

The Parables of Jesus in Contemporary Culture

by Dennis Christie

Abstract

The parables of Jesus have had an undeniable influence on my own life and my journey to faith. My belief is that the parables are as valuable and effective today, as they ever were, at convicting and prompting the listener to rethink their view of themselves and God, and to set them towards repentance and following Christ.

In an increasingly secular society where Christianity appears to have lost its prominence and influence, there now exist a number of barriers or obstacles for the de-churched or unchurched when it comes to understanding and knowing Christ. Barriers such as mistrust of the church, ignorance about basic Christian principles and an increasing focus on the temporal, material world are prominent especially in our modern, western culture. The parables, I wish to argue, can go a long way to directly addressing such barriers for people. Could it be that what we most need today to reach the lost for Christ are the very tools that Jesus used to convince and convict his followers in 1st Century Israel?

I also wish to examine the potential of the parables, given their nature as short stories, to reach a modern culture that is becoming decreasingly literate due to the prominence of modern communication techniques such as social media. For those engaged in the social media age we are now flooded with information, which we are filtering and processing much faster and as such are now more responsive to short and snappy thought provoking narratives. Perhaps the parables that Jesus told over two thousand years ago are actually perfectly suited to communicating the gospel of Christ and the principles of the Christian faith, to this modern age?

Within this dissertation I intend to review the potential of the parables of Jesus to reach those without a living Christian faith, examine the modern barriers to reaching people for Christ, and conclude that the parables are a well suited tool for evangelising our current generation.

As potential further work, I would recommend the exploration of process evangelism techniques, such as Alpha or Christianity Explored that would be based on the parables and intentionally geared towards addressing the obstacles of modern secular people towards following Christ.