

Pursuing the Jesus-way within  
a post-Christian culture

Peripheral

## MARK 4:1-20

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Once again Jesus began teaching by the lakeshore. A very large crowd soon gathered around him, so he got into a boat. Then he sat in the boat while all the people remained on the shore. He taught them by telling many stories in the form of parables, such as this one:

“Listen! A farmer went out to plant some seed. As he scattered it across his field, some of the seed fell on a footpath, and the birds came and ate it. Other seed fell on shallow soil with underlying rock. The seed sprouted quickly because the soil was shallow. But the plant soon wilted under the hot sun, and since it didn't have deep roots, it died.

## MARK 4:1-20

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Other seed fell among thorns that grew up and choked out the tender plants so they produced no grain. Still other seeds fell on fertile soil, and they sprouted, grew, and produced a crop that was thirty, sixty, and even a hundred times as much as had been planted!" Then he said, "Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand."

Later, when Jesus was alone with the twelve disciples and with the others who were gathered around, they asked him what the parables meant.

## MARK 4:1-20

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He replied, "You are permitted to understand the secret of the Kingdom of God. But I use parables for everything I say to outsiders, so that the Scriptures might be fulfilled:

'When they see what I do,  
they will learn nothing.

When they hear what I say,  
they will not understand.

Otherwise, they will turn to me  
and be forgiven.' "

## MARK 4:1-20

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Then Jesus said to them, "If you can't understand the meaning of this parable, how will you understand all the other parables? The farmer plants seed by taking God's word to others. The seed that fell on the footpath represents those who hear the message, only to have Satan come at once and take it away. The seed on the rocky soil represents those who hear the message and immediately receive it with joy. But since they don't have deep roots, they don't last long. They fall away as soon as they have problems or are persecuted for believing God's word.

## MARK 4:1-20

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The seed that fell among the thorns represents others who hear God's word, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the worries of this life, the lure of wealth, and the desire for other things, so no fruit is produced. And the seed that fell on good soil represents those who hear and accept God's word and produce a harvest of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted!"

# **THE WAY OF IMAGINATION**

# WHAT IS A PARABLE?

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A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning

**PARABLES ARE SUBVERSIVE**

# EUGENE PETERSON

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“Parables subversively slip past our defenses. Once they’re inside the citadel of self, we might expect a change of method, a sudden brandishing of bayonets resulting in a palace coup. But it doesn’t happen..God does not impose his reality from without; he grows flowers and fruit from within.”

**THE PARABLES ARE INVITATIONAL**

## LUKE 7:29

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“All the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus' words, acknowledged that God's way was right, because they had been baptized by John.”

# EUGENE PETERSON

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“Parables aren’t illustrations that make things easier; they make things harder by requiring the exercise of our imaginations, which if we aren’t careful becomes the exercise of faith...”

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...God’s truth is not an alien invasion but a loving courtship in which the details of our common lives are treated as seeds in our conception, growth and maturity in the kingdom.”

**TRUE LIFE BREATHING KNOWLEDGE IS RELATIONAL, NOT  
INFORMATIONAL**

**PARABLES ARE APPROPRIATING**

## 1. SHARE WHAT YOU SEE

- Ask the God to illuminate to you what is not obvious
- Look at it from different angles and in different ways
- What's not present, not said, not explained?
- What's deliberately present, said, explained?
- Which ground do you feel you are and how does that metaphor extrapolate out practically in your life today?

## 2. WRITE YOUR OWN PARABLE

- Think peripherally – what would be a subversive value of the way that would call for this form of sharing?
- Use a parable from Mark, content from a previous message, or think about a controversial topic of our day that could be more clearly understood through a story.
- It could be long or short, poetic or blunt.

**WALTER BRUEGGEMANN,**

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“To participate in the Eucharist is to live inside God’s imagination. It is to be caught up into what is really real, the body of Christ.”