

The Purpose of Parables

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[0 : 00] Okay, so we are, like I said, in the book of Mark, so if you've got a Bible, open up to the book of Mark. We made it to chapter 4. In chapter 3, we saw the choosing of the 12 disciples, we talked about that.

And then some of the accusations against Jesus, and his mentioning of the unpardonable sin, and the Jewish context, really, of that.

Today, we're going to be looking at one of Jesus' very first parables that he told. And considering that, there's a lot here in this very first parable, because Jesus kind of explains a little bit about why he teaches in parables, and kind of what's behind it.

So today, we're going to be looking at the parable of the sower, the purpose of Jesus telling parables, or using parables in his teaching, and specifically looking at the Jewish context.

It's easy, if you're not careful, to just read through the Bible, through the lens of the context of today. We are Gentiles, non-Jews, who have trusted in Christ, and we can kind of put ourselves in each of these accounts, and read through these accounts with just that in mind.

[1 : 33] And I think there's always something for us to learn in everything that we read in the Bible, whether it's the Old Testament and Genesis, the Old Testament under the law of Moses, the kingdom ministry that Jesus had, or anywhere else in the Bible.

But some things are directed directly to us in the age of grace in which we live. But we need to make sure that we make that proper division, making sure that we understand things correctly, so that we can apply these things correctly to our lives.

I'm just going to read through the first, I don't know, a couple of dozen or a dozen or so verses here in chapter 4, and then we're going to go back and just walk through it.

So again, Mark chapter 4, verse 1. And again, he began to teach by the sea, and a great multitude was gathered to him, so that he got into a boat and sat in it on the sea, and the whole multitude was on the land facing the sea.

Then he taught them many things by parables, and said to them in his teaching, Listen, behold, a sower went out to sow, and it happened, as he sowed, that some seed fell by the wayside, and the birds of the air came and devoured it.

[2 : 51] Some fell on the stony ground, where it did not have much earth, and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up, it was scorched, and because it had no root, it withered away.

And some seed fell among the thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no crop. But other seed fell on good ground, and yielded a crop that sprang up, increased, and produced, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.

And he said to them, He who has ears to hear, let him hear. But when he was alone, those around him with the twelve asked him about the parable.

And he said to them, To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God. But to those who are outside, all things come in parables, so that seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand.

Lest they should turn, and their sin be forgiven them. We're going to stop there, and really just cover this first portion of the parable of the sower, before Jesus gets in and explains all the details.

[4 : 18] Going back, we're just going to walk through, going back to the first verse. So he says, And again, he began to teach by the sea. Jesus has done this before. He's gone out to Capernaum, to the Sea of Galilee, and preached there.

One reason, I think, was to get away from the crowds in the big city, but the crowds followed him. But I think it was easier to navigate crowds when you're in a more open area, like the coast of the Sea of Galilee, which is really just a big lake.

It says, And the whole multitude was on the land facing the sea.

So if you can picture this in your mind, Jesus goes to the coast, to the coast of this lake, and instead of just standing there, like he had done before on the coast, and just speaking to the people, if you remember back in Mark 2 or 3, I can't remember which one, it says that he stood on the shore, and he spoke to the crowds, but they had a little boat at the ready, just in case he needed to escape.

Well, why would you need to escape? Well, there's this huge crowd, and you can imagine how nervous that might make you. Crowds can be dangerous. And so they had this little boat ready.

[5 : 37] Well, this time, well, forget the shore. I'm just going to get in the boat. So this time, Jesus just got in the boat, and went off just a little bit offshore, and the crowds stood on the shore to listen to Jesus and what he had to say.

And this is what he had to say. Then he taught them many things by parables, and he said to them in his teaching, listen, behold, a sower went out to sow.

And then he goes through and talks about, you know, all the different details of this parable. And we're actually not even necessarily going to go into the details of this parable today. We will, in the next message, get into more of the details.

But I wanted to talk about just parables in general. What is a parable? A parable is just a story. Most of us are familiar with the idea of a parable. It's a story used to illustrate something.

It can be considered like a metaphor, a comparison, an analogy. There actually, this word in the Greek used for parable is sometimes translated as a figure.

[6 : 48] Or a figure is, you know, something like an analogy. We think of figures of speech. The Greek word is parabole. Parable, and it really literally means to set alongside.

And that word parabole, you can think, well, that sounds similar to another English word, like parallel, parallel. You set alongside. You have two lines, and they're parallel.

They go alongside each other. So a parable is just a story that goes along with a certain truth that you want to communicate. It helps and assists.

At least on the surface, that's what it seems that a parable should do, right? Help illustrate an idea to make it more clear. We're going to find out that that's not exactly the case here with why Jesus is using parables.

If you count them up and you try to count them up, you're going to find out that Jesus told somewhere in the range of 30 to 40 parables throughout his ministry.

[7 : 55] If you go through the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and you try to count them all up, some of the parables are very short. They might be just one or two sentences. Others, like this one, are a bit longer.

Parables are not meant to be super long. Because I think the illustration gets lost. But sometimes it's difficult, and that's why the count, you can't really number them precisely.

Some people will come up with different counts because they consider maybe this a parable or maybe this other one not. Because Jesus didn't know, or the Bible doesn't always say, well, here is a parable.

Sometimes Jesus just tells a little story, and you just have to assume, well, it's a parable. Many times, like here, it actually says, Jesus spoke this parable.

In fact, back last week when we looked at what Jesus said about the unpardonable sin, it mentions that he said this as a parable. So even that was a parable, even though it was super, super brief.

[9 : 00] Parables were not even something, usually we think of parables in the context of Jesus' ministry in the Gospels. But there were parables told in the Old Testament by the prophets.

The one that comes first to my mind is the little story that Nathan the prophet told to David. Do we remember that? David had grievously sinned against God and man by taking another man's wife and then killing that man.

And we're talking about the story of David and Bathsheba. And if you remember, a prophet, the prophet Nathan, came to David, and David welcomed him, of course, not really thinking there was anything wrong.

And Nathan told this story about a man who had lots of sheep and lots of wealth, remember? And then he told of another man who had only one lamb, one precious little lamb.

And that man who had so many stole from the man who had just the one. And of course, that story was meant to illustrate something, but Nathan the prophet did not, in the beginning, reveal what the nature or what the illustration was of.

[10 : 22] And so David, in his indignation at hearing this parable, said, who is this man? He should be judged. And what does Nathan say?

You are that man, David. You are that man. And so parables can have a tremendous impact in revealing truth to anyone.

Another parable that I think of is the parable of the potter and the clay. That's in Jeremiah chapter 18. Israel is the clay and God is the potter.

But typically, when you have a parable, these parables, specifically, the potter and the clay and the one that David, that Nathan gave to David, in both of those cases, the parables were given and then explained.

This is what they mean. And that's helpful. You provide an illustration and then you explain how it ties in with the truth that you want to communicate. But if you noticed, as we read through this parable that Jesus told, at least when he was with the crowds, he ended the story and then he ended with, he who has ears to hear, let him hear.

[11 : 43] No explanation. Nothing. It's not until later when Jesus is with his disciples, privately, that they say, hey Jesus, we didn't get it.

Could you explain to us? And then he goes on to explain. Just a little bit more about parables.

Parables are not just something that's in the Bible or in Hebrew culture, right? You have parables in many cultures. It's, I think, even most famous in Greek culture, right?

Who was somebody, there's the name of a Greek dude many, many years ago who is famous for his parables or we might also call them fables.

Aesop, yes. So Aesop's fables or parables are famous even, you know, we teach them to young children. The most famous that I can think of is the parable or the fable of the tortoise and the hare.

[12 : 54] Most of us know that and I'll just read it and it's very short, very brief. Tired of the hare making fun of his plotting and pondering pace, a tortoise finally has enough and challenges him to a race.

The hare agrees to the contest and promptly bolts off toward the finish line in the distance. So far ahead does the rabbit find himself that he decides he has enough time for a rest. There's no way the tortoise could possibly catch him now.

As the hare lay fast asleep, however, the tortoise continues to make steady progress, one slow step at a time, eventually passing the hare to win the race. Before the hare realizes what's happening and despite his vain attempts to catch up, it's too late.

The tortoise has won. And what's the moral of the story? Slow and steady wins the race, right? And that's a truth, right?

If you just take slow, deliberate, plotting steps, somebody who tries to race through life, they're eventually just going to crash and burn. While if you just have a nice, steady pace in life, you're going to have good success.

[14 : 05] That's the moral of the story. So stories like this, illustrations, parables, have a moral, have a lesson that they teach and that's the purpose.

But what is the lesson, what is the moral of the story of the parable of the sower? Well, stories have characters. You have the tortoise and you have the hare.

Well, what are the characters or you might even ask elements of the parable of the sower? Well, you have the sower, the one throwing the seed. You have the seed itself.

Then you have the ground in which it was sown and there's four different kinds. And then at the end, you have a crop or produce, some fruit that comes out of it.

But the question is, what do each of these characters or elements represent? A story is all fine and good, but if you can't tie the elements of the story to some kind of truth that you want to communicate, the lesson can't be learned.

[15 : 17] So, his disciples came to Jesus and said, what's this about? What's the lesson that we're supposed to learn from this story? Jesus uses this phrase at the end of the story.

He says, he who has ears to hear, let him hear. Now, that's a figure of speech, right? Were there people that were listening to him that were missing their ears?

Did they not have ears? Well, no, that's not the case, right? So, what is he talking about? He who has ears to hear, let him hear. Do you know that there are people that even though they hear, they don't hear?

Like, we're all familiar with that. This happens a lot as a father with children, right? Children, their hearing sometimes is impeccable.

You know, we have a food pantry in our house and sometimes I'll go in there and find a snack. Have you ever done this? And I'll go in and I'll grab a fun snack and there's a little bag and it crinkles a little bit.

[16 : 29] And without fail, that little crinkle of the bag will draw kids swarming into the pantry to find out what's going on. What's dad eating?

But then, when it comes time to do the chores and you give instructions or say, ask, you know, yell for the kids to come to do their chores, it seems like they're hard of hearing.

Their hearing has kind of been dulled. And so, we're all familiar with this kind of concept of some people who have the ears to hear yet they don't hear.

And so, that's the case with any of us, right? we can not hear the things that we ought to, even though we can't hear, we hear the words, but we're not really interested in the message.

We're just not interested. I think that's what Jesus is getting in. Hey, is getting at here, is that for those of you who are interested in the message that I'm giving, listen up.

[17 : 37] this story is important. And if you're interested, if you're not, okay, that's fine. But if you're interested, this is the message and it's important.

You need to hear it and you need to understand it. This phrase, he who has ears to hear, let him hear, is actually used by Jesus several times throughout the Gospels. And then we also see it in the book of Revelation.

I believe four times. Three times specifically in the third chapter of Revelation. He says this phrase three times in Revelation chapter three.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

If you have an ear, if you're interested, if you want to know what the Spirit of God is saying to the churches, then listen up. this is important. Well, let's talk about the purpose of parables.

[18 : 43] Now, on the face of it, the purpose of an illustration, a story, an analogy, is to make things easier to understand. But as we just read here in chapter four of Mark, it seems that that is the case, but it's not the case.

Because this illustration does ultimately provide some spiritual truth, some help, an illustration to one group of people, but to another group of people, it's actually meant to be confusing, to be more of a riddle than an illustration.

In fact, this whole concept of a riddle is something that we find in the book of Ezekiel. Turn your Bible to Ezekiel chapter 17. Ezekiel, I probably should have bookmarked these.

If you go to the middle of the Bible and then turn over a few books, Ezekiel chapter 17.

This is the prophet Ezekiel and he's speaking to Israel. This is the word of the Lord. It says, And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, Son of man, pose a riddle and speak a parable to the house of Israel.

[20 : 28] Notice he uses two words, a parable as a story and a riddle. For any story, there's also a mysterious part of it, something that's difficult to understand and typically you need a key.

You need to know how to connect at least a few of the dots as a key and then the understanding will come. And he says this, And say, Thus says the Lord God, a great eagle with large wings and large long pinions full of feathers of various colors came to Lebanon and took from the cedar the highest branch.

He cropped off its topmost young twig and carried it to a land of trade and he set it in a city of merchants. And just to be brief, we're not going to read through the whole thing, but there's this story about an eagle and a twig and it's carrying this twig off.

Well, that's an interesting story, but it'd be more interesting if you knew what it meant. Well, Ezekiel ultimately explains it. If you look down in verse 11, it says this, Moreover, the word of the Lord came to me saying, Say now to the rebellious house, that's Israel, do you not know what these things mean?

Don't you understand the story that I just told? Tell them, Indeed, the king of Babylon went to Jerusalem and took its king and princes and led them with him to Babylon.

[21 : 54] And he continues to explain further. But that story about the eagle and the twig is a story about Babylon taking them and their king's captivity.

It's a parable, it's meant to illustrate, but he provides the key to understanding what the riddle is. what the parable is. Back in Mark chapter four, in the next verse, verse ten, it says, but when he was alone, those around him with the twelve asked him about the parable.

See, nobody understood, so they wanted to know. Jesus' twelve disciples didn't understand it, and they didn't understand because Jesus didn't explain it.

And you know what? I kind of wonder if these disciples had never asked, Jesus, could you help us understand this? I imagine he might never have explained it.

He would have just left it. know, if you read through the book of Proverbs, the book of Proverbs is all about wisdom. And how do you get wisdom?

[23 : 15] Does it fall from the sky into your head? Does it emanate from your pillow where you're sleeping at night? Wisdom comes to who?

To those who seek it out, to those who search for it. There's many places in the book of Proverbs that speak to that, but one that I pulled out in particular, Proverbs chapter 20 verse 5.

We won't go there, but Proverbs 20 verse 5 if you're taking notes. It says this, counsel in the heart of a man is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out.

If you have someone that you know that has wisdom that you want, that wisdom is not just on the surface. It's not sitting on his shoulder just waiting to flake off and through osmosis get into your heart and mind.

Wisdom in the heart of a man, same thing with the heart of God, right? Wisdom is like deep waters. You have to dig for it. You have to go down deep and draw out that wisdom, that counsel from a man of wisdom.

[24 : 27] And so God expects this of his people. Do you want to know the truth? Come seek it out. I'm not going to spoon feed it to you.

Come ask me. Search for it. Dig deep. Don't just expect it to come to you on a silver platter. And then in Mark 4, chapter 11, excuse me, Mark chapter 4, verse 11, and he said to them, to you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God.

But to those who are outside, all things come in parables, so that seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand, lest they should turn and their sins be forgiven them.

So he said to you, it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God. You see, every parable that Jesus told, the subject matter was the kingdom of God.

And this is the context that we always need to keep in mind. Remember what Jesus said that he came to do? this is in Mark, let's see, chapter 1, verse 15.

[26 : 00] The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel. Jesus came preaching the message of the kingdom of God.

That kingdom which had been promised to Israel by the prophets for hundreds and even a thousand years. To you, the mysteries of the kingdom have been given.

To you, who is he talking to? Well, he's talking to his twelve disciples, right? And it seems like there's others there who are hanging out. There are other disciples.

Jesus had the twelve, but it wasn't just the twelve. Remember, at one point, he sends out 70 of his disciples. There are many. who decided that it was worth it to follow him.

Remember, Jesus went around and he said, are you willing to follow me, to take up your cross even, to follow me? It's going to be difficult, it's going to be hard, but if you're willing, you can come follow me in this ministry that I have to Israel.

[27 : 08] To you were the ones who were willing to take up that cross. Those who were willing to follow him, those who were willing to accept him, that he was the Messiah.

For those who were still on the fence, for those who were actually offended by what he had to say, and were looking, maybe even, I think we should kill this one.

Those were the ones who were on the outside. So you have the insiders and the outsiders, and what makes the difference? do you want to know what's true?

Do you accept that Jesus, he is who he says he is, that he is Lord? We're going to dive more into the details of the, what does it mean, the mysteries of the kingdom, and what are the specific details of this.

But what I want to focus the rest of this message on is this somewhat enigmatic and even offensive, disturbing even, saying that Jesus says here at the end of verse 12.

[28 : 23] He says, here's why I'm explaining this to you, but not to them. Here's why. He quotes Isaiah, so that seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand, lest they should turn and their sins be forgiven them.

Here's the reason I'm speaking in parables. There are these people, those on the outside, I don't want them to understand what I'm saying.

I'm speaking in parables to confuse them, to keep the secret from them. why?

Lest they should turn and their sins be forgiven. I don't want their sins to be forgiven. I don't want them to turn back to the Lord. That's shocking.

Is that shocking? That Jesus would say something like that. Does that sound like Jesus? Does that sound like the Lord? I don't want people to believe in me.

[29 : 33] I don't want people to trust me. I don't want to forgive their sins. I don't want them to give them the means to have their sins forgiven. So what's up with all this?

Well, let's say we go to Isaiah and look and see what's the context of this message that he's quoting from Isaiah. So turn to Isaiah chapter 6. Again, this is somewhere right in the middle of your Bible.

This is a passage and I'll just summarize the first few verses here. But again, Isaiah chapter 6, the first part, we're going to be looking specifically at verse 9 and 10.

But in this first section of Isaiah 6, Isaiah is called to be a prophet and God says, who will go for me? And Isaiah says, well, I'm a man of unclean lips. I'm kind of a dirty dude.

I'm not qualified. I'm a man of unclean lips. And the Lord, through an angel, I don't know what the vision I imagine, an angel touches his lips with a coal, a burning ember, and his lips are symbolically purified.

[30 : 47] You know, God has provided the cleansing that he needs. And so then he says, all right, Lord, here I am, send me, at the end of verse 8. And in verse 9, this is what the Lord says to him.

He said, go and tell this people, keep on hearing, but do not understand. Keep on seeing, but do not perceive.

Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and return, and be healed.

that was the message that God gave Isaiah for the people of Israel. And it's spoken in such a way as, you know, well, the reason you're speaking is to keep things from them.

But is that really what God wants? God, does God want Israel to continue to remain rebellious? Is that what he wants? No. As you read through the whole of Scripture, you find God constantly pursuing Israel, calling them back to himself.

[32 : 04] That's the story of the whole Bible. Even today, God wants his people, Israel, to turn to him. And we see in the future, God's going to, he's going to work to make it happen.

And maybe we'll talk about that in the next message in more detail. But really, this is, and most people who, if you read the commentators, say, well, this is kind of a figure of speech here.

In fact, it's interesting. Is anybody familiar with the Septuagint? The Septuagint is a Bible that was translated. It's written in Greek.

The Septuagint is in the Greek. But it's a translation of the Old Testament Hebrew Bible. This is before the time of Jesus. Translated to Greek. So the Hebrew Bible is written in Hebrew.

I guess that's why we call it the Hebrew Bible. And some people wanted it available for them to read, for the Greeks to read. And they actually wanted it part of the great ancient library in Alexandria.

[33 : 13] And so they commissioned a bunch of Jewish scribes to come and translate the Hebrew text into Greek. And we call that today the Septuagint. Well, you can get English translations today of the Greek Septuagint.

So it's a translation of a translation. Now, most of the Bible is not that way, right? Our English translations, if you read the King James, the New King James, many of the other translations, they're translated directly from the original Hebrew or Greek into our English language.

That's actually somewhat of a privilege. You know, in many countries in the world, they don't have that. Many countries in the world, their language, the Bible translation that they have is from the English translation to their translation because they just don't have the Hebrew scholars, the Greek scholars who can do the direct translation that we have available in English.

But here is how the Septuagint is translated into English. This is the same passage, Isaiah 6, 9 through 10. Ye shall hear indeed, but ye shall not understand.

And ye shall see indeed, but ye shall not perceive. Notice how it reads differently. Instead of keep on hearing, but do not understand.

[34 : 32] Instead of an imperative, it's really saying, well, this is a description of what's going on with my people the Jews. For the heart of this people has become gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed, lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.

So notice how the understanding is a little bit different, the way that this is translated back even before the time of Christ. And when Jesus was quoting Scripture, do you know that he quoted mostly, when he quoted Scripture, he mostly quoted from the Septuagint, which is a Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible.

He didn't translate, or he didn't quote Hebrew, he quoted from the Greek, which is actually, I think, one, you know, there are some who say, well, there's only one legitimate translation of the Bible, and translations, you know, you shouldn't be trusted, and, you know, you do have, sometimes translations can have issues and problems.

But Jesus was actually very comfortable to just quote from a Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible. Anyway, so he's saying, you hear, you people of Israel, you hear, but you don't hear.

It's because you don't want to hear. You see, but you don't see, you don't perceive, because you don't want to understand.

[36 : 06] understand. So tell you what, I'll give you what you want. You want to be blind? I'll give you dull sight. I'll darken your eyes.

That's fine. If that's what you want, that's what I'll give you. This is the message that Isaiah is preaching to Israel. You want to darken mind?

You want darken eyes? You want dull hearing? I will give it to you. And so Jesus, in his teaching of parables, here's the story.

Here's an analogy. Here's a riddle. And I'll keep you in the dark. If that's what you want, I'll keep you in the dark.

You see, Jesus preached throughout his whole ministry. And if we fast forward and look at what happened through this three years of Jesus' ministry, there were some who accepted him.

[37 : 14] Some who received the message of the kingdom. Some who received him as the Messiah foretold by the prophets. As God, the Son, sent to bring salvation to the world.

But most in Israel did not. And why didn't they? Was it because the message was hidden? Or was the message standing in front of them, ready and willing to give to anyone who had the eyes to see and the ears to hear?

He was right there. But, if you want to be blind, I'll darken your eyes. That's fine. turn in the book of Acts, the very last chapter in the book of Acts.

Paul was, as we've taught here many times, the apostle to the Gentiles. You see, the original twelve apostles and many of those around them, they went to the Jewish people after Jesus rose from the dead and ascended into heaven with that message of the kingdom, that their Messiah had come.

They needed to repent and turn back to God. Paul, we know, was called specifically to take the gospel message about the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus to the Gentile people.

[38 : 44] But did you notice when you actually read about his missionary efforts, where does he always go first? The synagogue synagogue to the Jewish people.

And what almost always happens, he's run out on a rail, right? Sometimes it takes a few days. But there's riots ensue, he's run out on a rail, and it happens over and over and over again.

Well, if you know the story of Paul, he eventually got caught up. He went to Jerusalem and was accused of blasphemy, and eventually rested by the Romans.

And he appealed to who? To Caesar, to the seat of the Roman Empire, and eventually made his way in chains up to Rome.

Well, while he was in Rome, he met with some Jewish people, some Jewish people who had heard about this Jesus guy and all the kind of controversy around it, and they wanted to hear from him.

[39 : 54] So, in Acts chapter 28, this is the last chapter. This is the last that we have of the story of Paul and his ministry. So, I'm going to try to skip through, but basically, he's talking to some Jewish people, and we'll start in verse 24.

And some were persuaded by the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved. There was a mix. Some believed, some disbelieved. So, when they did not agree among themselves, they departed after Paul had said one word.

The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers, saying, Go to this people and say, Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive.

For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed. Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.

He quotes that same passage from Isaiah. And then he finishes with this, Therefore let it be known to you, speaking to these Jews, that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it.

[41 : 15] this is something that Paul had said many times over throughout, if you look through the book of Acts. He said, Fine, you won't receive it, God sent me to the Gentiles, they will hear it.

This is the context in which Jesus is teaching these parables, why he's speaking in parables. You see, God had, throughout many, remember we talked about this last week, there were kind of three stages of God trying to reach Israel.

You had God the Father trying to reach Israel through the prophets. In fact, there was that parable that Jesus gave, and I think we read it in Matthew, about the tenants who were left with the vineyard, and then the owner of the vineyard sent messengers to go get fruit.

What did they do with the messengers? He's talking about the prophets. They killed the prophets. They killed the messengers. Then finally, he sent his own son to go get some fruit from this nation.

They kill him too. And so, God has been trying for millennia to turn his people as a whole.

[42 : 44] Individually, many have been faithful in Israel, but as a whole, there's been a rejection, a rebellion against the Lord in Israel for so long.

And so, in this passage, in the last book of Acts, saying fine, okay, we're turning to the Gentiles.

God is turning to the Gentiles. This passage in Isaiah, Paul brings up one more time, and this is in a book that he wrote to the Romans, to the Christians who were in Rome.

Let's look at that. as we finish up, Romans chapter 11. Romans chapter 9 through 11 is this passage in which Paul starts out saying, I grieve so intensely.

In fact, his intensity of his love for the nation of Israel, his own people, is so strong that he says, you know what, I would even, I feel like I would even be willing to cut myself off from God.

[43 : 53] If only the Gentiles would turn to him. My love for my own nation is so intense, but they rejected him.

So in Romans 11, continuing this on, we'll start in verse one. He says, I say then, has God cast away his people, Israel? Certainly not, for I also am an Israelite of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

God has not cast away his people whom he foreknew. Or you do not know what the scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life.

Remember Elijah? He said, all of your people, they've forsaken you. I'm the only one that's faithful. And what does God say? But what does the divine response say to him?

I have reserved for myself 7,000 men who have not bowed the knee to Baal. You're not the only one, Elijah. I know it feels that way. It may seem that way. But there are others who have remained faithful, even though as a nation as a whole, they have rebelled and rejected me.

[45 : 08] He says this, even so then at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. He's saying, there are still just Jewish people, the twelve disciples and many of the other disciples that were faithful toward the Lord.

There's a remnant. We'll skip down to verse 7. What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks, but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded.

The rest were blinded. What was the nation of Israel expecting? God's going to come and he's going to save us from our enemies, from our captors, the Romans, the Babylonians, the Syrians.

He's going to give us a kingdom. We're going to be the people of God on the earth. But that whole plan came with some stipulations.

Well, there's God himself, the Messiah. You must receive him. You need to repent and turn to God, and then he will give you your kingdom. But they didn't want to hear that.

[46 : 16] Many. They didn't want to hear that part. They're willing. They want the kingdom, but they don't want the repentance. They don't want to have to turn to God. And so, you want to be blind?

Then I'll make you blind. You can be blind. That's fine. But the rest were blinded. And here it's quoted again.

Just as it is written, God has given them a spirit of stupor, eyes that they should not see and ears that they should not hear to this very day. So, it's continued on through the ministry of Jesus, through the ministry of Paul.

And ultimately, what we see in this chapter is God finally decides, I'm going to cut off the nation of Israel. As a nation, not individual people. There are some who were faithful.

Of course, anyone who's faithful to the Lord, who trusts in Him, God will have mercy on and put His love on Him. But as a nation, I'm cutting the nation off. They're not my people anymore. I'm going to graft in a new nation.

[47 : 24] In fact, all the rest of the nations of the world, the Gentile people, and they will be my people. I'm going to take to them a message of grace, of faith alone.

In which, if you trust in the blood, the shed blood of Jesus the Christ, you can have life eternal. No law, no keeping of a law, no regulations or rituals that you have to do.

Just trust in Him. There's that, in this passage, you might think, well, God has given them a spirit of stupor. Well, that's not in Isaiah, and that's true.

He actually quotes from two passages. One, like the last part of the sentence is from Isaiah. The first part is actually from somewhere else. It's actually from Isaiah chapter 29, verse 8.

And I'm going to read that real quick. Isaiah 29, verse 8. Don't feel like you have to turn there. I'm just going to read through it. But Isaiah 29, verse 8, says this.

[48 : 33] Again, similar kind of context. God wanting to Israel to turn to Him, but finding resistance. Isaiah 29, verse 8.

It shall even be as when a hungry man dreams. And look, he eats, but he awakes, and his soul is still empty. Have you ever had that? You're dreaming, and you're having this meal, but then you wake up, and you're like, well, I didn't actually eat anything.

Or as when a thirsty man dreams, and look, he drinks, but he awakes, and indeed, he is faint, and his soul still craves. So the multitude of all the nations shall be. Who fight against Mount Zion.

You're going to fight against God? Then my word that I give out to you will be like a man who eats, but is not satisfied. Someone who drinks in a dream, but is still faint.

Pause and wonder. Blind yourselves, and be blind. They are drunk, but not with wine. They stagger, but not with intoxicating drink. For the Lord has poured out on you the spirit of deep sleep, and has closed your eyes, namely, the prophets, and he has covered your heads, namely, the seers.

[49 : 42] God has put on you, you know, he's made you sleepy. So that you can be, like, drowsy and blind, and you cannot see what you ought to see.

But why is it? Is it because these people are trying to find God's truth, and God's hiding it from them? Absolutely not. It's because they're looking for a reason why they shouldn't listen to him.

This is something that happened with Israel, and we remember that this is the context of Israel, this parable of the sower, and Jesus keeping things hidden from Israel.

Israel. But we are not Israel. We are Gentile people, and the rest of the world is the Gentile people. And it makes me think God is not just this way with the Jews, but he's this way with all men.

And for anyone who wants to be blind, God is willing to oblige. If you want to be blind, you can be blind. In Romans chapter 1, and for sake of time, you don't have to turn there, Romans chapter 1, verse 24, Paul talks about the world and the way of the world, the way that the world is.

[51 : 08] The sins of the world, people's rejection of their creator. Romans chapter 1, verse 24. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness in the lusts of their hearts to dishonor their bodies among themselves.

What does it say? He gave them up. You want to be unclean? There's the dirt. There's the mud.

Go play in the dirt. If that's what you want, be unclean. Who exchanged the truth of God for the lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the creator who is blessed forever.

Amen. Verse 26. For this reason, God gave them up. That same phrase. He gave them up to vile passions for even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature.

Likewise, also the men leaving the natural use of the woman burned in their lust for one another. Men with men committing what is shameful and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind to do things which are not fitting.

[52 : 29] You want a mind that is cloudy, that is debased, that is unclear? It's all yours. Go for it. I'll give it to you. And so today we have a message, a message of grace, the message of a gospel.

It's a simple message. It's pretty easy. It's a message of love and forgiveness and grace. But you have to humble yourself and acknowledge the one who gave it.

You have to acknowledge him as Lord. And many are unwilling. But there are other options. There are other altars that we can worship at.

And many have chosen those altars. And God is willing to give us over to those other altars of worship. We can worship at the altar of skepticism.

We can heed the prophets of science who will offer you wisdom both ancient and modern so that you can understand the great depths of the meaninglessness of your life.

[53 : 57] We can worship at the altar of the many sex cults that are out there, dozens of them. Worshiping your own body and making sacrifices to the God of pleasure, usually with the blood of innocent children.

You can worship at the altar of the success cults, pursuing wealth and power at the expense of your eternal soul.

You can worship at the altar of Netflix or cable television, soothing the pains and challenges of life with entertainment to distract you from considering the value and the importance of your eternal soul.

You can worship at the altar of social justice, where you can earn salvation through your good works by virtue signaling, invented moral precepts while living life however you please.

You can be a good person, virtue signaling, with these concepts that you just make up and then you can live life freely however you want.

[55 : 14] There are even religious altars that you can worship at. You can worship at the altar of the sparkle creed. I saw that on YouTube a few weeks ago. The sparkle creed.

Consecrated by the effeminate, limp-wristed, rainbow Jesus. Where love is love. Whatever that means.

And every vile perversion is blessed as holy and celebrated as good. You can worship at the altar of the your best life now Jesus.

Where the message of self-improvement will sufficiently hide away the message of the salvation of your soul from your very eyes. God's willing.

Do you want your eyes darkened? I'll darken them. Here's a church you can go to. They will lead you astray as far as you want to go.

[56 : 20] Do you want your ears made dull? He's willing to oblige. Or you can bow the knee to the God who created you.

You can turn your eyes to the heavens. So the God who created us and humble yourself before him.

And when you do that he's more than willing to open the eyes of the blind to make that which seems murky and cloudy clear and bright.

have your eyes open to the message of eternal life that is so simple and easy that all that is required is to trust in a man who bled and died for your sins.

Instead of trusting in your own goodness you can trust in what he did for you. And that's it. It's a message that Paul calls in 1 Corinthians it's the message of foolishness.

[57 : 39] He said it's the message that is a stumbling block to the Jews and it's foolishness to the Greeks. So some will stumble over Jesus who is the stumbling stone.

Are you willing to open up your eyes if you haven't? And I imagine many of us have to open up your eyes to see to open up your ears to hear that you might believe and have eternal life.

The message is so simple it's so easy to miss when we don't really want the one who gave it. If that's the message that you have not received that you have rejected up to this point God's perfectly willing to open up your eyes if you want them open.

Amen. Let's pray. Father we love you and thank you for the message of grace that you have provided for opening up our eyes to see we pray for anyone here who has not done that as of yet whose eyes are still darkened they might be willing to have their eyes opened that you would make us willing vessels Father to persuade others to open up their eyes that they might see the truth as well.

Thank you for working in us for the salvation that is so simple and easy that we can have eternal life in you by just believing.

[59 : 35] Amen.