to help them understand the gospel.

2. 對真理的回應 Responses to The Truth

With that in mind, let us explore today's parable. It tells us there are different responses to the truth, much like seeds sown in soil. At that time, most people only had a small field near their houses. Farmers would sow as many seeds as possible. No one will waste seeds in places where crops may not grow. However, some seeds will end up in not so ideal spots. Producing a crop is the final goal. Of the four situations, only one soil results in a harvest. Jesus makes it clear in verse 14 that the seeds represent God's Word. Sharing the gospel is like spreading seeds. The four soils represent four responses to the truth. Bearing fruit is a solid proof that a person is truly saved. You can examine which soil is closest to your spiritual condition as we unpack the story.

A. 被奪走的人 The Devoured

The first soil symbolizes the devoured. Jesus describes in verse 4: **“And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it.”** Those seeds were eaten by birds soon after they landed on the ground. They did not even have a chance to germinate. Jesus explains in verse 15: **“And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them.”** Satan removes God's Word from those audience right after they heard it. It does not have an opportunity to remain in people's hearts. Luke 8:12 tells us a definite outcome of those who are devoured: **“...the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved.”** They cannot believe without God's Word in their hearts. Hence, they are not saved. Who are those people in today's world? Our hearts cannot stay vacuum. Either God or something else will fill the void. Some people worship false gods. They reject Biblical truth because it contradicts what they believe. They cannot accept the one true God because they themselves want to become gods. Salvation by grace challenges their pride because they hope to go to heaven by doing good works. Other people say that they are spiritual but not religious. They hope to elevate their souls to a higher level after they leave the world. Some people claim to be atheists but they worship themselves. They think that they can solve any problem with their knowledge, capabilities and money. How can we reach out to those people? We need to ask God to soften their hearts so that gospel seeds will retain in them. We can encourage them to remain objective in their pursuit of truth. We can gently question the basis for their beliefs. For example, some people believe that there is nothing beyond physical matters. They say that soul does not exist because they cannot see it or feel it. Therefore, we just vanish when we leave the world. Do they have any proof for those notions? Besides arguing about what they believe, we must encourage them to read the Bible. See it for themselves what the book is about. Let God speak to their hearts. His Word is powerful to penetrate into people's minds and awaken their souls.

B. 被嚇走的人 The Deterred

The second soil are the deterred people. Problems in life scare them away from following Jesus. Look at verses 5-6: **5 “Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and immediately it sprang up, since it had no depth of soil. 6 And when the sun rose, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away.”** Those seeds sprouted quickly, but they did not last long. There was not much room for their roots to expand because of the rocks under the thin soil. They soon dry up when the sun is out. Jesus gives us an interpretation about this soil in verses 16-17: **16 “And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: the ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy. 17 And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away.”** Hardships in life stop further spiritual growth. Those people fall away before long. The Greek phrase for “fall away” can be translated as stumble. Who are the deterred people in our world today? Many false teachers say that since God loves you, He will give you everything you ask for. Really? I love my two sons wholeheartedly. But I only meet their needs, not their greed. People who buy into that doctrine will stumble easily when difficulties come. God does not make us invincible. Many Christians die from incurable diseases, lose their jobs or they have rebellious kids. Also, believers in many parts of the world are despised by their families, falsely accused in court, imprisoned and even die for their faith. We will be spreading a lie if we tell people that everything will be alright after they receive Jesus. Getting a ticket to heaven is not the reason for becoming a Christian. Some people get married because they are looking for an ATM machine or a maid. Building a long-lasting relationship should be the reason. Jesus is not calling for believers, but disciples. They are willing to pay the price for following Jesus. That is not a popular idea to modern people. The fact is that we will suffer to a certain degree for identifying with Jesus. Some people will hate us because they hate Jesus. But the Lord will be with us always. Also, even though we may not need to forsake everything for Jesus, we must turn over the ownership we think we have to Him. Jesus is our Master and we are His servants.

C. 被騙走的人 The Deceived

Satan is very crafty in steering people away from God. Some are deterred by hardship. Others will be deceived by wrong priorities. Jesus describes the third type of soil in verse 7: **“Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain.”** Thorns exhaust water and nutrients in the ground, and they block out space and sunlight. As a result, seedlings cannot mature. Jesus explains the analogy in verse 18-19: **18 “And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, 19 but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.”** Thorns can appear as pressure, treasure or pleasure. We show concerns when under pressure. But concerns will weaken our faith when they turn into worries and even disbelief toward God. Besides, treasure and pleasure will cause us to focus on ourselves. We become prideful when we have more than what others have. On the flip side, our hearts will be filled with self-pity when others are better-off than us. Think about wealth. The Bible says a lot about money, because it is a powerful thorn that will jam our spiritual growth. Paul warns us in 1 Timothy 6:10 – **For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.** Money is God’s blessing. But the love of money is a sin. The pursuit of money is a strong temptation. Some people think that if they can earn some by working five days then they can make more by working six or even seven days! Hence, they spend their health in exchange for wealth, thinking

that they can use wealth to buy back their health. Here is a simple test for you: you are able to exercise self-control if you can pause whenever you want to. It can be money, playing computer games or shopping. Do not make yourself a slave to that thing! Jesus will empower us to live a life of true freedom if we submit to Him. We are not our own boss. We serve Jesus through the role He assigns us. Then we can enjoy life with contentment, whether we have more or less.

D. 被拯救的人 The Devoted

All three soils failed to produce a crop. Only the fourth soil, the devoted, resulted in a harvest. Jesus says in verse 8: “**And other seeds fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.**” One reference tells us that on the average one seed will produce 35 grains. Sixty and even a hundred times are plentiful. In regard to Jesus’ interpretation, Luke 8:15 gives us some further information: “**As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience.**” There are two key factors for spiritual maturity. First, faithful listeners **preserve** God’s Word. They retain the truths in their hearts after they hear them, much like seeds that are buried in the ground. Second, those audience **persevere** until they bear fruit. They are similar to farmers who tend their plants carefully. You water your veggie garden in the morning and evening, you pull weeds and fertilize the soil when needed. Likewise, bearing fruit from God’s Word requires hard work. You study the Bible, know its meanings and apply truths in life. You also have to overcome struggles and Satan’s temptations. What kind of fruits are those? First and foremost is the fruit of salvation. In another words, it is the new life when you are saved. You also bear fruit for God’s Kingdom when you lead someone to Jesus. Second, it is the change in our character to become more like Jesus. You can refer to the nine qualities of the fruit of the Holy Spirit in Galatians 5. For example, is there more patience toward people who hold different opinions? Is there more compassion toward those who are suffering? Is there more generosity in sharing God’s blessings with others? Some believers are more fruitful. Others may need more growth in certain areas. Regardless, there must be some fruits if you are in Christ. The Lord describes our relationship with Him as branches connected to a grapevine. There will be active growth when there is a secure attachment. Therefore, if your life is self-centered and not God-centered; you cannot stop bragging about yourself instead of praising God naturally; your heart is full of bitterness and not joy; then you need to ask whether or not you have been saved. Just like the slogan from a restaurant, “you can’t fake steak” you cannot fake salvation. Either you are saved by God or you need His salvation.

結論 CONCLUSION

Bearing fruit is a solid proof that a person is truly saved. They are visible signs of a changed life. They are positive qualities that bring fulfillment to yourself, benefits to others and glory to God. Praise the Lord if you are a devoted person. God wants you to continue to produce more fruits for His Kingdom. However, if you are a devoured, deterred or deceived person, God always welcomes you to return to Him. You must admit your sins to Jesus, and accept Him as your Savior and Lord by faith. Once you have received a new life, there will be growth and subsequently there will be fruits.

引言 INTRODUCTION

今天我們開始一個新的系列探討耶穌的比喻。以下是我對比喻的定義：它是一個簡短的虛構故事，傳遞道德教訓。很多人小時候聽過《伊索寓言》。例如《龜兔賽跑》和《狼來了》等故事。我們從這些故事中學到了一些美德。同樣，耶穌講比喻時也期望聽眾有正面的回應。在解釋這些故事時，我們需要記住三件事。首先是**背景**。了解耶穌時代猶太人的一些風俗會有所幫助。此外，之前發生的事情可能會給我們一些線索，說明耶穌為什麼要講這個比喻。其次是**內容**。故事中有哪些關鍵的角色？發生了什麼事情？有什麼結果？第三是**目的**。比喻的教訓是什麼？它如何適用於我們的情況？另外，我們不應該把注意力放在一些細節。一塊石頭和一棵樹不一定有特別的含意。我們不應該把簡單的事情弄得複雜。有兩個步驟可以幫助你明白寓言。首先，用自己的話把故事講出來。第二：抽出它的主要教訓。

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 講比喻的原因 Reasons for Telling Parables

在我們探討今天的故事之前，讓我們先思考一下耶穌講比喻的原因。門徒和一些人聽了這個比喻後，要求耶穌解釋。耶穌在第 11 節回答說：**耶穌對他們說：「神國的奧秘只叫你們知道，若是對外人講，凡事就用比喻」**。耶穌將聽眾分為「局內人」和「局外人」。局內人是指門徒和對真理感興趣的人。耶穌用直接的方式教導他們。祂稱有關神國的知識為奧秘。神隱藏這些信息，直到適當的時候把它們揭開。局外人是其餘的聽眾。耶穌教導他們時使用比喻。我們在第 12 節看到他們聽了比喻後的反應：**「叫他們看是看見，卻不曉得；聽是聽見，卻不明白；恐怕他們回轉過來，就得赦免。」**他們看見了耶穌所行的神蹟，也聽到祂的教導。但他們並沒有以信心回應。在這裡耶穌引用了以賽亞書第六章。當時神向先知以賽亞顯現。之後，祂派以賽亞向子民傳遞訊息。但神預先告訴以賽亞，人們會拒絕接受。我們可能會問：「那為什麼還要浪費時間去講呢？」有兩個原因。首先，當神的審判最終到來時，人們沒有藉口說神沒有預先警告他們。其次，神的預言也是盼望的信息。在懲罰之後，祂會再次祝福剩下的以色列人。舊約的猶太人、耶穌的聽眾和今天的人都同樣的頑固和反叛。他們可能認為福音很抽象。耶穌的身份和工作對他們來說就像童話故事。神成為人，由童女所生。一個無辜的人為全人類的罪死在十字架上，祂三天後復活。那些憑信心接受耶穌的人便能得救。我們必須先解釋福音，然後人們才能明白並接受它。就像耶穌所做的那樣，我們可以使用比喻。聖經本身其實充滿生動的形容。耶穌救贖我們，就像還清了我們的債務並使我們自由一樣。

祂彌補我們與天父破裂的關係，就像解決朋友之間的爭吵一樣。耶穌也稱我們為義，看我們為義人，就彷彿我們在法庭上被宣判無罪一樣。救恩是神賜給我們的禮物，我們只需要憑信心接受它。它也是無價的，因為沒有人可以用任何東西來交換它。你可以想到其他例子，幫助非信徒明白福音。

2. 對真理的回應 Responses to The Truth

有了一點背景認識之後，讓我們來探討一下今天的比喻。它提到人們對真相的不同回應，就像撒在土壤上的種子一樣。那時，大多數人在他們家的附近有一小塊田。農夫會盡量多撒種子。沒有人會在植物無法生長的地方浪費種子。然而，有些種子會落在不太理想的地方。收成是農夫的最終目標。在四種情況中，只有一種土壤能帶來收穫。耶穌在第 14 節中明確指出，種子代表神的道。傳福音就像播種。四種土壤代表對真理的四種回應。結果子是一個人得救最好的證明。當我們解釋這個故事時，你可以看看哪一種土壤最接近你的屬靈狀況。

A. 被奪走的人 The Devoured

第一種土壤象徵被奪走的人。耶穌在第 4 節中描述道：「撒的時候，有落在路旁的，飛鳥來吃盡了。」那些種子落地後不久就被小鳥吃掉。它們甚至連發芽的機會都沒有。耶穌在第 15 節中解釋說：「那撒在路旁的，就是人聽了道，撒但立刻來，把撒在他心裡的道奪了去。」那些聽眾聽到神的話語之後，撒旦就把道奪走。它沒有機會留在人們的心中。路加福音 8:12 告訴我們那些被奪走的人的結局：「...隨後魔鬼來，從他們心裡把道奪去，恐怕他們信了得救。」如果一個人的心中沒有神的話語，他就無法相信。因此，他也不能得救。在今天的世界上，那些人是誰？我們的心不會保持真空。若不是被神佔據，便會被其他東西填滿。有些人拜假神。他們拒絕聖經真理，因為聖經與他們的信仰相矛盾。他們不能接受獨一真神，因為他們自己想要成為神。靠著恩典得救挑戰了他們的驕傲，因為他們希望透過做好事上天堂。其他人說他們追求靈界的事情但沒有宗教信仰。他們希望在離開世界之後，自己的靈魂能夠提升到更高的境界。有些人自稱是無神論者，但他們崇拜自己。他們認為用自己的知識、能力和金錢可以解決任何問題。我們如何向這些人傳福音？我們需要神軟化他們的心，讓福音的種子停留在他們心裡。我們可以鼓勵他們在追求真理的過程中保持客觀。我們溫和地質疑他們信仰的基礎。例如，有些人認為只有物質才是最真實的。他們說靈魂不存在，因為他們看不到或感覺不到它。因此，他們覺得離開世界之後一切便煙消雲散。他們的這些想法有任何根據嗎？除了挑戰他們的信仰之外，我們還必須鼓勵他們讀聖經。讓他們親自看看這本書的內容，讓神對他們的心說話。祂的話語具有能力，可以深入人們的思想並甦醒他們的靈魂。

B. 被嚇走的人 The Deterred

第二種土壤是被嚇走的人。生活中的困難使他們不願意跟隨耶穌。請看第 5-6 節：5「有落在土淺石頭地上的，土既不深，發苗最快，6 日頭出來一曬，因為沒有根，就枯乾了。」那些種子很快便發芽，但卻沒有維持很久。由於土壤太淺，下面的石頭妨礙根的生長。當太陽出來時，幼苗很快就枯乾了。耶穌在 16-17 節解釋：16「那撒在石頭地上的，就是人聽了道，立刻歡喜領受，17 但他心裡沒有根，不過是暫時的，及至為道遭了患難，或是受了逼迫，立刻就跌倒了。」生活中的困難阻礙了靈命成長。那些人沒多久就跌倒了。在現代世界中，哪些人是被嚇走的？許多假教師說，既然神愛你，就一定有求必應。真的嗎？我愛我的兩個兒子。但我只滿足他們的需要，而不是他們的貪心。當困難來臨時，相信這些教導的人很容易跌倒。神並沒有使我們刀槍不入。許多基督徒死於不治之症、失業或是他們的孩子叛逆。此外，世界許多地方的信徒因信仰而被家人厭棄、在法庭上被誣告、坐牢甚至被殺。如果我們告訴人們信耶穌後一切都會順利，我們就是撒謊。拿到天堂的門票並不是成為基督徒的原因。有些人結婚只是為了一部提款機或是一個女傭。建立持久的關係應該才是真正的原因。耶穌並不是呼召信徒，乃是門徒。他們願意為跟隨耶穌付代價。對於現代人來說，那是一個不受歡迎的說法。事實上，我們會因為與耶穌認同而遭遇某些困難。有些人會不喜歡我們，因為他們痛恨耶穌。但主會永遠與我們同在。此外，雖然我們可能不需要為耶穌放棄一切，但我們必須把一切擁有權交給主。耶穌是我們的主人，而我們是祂的僕人。

C. 被騙走的人 The Deceived

撒但非常狡猾，他會用各種方法使人遠離神。有些人被困難嚇走，另外有些人會被錯誤的優先順序所騙走。耶穌在第 7 節形容第三種土壤：「有落在荊棘裡的，荊棘長起來，把他擠住了，就不結實。」荊棘會搶走地裡的水和養分，並阻擋成長空間和陽光。結果，幼苗無法成熟。耶穌在第 18-19 節解釋：18「還有那撒在荊棘裡的，就是人聽了道，19 後來有世上的思慮、錢財的迷惑，和別樣的私慾進來，把道擠住了，就不能結實。」荊棘可以代表生活壓力、財寶或享樂。我們在壓力下會表現出掛慮。但當掛慮變成擔心甚至懷疑神之時，就會瓦解我們的信心。此外，財富和享樂會讓我們專注於自己。當我們擁有的比別人多時，我們就會感到驕傲。反過來看，當我們比不上別人時，我們便充滿自憐。想想財富這樣東西。聖經說了很多關於金錢的道理，因為它是很利害的荊棘，會攔住我們靈命的成長。保羅在提摩太前書 6:10 警告我們：貪財是萬惡之根。有人貪戀錢財，就被引誘離了真道，用許多愁苦把自己刺透了。金錢是神的祝福，但貪錢是一種罪。金錢的追逐是一種強烈的試探。有些人誤認為，如果工作五天能賺到一些錢，那麼工作六天甚至七天就肯定會賺更多！於是，他們用健康交換財富，認為可以用財富買回健康。這裡給你一個簡單的測試：無論你在做什麼事情，如果你能隨時暫停，你就是一個能自我約束的人。那個東西可能是金錢、電腦遊戲或購物。不要讓自己成為它的奴隸！如果我們順服耶穌，祂就會給我們能力，讓我們過著自由的生命。我們不是自己的老

闊。我們藉著耶穌委派給我們的角色來服事祂。這樣，無論我們擁有的多或少，我們都可以知足地享受生活。

D. 被拯救的人 The Devoted

以上三種土壤都不能有收成。只有第四種土壤，我稱為被拯救的人，才結出果子。耶穌在第 8 節說：「又有落在好土裡的，就發生長大，結實有三十倍的，有六十倍的，有一百倍的。」一份參考資料告訴我們，平均一粒種子可以結出 35 粒穀物。六十次甚至一百倍就是很多的了。關於耶穌的解釋，路加福音 8:15 給我們更豐富的資訊：「那落在好土裡的，就是人聽了道，持守在誠實善良的心裡，並且忍耐著結實。」靈命成熟有兩個關鍵因素。首先，忠實的聽眾持守神的話語。他們聽完真理後將其牢記在心，就像種子被埋在地裡一樣。其次，那些聽眾要有忍耐的心，直到果子成熟。他們就像細心照料植物的農夫一樣。你早上和晚上給菜園澆水，需要時除雜草並施肥。同樣，從神的話語中結出果子也需要花功夫。你學習聖經，了解其意義並將真理應用在生活中。你還必須勝過掙扎和撒旦的試探。這裡講的到底是什麼果子？首先也是最重要的是得救的果子。換句話說，就是你信耶穌後的新生命。當你帶領別人信主時，你也是為神的國結出果子。其次，當我們的品格變得更像耶穌時，我們正在結果子。你可以參考加拉太書第五章聖靈果子的九個特質。例如你對持不同意見的人是否有更多的耐心？你對那些受苦的人是否有更多的憐憫？你是否更慷慨地與別人分享神的祝福？有些信徒會結出更多的果子，其他人可能需要在某些地方不斷成長。無論如何，如果你是個基督徒，就一定會結出一些果子。主將我們與祂的關係描述為與葡萄樹相連的枝子。當有緊密的連接時，自然會有積極的成長。因此，如果你的生命是以自我為中心，不是以神為中心；你停不了誇耀自己而不自然地讚美神；你的心中充滿苦毒而不是喜樂；那麼你就需要問自己是否得救。就像餐廳的口號一樣，「你無法偽造牛排」，你不能假裝得救。要不然你已經被神拯救了，要不然你需要祂的拯救。

結論 CONCLUSION

結果子是一個人得救最好的證明。那是生命被改變的明顯跡象。它們是正面的素質，可以使你感到滿足，帶給別人益處，而且能榮耀神。如果你是個被拯救的人，感謝主！神希望你繼續為祂的國結出更多的果子。然而，如果你是一個被奪走、被嚇走或是被騙走的人，神總是歡迎你回到祂身邊。你必須向耶穌承認你的罪，並憑信心接受祂為你的救主和生命的主。你得到新生命之後便會有成長，逐漸也會結果子。