

Old Testament: Genesis 11:1-4 & 8-9

New Testament: Matthew 13:1-9

Please pray with me. And now Lord God may the words of my mouth, and the meditations of all our hearts, be pleasing and acceptable in Thy sight our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

What if parables, the primary teaching format that Jesus used, have always been used by God? What if so many of the oral stories that the Hebrew people passed along from generation to generation, long before they were written down in the Bible, were also parables? Before we can attempt to address these questions we must first answer the question: what, exactly, even is a parable? According to “A Not-So-Stuff Dictionary of Biblical Terms”, a parable is “a story with not only a point, but a skewer”. (Read extended quote: third and fourth paragraph). Let the hot air out and the Holy Spirit’s healing breath in. All of us struggle with the concept of over-inflating our self-importance; the proverbial hot air. All of us struggle with the concept of thinking or believing that some things cannot happen without us and our singular effort or efforts. And it’s a fine line to draw. We are, each one of us, uniquely important, vital even, to the body of Christ. Paul’s analogy of the hand not being able to say to the foot, “Ew! You stink! Get out of here”, is what I have in mind here. At the same time, each one of us is not *more* important, *more* vital, to the body of Christ. The proverbial “hot air” is when we fall prey to the idea that our contribution is somehow more critical than someone else’s. This “hot air” is the work of the Enemy. The Enemy, according to Paul and centuries of theological thought and doctrine, is subtle. The Enemy is not so brazen and overt as Hollywood horror depictions of possessions would lead us to believe. No. The Enemy twists inherently good things, like each one of us being vital, in our role, to the good functioning of the body, into corrupted versions of the good thing like over-inflating our importance *at the expense of others*. When this happens, when the Enemy plays on our ego and we over emphasize ourselves and our roles at the expense of others, we sometimes need a skewer to get the air out of the proverbial balloon.

Seeing as this is the purpose of parables, then it is completely reasonable, and I’ll say better, to read the story of the Tower of Babel not as a historical event, but as a parable in which we are being reminded to humble ourselves. I think we will all agree that the ability to communicate clearly is vital to the proper, effective functioning of any body or organism. Our central nervous system ensures that every part of our body is communicating with the other parts. Good CEO’s ensure that every part of their corporate body is communicating with the other parts so that they can continue to excel. Church boards communicate well so that the whole body can move forward, together, in the same direction. Communication is a good thing. One of the most

important ways we communicate is verbally; like I'm doing now. Verbal communication is a good thing. But all of us have seen firsthand, read in our history books, how a good thing, like verbal communication, can be twisted and manipulated by the Enemy. Let's re-read verse 4 to refresh ourselves as to *why* the people were going to build this tower. (Re-read verse 4). To stroke their egos. To make a name for themselves. They wanted more proverbial "hot air". Not less. The people needed to be humbled.

God did not disperse the people or confuse our languages as a punishment, but as a consequence. This comes back to what we were starting to explore last week. The justice of God functioning within the context of love. Humility is required for love to function properly. Look at what the Triune Godhead did to fully express God's love for all of God's good creation.