



“Symphony of Similitudes”

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Preaching the Parables: Cycle B, p. 11

Many people have difficulty fully understanding an abstract truth or principle unless they are helped to see the truth as well as hear it. It is the preacher’s task to put eyes into the ears of his audience so that they can say, “Now we see what you mean.” To make the truth visible to all, we may use various literary devices called “similitudes.” The parable is one essential instrument in the symphony of similitudes:

1. **SIMILE.** A simile is the simplest form of similitude. It is a figure of speech which compares two unlike things in a phrase often introduced by “like” or “as.”
2. **ANALOGY.** In this case two or more things have a resemblance to each other.
3. **METAPHOR.** A word or phrase denoting one kind of objective or idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness between them. A metaphor is an extended simile.
4. **ALLEGORY.** A allegory is a way of speaking figuratively. An allegory is a symbolic representation of truth – of an idea or moral or religious principle.
5. **PARABLE.** A parable is an extended metaphor in the form of a story.

A parable is a major similitude which explains or describes some spiritual truth or principle. The Hebrew word for “parable” is “mashal,” meaning “be like.” The corresponding Greek word “parabole,” meaning the placing of one thing alongside another for comparison so that a parable is a kind of parallelism. A common contemporary definition of a parable says that it is an “earthy story with a heavenly meaning.”