

Jesus liked stories. He remembered the stories Mary and Joseph told him when he was a child. Some of the stories were about people like Abraham and Sarah, Rebecca and Isaac, Moses and Miriam.

Sometimes Joseph and Mary made up stories. Made-up stories are fun.

When Mary and Joseph wanted Jesus to understand something, they made up a story. Stories that explain things are called parables. Jesus liked parables.

Jesus made up stories too. Sometimes he made up stories just for fun. Sometimes he made up parables so people would understand about God's love. Those stories helped people grow in God's way.

People liked those parables. "We can understand Jesus because he explains things with stories," they said.

Here are some of the parables Jesus told.

Stories about God's Shalom

Matthew 13:3-12, 18-23, 31-33, 44

Mark 4:3-9, 13-20, 30-32

Luke 8:5-15

The farmer went out to sow some seeds. He wanted to grow some grain to make bread. "I'm going to plant lots of seeds everywhere," said the farmer.

The farmer put a bunch of seeds where people walked. But the ground was too hard. Then birds came and ate the seeds. "Well, that didn't work," said the farmer.

So the farmer put a bunch of seeds in rocky places. There was hardly any soil. At first the seeds grew very fast. Then they died, because there was no soil for the roots to grow into.

"Well, that didn't work," said the farmer.

So the farmer put seeds among the weeds. The seeds started to grow. But the weeds



grew faster and killed the grain seeds.

“Well, that didn’t work,” said the farmer.

Then the farmer put seeds on good soil. The soil was nice and soft. There was lots of water. Soon the seeds grew into good strong plants.

“Well, that really worked,” said the farmer. “Now I’ll have lots of grain to eat.”

When Jesus told the story, his friends looked very puzzled.

“We don’t know what the story means,” they said. So Jesus told them.

“God is like that farmer,” said Jesus. “God plants lots of love in our hearts. But somebody has hurt us and the love doesn’t grow.

“Or sometimes we are very happy when we feel God’s love. We sing and dance. But later, we forget about it.

“Or sometimes we’re too busy. Or we think about too many other things. We don’t have time for God’s love.

“Sometimes we let God’s love really grow inside us. When that happens, we love other people. Then they know about God’s love too.”



Shalom is a Hebrew word. It means something like “peace” but it means more than that. Jesus told many parables to help us understand Shalom. Maybe he was laughing a little when he told this one.

“God’s Shalom is like a mustard seed,” Jesus said as he held the tiny seed in his hand. “See how tiny it is?”

“You think a mustard seed can only grow into a small plant? Well, pretend that it can grow big as a tree. Pretend that birds will come and make nests in its branches.”

Everyone laughed. “A mustard plant as big as a tree?”

“Yes,” Jesus laughed too. “God’s Shalom is like that.”



Then Jesus told an even funnier story.

“You know the yeast people use to make bread? You can’t see how the yeast works. It just bubbles around inside the bread.

“Well suppose a woman took a tiny bit of yeast. Suppose she mixed it with a lot of flour and water. The yeast would work inside the dough. After a while she would have enough bread to feed a hundred people!”



“You mean one tiny bit of yeast could make all that flour into bread?” someone asked.

“That’s right,” Jesus smiled. “God’s Shalom is like that. You can’t see it working. But it’s there, all the time, working in you and working in me.”

“Here is another way to think about God’s Shalom,” said Jesus.

“God’s Shalom is like a treasure hidden in a field. If you knew about that treasure, you would go and sell all the things you had. Then you would take the money and buy the whole field. You would want the treasure to be yours.”

“Should we want God’s Shalom that much?” the people asked.

“Yes,” said Jesus. “That much!”

