

Luke 8:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when much people were gathered together, and were come to him out of every city, he spake by a parable:

Analysis

And when much people were gathered together, and were come to him out of every city, he spake by a parable—The Greek *ochlou pollou* (ὄχλου πολλοῦ, "great crowd") emphasizes the massive audience, while *kata polin* (κατὰ πόλιν, "according to city" or "from each city") indicates representatives from multiple municipalities converged. This diverse, large assembly prompted Jesus to shift teaching methods. The phrase *eipen dia parabolēs* (εἶπεν διὰ παραβολῆς, "spoke through a parable") introduces Jesus' characteristic pedagogical tool.

The term *parabolē* (παραβολή) literally means "a throwing alongside," from *para* (beside) and *ballō* (to throw)—placing one thing beside another for comparison. Parables simultaneously reveal truth to receptive hearers and conceal it from hardened hearts (v. 10). Jesus' use of parables fulfilled prophetic pattern (Psalm 78:2, quoted in Matthew 13:35) and represented wisdom teaching common in Jewish tradition (Proverbs, rabbinic *mashal*). The shift to parabolic teaching at this point in Luke's narrative signals increasing opposition and the need to distinguish genuine disciples from mere curiosity-seekers.

Historical Context

First-century Palestinian culture was largely agrarian, making agricultural parables immediately accessible. Open-air teaching to large crowds was common practice for popular rabbis and philosophers. The mention of crowds from every city indicates Jesus' fame had spread throughout Galilee, likely following the

miracles and exorcisms of chapters 4-7. Outdoor acoustics and the custom of sitting while teaching (rabbinic practice) allowed large groups to hear. Jewish wisdom literature extensively used parables and metaphorical teaching (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, prophetic literature). Jesus' parables, however, were unique in their eschatological urgency—announcing the kingdom's arrival rather than merely communicating timeless wisdom. The parable method allowed Jesus to challenge listeners without direct confrontation, inviting reflection rather than provoking immediate hostility from religious authorities.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. Why does Jesus choose parabolic teaching when crowds are largest, and what does this reveal about the relationship between popularity and spiritual receptivity?
2. How does the parable form's dual function—revealing truth to some while concealing it from others—challenge modern assumptions about making the gospel as clear and accessible as possible?
3. What does the gathering of crowds from multiple cities indicate about the hunger for spiritual truth, and how should this inform contemporary evangelistic strategy?

Interlinear Text

Συνιόντος δὲ ὄχλου πολλοῦ καὶ τῶν κατὰ⁶
were gathered together **And** **people** **when much** **and** **G3588** **out of every**
G4896 G1161 G3793 G4183 G2532 G2596

πόλιν ἐπιπορευομένων πρὸς αὐτὸν εἶπεν διὰ
city **were come** **to** **him** **he spake** **by**
G4172 G1975 G4314 G846 G2036 G1223

παραβολῆς·
a parable
G3850

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