

MODERN PARABLES 5

You might be thinking, *What are we doing here? Why do we have movie posters in the church and popcorn in the auditorium? Why are we doing a sermon series on movies as modern parables?*

Jesus regularly taught using parables, presenting stories rather than direct exposition of Scripture, to convey spiritual truth. One day, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Why do you speak to the people in parables?” Jesus replied, “Because the knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them” (Matthew 13:10-11). Jesus used parables so that the hearts of those rejecting God would not be hardened further.

A parable reveals truth to him who desires truth; it conceals truth from him who does not wish to see the truth. Those who are open and sensitive to spiritual truth will be given spiritual insights through parables. Parables, then, present God’s message in a way that requires imaginative discernment. Through a parable, the spiritually and imaginatively discerning will understand some aspect of truth clearly, but the spiritually unimaginative and imperceptive will merely hear a story.

About such spiritually unimaginative and imperceptive people, Jesus says, “In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: “‘You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise, they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them’” (Matthew 13:14-15).

About those who are spiritually imaginative and perceptive, Jesus says, “But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear” (Matthew 13:16). There are spiritual insights offered through these modern parables—movies. The goal of this sermon series is to help sharpen your spiritual imagination and to make you wise to the spiritual truths embedded in entertainment. You might think it irreverent to bring secular cinema into the church, but never forget, we are Christ’s ambassadors to the culture around us, and the Apostle Paul encourages us to become “all things to all people so that by all means possible, we might win some” (1 Corinthians 9:22).

There is no doubt that our world values entertainment. It craves it. And there is no doubt that the entertainment industry takes advantage of spiritually lazy people. Let us be a people who sharpen our spiritual imagination and discernment when experiencing modern parables, not those who check out mentally and spiritually. For the mentally and spiritually checked-out can be influenced away from godly truth—though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand.

We, however, by engaging our sanctified imaginations, will be able to discern clearly some aspect of truth in the movie, which will allow us to connect that movie—that modern parable—with spiritual truth and then invite people to have a conversation about God-stuff.

With your discipleship partner, catch up about the week, pray for and with one another, and consider the following issues.

Goodness/Wickedness

Matthew 7:44-45

I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes the sun to rise on the wicked and the good and sends rain on the wicked and the righteous.

-Jesus calls us to love even our enemies, for God offers grace to the good and wicked alike. Why is it difficult to demonstrate love, kindness, and goodness to certain people or groups of people?

Ephesians 5:8-9

Once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness, and truth).

-We've left wickedness behind. Goodness, righteousness, and truth must guide our lives as we live as the light in the Lord. In a world where hatred, vitriol, and cynicism are so prevalent, how can a foundation of truth lead to goodness in our actions?

Everyone seems to agree that goodness exists. Not everyone agrees on all the specifics, but the entire concept of morality seems to be based on doing good. A very important question, then, is *What is the true source of morality?*

Consider the following argument:

1. Universal morality exists.

-Everyone generally knows that certain things are good and certain things are wicked.

2. Universal morality can only come from an infinite and personal source.

-‘Universal’ means applicable to everyone. Morality is a prescription for behavior. A prescription for behavior must come from a source that can think and decide things. The only options for the source of universal morality are:

Infinite/Personal (God)	Infinite/Impersonal (gravity/nature, etc.)
Finite/Personal (people/society)	Finite/Impersonal (fire/electricity, etc.)

-Something is infinite if it is unlimited. Something is finite if it is limited. Something is personal if it can think and decide. Something is impersonal if it cannot think or decide.

3. The only infinite and personal one is God.

4. Therefore, only God (Yahweh) is the source of universal morality.

What happens if an individual or a group of people decide what is good/wicked and another person or group of people decides otherwise? Popular opinion does not make something true, just preferred. Can you think of examples where a popular opinion was still wicked?

Psalms 34:8; 100:5; 107:1; 136:1; 145:9, etc. declare that God is good. How does life improve if His truth and goodness direct our lives?