

THE PARABLES OF JESUS

Intro to Parables

The Parables of Jesus

- **Things we will be discussing in this class**
 - List of reasons why teaching with parables was important for Jesus
 - Define what a parable consists of
 - Identify and explain the barriers that exist between reading and understanding a parable of Jesus

The Parables of Jesus

- Jesus is primarily known for two things:
 - His death on the cross and subsequent resurrection and for being an astonishing teacher
 - About a 1/3 of Jesus' teachings appear in the form of parables and since they are the primary form with which he chose to reveal something of the character of God, human beings and the coming kingdom of God, it is safe to say that no one can understand the core of what Jesus believed about these things without first understanding what he spoke in parables.

The Parables of Jesus

- **Why were the parables only listed in the first 3 Gospels?**
 - Matthew - audience were the Jewish
 - Mark - the Romans
 - Luke - the Greeks
 - John - wrote to an audience of other Christians

The Parables of Jesus

- **Why was teaching with parables important for Jesus?**
 - Jesus' target audiences were ordinary people who lived in a very oral culture. Parables allowed Jesus to capture his audience's imagination.
 - Parables allowed Jesus to teach central spiritual lessons in a way His disciples could easily remember.

The Parables of Jesus

- **What parables are personally meaningful to you?**
- **Why is the parable so meaningful to you?**
- **How would you define what a parable is?**
- **Are parables always stories? Are all stories parables?**
- **What items, if any will always be found in a parable?**

The Parables of Jesus

- Our English word “parable” comes from the Greek word 3850 that puts together two words: 3844 Para (Alongside) and 906 Bole or ballo (to throw).
- In the Greek Old Testament the word was used to translate the Hebrew word “Mashal” which pointed to any saying, pun, riddle, allegory, or proverb.
- A ‘parable’, therefore, is basically a figurative saying or story that makes a comparison by laying side by side one truth that is easily seen and understood with a reality that is not obvious.
- Parables primarily make one or a few major points. A person reading the parable should keep their focus on the major point or points. They should avoid treating minor details of a parable as allegories in order to prove doctrine that wasn’t Jesus intention to teach.

The Parables of Jesus

- Mark 4:10-12 - “When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. He told them, “**The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables so that, “they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven.”**”
- **Did Jesus intend everybody to readily understand his parables?**
 - No. He intended that those with faith would hear the message of the parables with its life-transforming effect.

The Parables of Jesus

- While almost anybody can simply pick up a New Testament and read one of Jesus' parables, there are several things that may prevent them from understanding the message.
- **What might stand in the way of a person's understanding of what Jesus was trying to say in one of his parables?**
 - Barriers such as... cultural distance (use of wineskins; dangers of the Jericho road)
 - Seeing how a parable's message fits into Jesus' ministry or
Seeing how a Gospel writer utilizes a parable for his intentions
 - Moral distance: we cannot truly understand if we are in defiance of God's will.

The Parables of Jesus

- WEEKLY CHALLENGE
 - Pray this week for the Holy Spirit's discernment and leading as we study these parables
 - Find an everyday item which if used in one setting it would have very little effect, but when used in an appropriate setting its strength is seen...(ex. Bleach, oil, air conditioning unit...) Be prepared next week to tell what item you found.

THE PARABLES OF JESUS

The Gospel Seed

The Gospel Seed

- **What are some everyday items around the house that when used in some contexts very little occurs but when used in the right context is very effective?**
- Objectives
 - Identify the elements of the setting and the metaphors of the parables that are significant to interpret
 - Identify some interpretations that are not conveyed by the parables
 - Identify the major message of the parables
 - See the different ways the parables are told in the Synoptic.

Parable of the Sower

- Mark 4:1-9 - “**1** Again Jesus began to teach by the lake.^s The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water’s edge. **2** He taught them many things by parables,^t and in his teaching said: **3** “Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed.^u **4** As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. **5** Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. **6** But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. **7** Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. **8** Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times.” **9** “Then Jesus said whoever has ears let them hear.”

Parable of the Sower

- **Who is Jesus talking to?**
 - Crowds
- **Who is the Sower?**
 - Jesus, therefore this parable is primarily about explaining some misunderstanding of Jesus' activity
- **What is the seed?**
 - God's word of the coming kingdom
- **What is the sowing?**
 - The proclamation of the coming kingdom through Jesus' ministry

Parable of the Sower

- | • Seed fell among | Result | Spiritual Explanation |
|--------------------------|------------------------|--|
| • Wayside | Birds ate it | Unreceptive people |
| • Stony Places | Plants became scorched | People Who lose faith during persecution |
| • Thorns | Plants were choked | People distracted by with wealth |
| • Good Ground. | Crops multiplied | Receptive people |

Parable of the Sower

- **What points have you heard made by using this parable that you believe were not being conveyed by it?**
- Some people are either born with the ability to receive the word while others are not
- Only a ___ of those people who hear the word will respond
- The word of God received by a person of genuine faith produces miraculous growth
- The word of God should be spread gently

Parable of the Sower

- The major messages of this parable
 - The ministry of Jesus should not be considered ineffective simply because it is not accepted by some; rather its power is demonstrated in the lives of those who do receive it
 - Those who are not citizens of the kingdom did not receive the word either because of (1) Satanic involvement in the lives of some, (2) unwillingness to pay the cost in suffering or (3) distraction with material gains.
 - Citizens of the kingdom have the word of God deeply planted into their internal spirit and produce righteousness in their lives.
- **Does the unlikelihood of locating good soil mean that we should give up and not sow at all?**

Parable of the Sower

- Matthew 13:18-23 - “¹⁸“Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: ¹⁹When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. ²⁰The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. ²¹But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. ²²The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. ²³But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”

Parable of the Sower

- Luke 8:11-15 -“¹¹“This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God. ¹²Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. ¹³Those on the rocky ground are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away. ¹⁴The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life’s worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. ¹⁵But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.

Parable of the Sower

- **What things strike you as different in Matthew and Luke's retelling of the same parable?**
- In Mark and Luke the comparison is between people and terrain while in Matthew it is between a person and a seed
- Matthew emphasizes that the second type of person receives the word with joy before falling away

Parable of the Mustard Seed

- Mark 4:30-32 - “³⁰Again he said, “What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? ³¹It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. ³²Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade.”
- Matthew 13:31-32 - “³¹He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. ³²Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.”

Parable of the Mustard Seed

- **What is the mustard seed?**

- It could be used a reference to Christianity
- Micah 5:2 - “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.”
 - In this parable we also see a reflection of our Savior’s choice of entry into the world.

- **What becomes of the little planted mustard seed? What becomes of the resurrected Christ?**

- Sometimes we deem certain individuals very unlikely to respond to the gospel and then they surprise us and obey it and become the godliest of brethren. **What does this prove?**

Parable of the Mustard Seed

- Luke 7:36-47
- We can see this type of faith by the sinful woman. Her faith was perceived to be little but she showed great faith in what she did for Jesus.

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

- 1 John 2:12-14 - “I write to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name. I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, dear children, because you have known the Father. I write to you, fathers because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.”
- The gradual progression of the seed (blade, head, full grain) is a comparable doctrine to the apostle’s in 1 John 2:12-14. **What three stages of a man’s spiritual growth are taught there?**
 - Children who experienced forgiveness through Christ
 - Young Men had victory over satan again and again
 - Older men (Fathers) were mature in the faith and had a long standing relationship with Christ.

The Gospel Seed

- WEEKLY CHALLENGE/RECAP
 - Based on these parables, **what do you think Jesus would want you to remember as you evangelize others?**
 - Reflect upon the time you believed in God's word in your life. Next week, be prepared to share some examples of "fruit" that has been produced in your life since then.

THE PARABLES OF JESUS

Humility

Parable of the Prodigal Son

- Reflect upon the time you believed in God's word in your life. Next week, be prepared to share some examples of "fruit" that has been produced in your life since then.
- **Who would like to share what "fruits" they have observed being produced in their life since they accepted God's word?**

Prodigal Son

- Imagine a company where there was an older overachiever and a younger failed opportunist who gets back into the good favor of the boss. The older overachiever is a loyal company worker who believes that everybody should be self-sacrificing, cautious, and perform at the highest standard possible. The younger opportunist believes that in order to obtain personal goals one must take risks and perform with creativity, even if some professional standards are overlooked. Imagine that on one occasion the younger opportunist took a risk on a creative project that cost the company a loss of profit and brought about public humiliation. The younger employee is not fired but is kept on and put on a project with the older more cautious employee. What would you imagine these two workers' relationship to be like?

Prodigal Son

- Objectives for this parable
 - Identify three historical-cultural questions that should be asked of this parable
 - Identify the primary lessons conveyed allegorically by the main characters.
 - Determine contemporary applications for the parable of the prodigal son

Prodigal Son

- Luke 15:11-20 - “¹¹Jesus continued: “There was a man who had two sons. ¹²The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them. ¹³“Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. ¹⁴After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. ¹⁷“When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! ¹⁸I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.’ ²⁰So he got up and went to his father. “But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

Prodigal Son

- Luke 15:21-32 - ²¹“The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ ²²“But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate. ²⁵“Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ²⁷‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’ ²⁸“The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. ²⁹But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. ³⁰But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’ ³¹“‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. ³²But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’”

Prodigal Son

- **What things would someone need to know to hear this story like a 1st century Jew?**
 - Any surprising unrealistic detail
 - Any issue of shame or honor
 - The allegorical meaning behind the main characters
- Allegory - a story where the characters, objects and actions have to be "decoded" for they symbolize a different reality

Prodigal Son

- **Who do the main characters symbolize?**
 - Some Interpretations of Patristic Writers:
The Father = God Prodigal Son = Sinners
Older Son = Pharisees
- **What knowledge about God and moral lessons are conveyed in this parable? (Contemporary Thoughts)**
 - Sinners always have the opportunity to return to God and find forgiveness.
 - God offers full and complete forgiveness to those that will accept it
 - God's people should rejoice at the extent to which God offers grace to the undeserving.

Prodigal Son

- **Who was Jesus primarily criticizing?**
 - Pharisees
- **Why was he criticizing the Pharisees?**
 - Because they complained that Jesus was eating and socializing with sinners.
- Luke 15:1 - “Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus.”
 - Luke does not mean simply non-Pharisees or less than scrupulous Jews. Rather, he meant those whom Jewish society in general saw as blatantly disobedient to law and dismissive of distinctive Jewish practices.

Prodigal Son

- **Who might Luke have thought would need this lesson during his time?**
 - Pharisaic Christians or those indignant about accepting less stringently observant Jews into the Christian community
- **To whom should this parable be directed today?**
 - *Christians who think they have committed a sin God will not forgive.* Some people will turn their backs on Christ because they think their sin is too monstrous for God to forgive (i.e. abortion, child abuse, pornography, even murder)
 - *Christians who struggle to believe that God has really forgiven them.* Some people do not live each day with the joy and confidence that God has forgiven them. Instead they are overwhelmed with guilt and discouragement
 - *Christians who have shown consistent religious dedication and personal self-sacrifice but are displeased to see other Christians cheerfully forgiving those who were once unscrupulous but now repentant.* Some people are agitated when Christians are very receptive to former prisoners, addicts, the homeless or social outcasts

Parable of the Lost Sheep and Lost Coin

- Luke 15:4-7 - “⁴“Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? ⁵And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders ⁶and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ ⁷I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.”
- Luke 15:8-10 - “⁸“Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins^a and loses one. Doesn’t she light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? ⁹And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.’ ¹⁰In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

Parable of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin

- **What pieces of these parable should be allegorically interpreted?**
- **WEEKLY CHALLENGE**
- Find someone who was far from God for some time but then return repentantly to him. Communicate to that person how thrilled you are to have them as a brother or sister and how grateful you are for God's extravagant grace in both your lives.
- **NEXT WEEK PARABLE OF THE TALENTS**
Matthew 25:14-30

THE PARABLES OF JESUS

Parable of the Talents

Parable of the Talents

- Objectives for this class
 - Describe important background information that will improve the accuracy of understanding who the main characters and their actions.
 - Identify what issues a 1st century Jewish audience would focus on after hearing the parable of the Talents
 - Identify the major lessons that are conveyed allegorically by the main characters
 - Make applications of the major lessons to contemporary situations.

Parable of the Talents

- Last Week Weekly Challenge
 - Who would like to share their experience of telling a recently returned brother or sister in Christ how grateful to God you are for their return to God and for God's grace in their lives?
 - **When the Lord returns, what kind of questions do you think he will ask of you?**

Parable of the Talents

- Matthew 25:14-20 - “¹⁴“Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. ¹⁵To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag,^a each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. ¹⁶The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. ¹⁷So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. ¹⁸But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money. ¹⁹“After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. ²⁰The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.’”

Parable of the Talents

- Matthew 25:21-30 - “²¹“His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’ ²²“The man with two bags of gold also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two bags of gold; see, I have gained two more.’ ²³“His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’ ²⁴“Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. ²⁵So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’ ²⁶“His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? ²⁷Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. ²⁸““So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. ²⁹For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. ³⁰And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

Parable of the Talents

- Parable of Talents is also known as the Parable of the bag of golds
- Very similar to another parable in the Gospel of Luke the parable of the pounds in Luke 19:12-27
- This parable belongs to “The Eschatological Discourse”
 - Jesus’ teaching here refers to events at the close of this age.
 - The phrase “it will be like” (v.14) links this parable with the preceding one (Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids).
 - The subject that the parable illustrates is the kingdom of heaven. So in this parable the kingdom of heaven is being compared to the return of a master who has entrusted his money to three servants.
-

Parable of the Talents

- Each servant is entrusted with a “talent”.
 - This word can refer to a designation of weight equaling roughly 94 pounds
 - It is used here for a monetary unit that was nearly 6,000 denarii.
 - Each talent is worth nearly 20 hearts of labor by a common worker.

Parable of the Talents

- **What did the first two servants actually do with their talents?**
 - Used their talents to engage some type of business
 - The phrase “put his money to work” does not mean they just invested it in the bank to gain interest.
 - This is what the foolish servant could have done in the least.
 - We are to imagine that some kind of business activity began and carried on for a long time.

Parable of the Talents

- **What rationale did the third servant give to the master for burying his money?**
 - He was afraid because he knew his master was a ‘hard’ man.
 - The third servant is condemned and told that what he knew about the master should have motivated him in the opposite direction.
 - He is therefore condemned by his own words. His talent is then taken from him and given to the first servant who has ten talents.

Parable of the Talents

- “For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away” (v.29)
- This is similar to the ending of Parable of the Pounds - Luke 19:26
- **What lesson does this saying basically convey?**
 - There is a promise and a warning
 - The promise is that God will give more to those who have what he has already given them.
 - The warning is that those who do not have what he gave them, what they have will be taken away.
- **How does this saying stand in tension with what happens in the parable?**
 - The saying promises more if you still have what was given. But the third servant is punished for having intact what was given to him.
 - This might be indicate, as some conclude, that this saying of Jesus was attached later to the parable because it shares the theme of receiving and taking away.

Parable of the Talents

- Jewish Perspective
- **Are there any unrealistic details in this story?**
 - The man going on a journey is unrealistically wealthy when one considers that a talent is roughly equivalent to what a day laborer could earn after working for 20 years.
 - In today's terms it would be close to \$200,000. The man gave to his servants somewhere near to a half a million dollars!
 - Jesus often used hyperbole or exaggeration in order to catch his audience's attention.
- **How would 1st century Jews perceive the man who buried his talent? Wise or Foolish?**
 - Some Jews would have thought that he did the cautious and responsible thing by not risking the man's money to loss. Burying money was a common way in ancient times to secure the safe keeping of one's treasures.
 - Since the master did not instruct them to invest his money, the servant may have thought that his only obligation was to keep in full what was given to him.

Parable of the Talents

- **Who are the main characters in the story?**
 - Man on a journey, the first two servants, and the third servant
- **Who do these main characters symbolize?**
 - The man on the journey symbolize God (though some Patristic writers allegorized it as the postponement of Christ's return)
 - The servants symbolize either disciples generally or church leaders specifically (since several of Jesus' servant parables were directed to his apostles this suggests a connection between the work entrusted to the servants and the work Jesus would be entrusting to the church's first leaders)
- **What does the talent symbolize?**
 - While it is often assumed that the money symbolizes personal gifts and talents (we actually got our English word talent from this parable), the money probably more accurately symbolizes the acts of compassion that the disciples are to increase. God was gracious in giving compassion to them, so they are in turn to be increasingly compassionate to others

Parable of the Talents

- **What are the primary lessons conveyed by the actions of the main characters?**
 - There are three main lessons:
 - (1) God entrusts to his people (or church leaders) the responsibility of increasing acts of compassion and kindness to those in need.
 - (2) Those who act faithfully with opportunities to show the compassion God has given to them and act according to their knowledge of his character will be commended and rewarded on the day of the Lord.
 - (3) Disciples who act in fear of God, ignore his revealed character, and do not increase acts of compassion will be condemned.

Parable of the Talents

- **Which of these two situations is this parable more likely addressing?**
- **Situation 1:** A Christian woman refuses to check on the condition of a sick female neighbor who is confined to bed because she does not want to get tied down with an on going commitment to her.
- **Situation 2:** A Christian with a gifted voice refuses to lead singing in worship because they do not want to be burdened regularly with that job
 - It is more likely that this parable is directed towards situation 1

Parable of the Talents

- **Challenge: List 5 things that would be your “talents” that need to grow before God’s day of judgement comes.**
 - This list should preferably include areas of righteousness not gifts or talents.
- **Pick one item on your list and seek to increase it this week.**
- **NEXT WEEK: The Good Samaritan Luke 10:25-37**

PARABLES OF JESUS

The Good Samaritan

The Good Samaritan

- Last week's challenge..
- **Pick one item on your list and seek to increase it this week**
- **Have you ever heard someone use the phrase out of anger "if you were dying on the side of the road I wouldn't help you!"**
- **What factors often influence to whom we chose not to be compassionate?**
 - Some examples could be such things as race, religion, social status, or even gender.

The Good Samaritan

- Luke 10:25-37 - “²⁵On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” ²⁶“What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?” ²⁷He answered, ““Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’^[a]; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” ²⁸“You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.” ²⁹But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”” ³⁰In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³²So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵The next day he took out two denarii^[c] and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’” ³⁶“Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” ³⁷The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.””

The Good Samaritan

- Many scholars label this parable and three others in Luke [the Rich Fool (12:16-21); Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19-31); and the Pharisee and Tax Collector (18:9-14)] as "example narratives". Rather than making a comparison between what is told in the story and some other reality, they set out a specific example for Jesus' disciples to follow or avoid.
- **To whom and why does Jesus offer this parable?**
 - To a lawyer (one trained in interpreting and teaching the law of Moses and Jewish traditions) who was seeking to "justify" himself (because he believed he was obeying this command by loving other Jews) when he asked Jesus, "Who is my neighbor?"

The Good Samaritan

- **Why would the lawyer think the word "neighbor" needed explained?**
- Leviticus 19:18 - “¹⁸Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.”
- It is that Israelites love their neighbors but then suggests that by "neighbors" God means other Israelites. The lawyer wants to be reassured that by loving those he calls neighbor (other Jews) that he is obeying the commandment.
- Jews who heard this story would know that the road from Jerusalem (at 2,700 feet upon sea level) that went down to Jericho (at 820 feet below sea level and only 17 miles away) was known to be dangerous and vulnerable to thieves.

The Good Samaritan

- **Most people know what a priest is, but what is a Levite?**
 - Levite (men from the tribe of Levi) assisted priests (men who also came from the tribe of Levi but were descendants of Aaron as well) with the sacrifices by preparing the animals and grains to be sacrificed.
- **Who are the Samaritans?**
 - These people are the descendants of the intermarriage between the tribes of the Northern Kingdom (Samaria) and the immigrants who were brought there by the Assyrians who had conquered it in 722 B.C. Jews held them in contempt (even equated with Gentiles) because in their eyes they had turned their backs on traditional customs and observances of the law.
 - The Samaritans developed their own Pentateuch (First 5 books of the Bible) and for a while had their own temple on Mt. Gerizim. Today, there still exists about 500-600 Samaritans.

The Good Samaritan

- Thoughts on this parable from 1st century Jews
- **Are there any startling or ironic details in this story?**
 - First, it may have been startling to some Jews that religious figures like a common Levite and priest would be so callous as to bypass a man in need. Then again it may not be so startling to some Jews that members of the priesthood would act this way because they thought that the priesthood was corrupt.
 - Second, the hero of the story is a Samaritan rather than a Jew. Upon an initial hearing of the parable, a Jewish audience may have expected that after two supposed pious leaders refuse to do the right thing that a Jew who was not a significant religious figure would come and do the right thing.
 - Third, it is ironic that the unclean Samaritan should use oil and wine to help heal the man because oil and wine were used frequently in Temple sacrifices. Priests and Levites would use them to offer up gifts to God in the sacrifices but they would not use them to offer up a gift to God in the form of an act of compassion

The Good Samaritan

- **Who in the story acts shamefully?**

- Obviously the thieves do, but central to the story is the fact that the priest and the Levite who were returning from their shift of duty at the temple (because they are going "down" from Jerusalem rather than going "up" to it) should ignore the injured man. If the priest or Levite were to assist him, they would have to take the risk that he is a Jew or he appeared to be "half-dead".

- **Did Jesus answer the lawyer's question?**

- Not really. While the lawyer wanted a definition for "neighbor" so as to determine the extent of his legal obligations, Jesus address a new question, "Which person was a neighbor to the man?" The question Jesus thought the lawyer should really be asking is not "Who do I not have to love?" but "How can I love anybody and so define myself as a neighbor?"

The Good Samaritan

- **Who are the main characters in this lesson?**
 - The victim, priest, Levite and Samaritan
- **What are the primary lessons conveyed by the actions of the main characters?**
 - (1) Citizens of the kingdom know that to obey God they must show compassion to others regardless of any religious or social differences
 - (2) Foreigners to the kingdom think that they can still obey God's will by excusing their lack of compassion to those in need based on a slanted interpretation of scripture
 - (3) Even one's enemy is one's neighbor.

The Good Samaritan

- **If Jesus' parable were retold today, who would replace the priest, Levite and Samaritan?**
- **Who can give an example where a person's sense of compassion might collide with their sense of justice? In other words, are there situations where it might seem that the just thing to do is to show no compassion?**
- **WEEKLY CHALLENGE**
- List 3 types of people you find it difficult to have compassion for...
- Think of one person from that list and see if you can find a way to meet a physical need for that person within the next 2 weeks.

PARABLES OF JESUS

Foolish Builder and Wise King

Foolish Builder and Wise King

- **Weekly Challenge**
- **Who would like to tell about their experience of showing compassion to someone who is either generally dismissed by society or yourself?**

Foolish Builder and Wise King

- Luke 14:28-33 - ²⁸ “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won’t you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? ²⁹ For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, ³⁰ saying, ‘This person began to build and wasn’t able to finish.’ ³¹ “Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won’t he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? ³² If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. ³³ In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.

Foolish Builder and Wise King

- Background Information for Understanding...
- Parable of the Foolish Builder
 - Greek word tower means “purgos”
 - This can point to either a circular or square structure that was erected during this time to be used either for military purposes or agricultural ones.
 - Farmers used these structures for several purposes: to store farming equipment or produce; to house or guard to protect crops from thieves or animals; to provide lodging.
 - The word “tower” is appropriate but we must see the multiple uses of this structure. Also since the builder had to figure out his costs this structure then would not be a small one.

Foolish Builder and Wise King

- Background Information for Parable of the wise king...
 - Like some parables, this scenario Jesus states is not unrealistic. The idea of a king with 10k men or 20k may be using high numbers, but they are not unimaginable.
 - The king cannot simply call it quits and go home but must find terms of peace with the one who comes with 20k men.
 - Greek word behind “ridicule” is “empaizo” which does not mean a simple light-hearted tease but a cruel derision.

Foolish Builder and Wise King

- **To what issue in these stories would a Jewish audience be very sensitive?**
 - The builder only lays a foundation and then has to stop so that what is put up so far looks foolish to others.
 - The wise king avoids a foolish war and even death when it is clear that his army is out-numbered.

Foolish Builder and Wise King

- **Towards whom are these two parables primarily directed?**

- It is directed towards half-hearted disciples. Jesus' (and Luke's) intention is not so much to warn people about becoming disciples as it is to warn disciples not to give up or they will be shamed before God.

- **Do you think that most Christians know what kind of sacrifices they will have to make as disciples of Jesus?**

- It is unlikely that most Christians know the full extent of the sacrifices they will make. This parable is not asking for this. Jesus is only pointing out that if it is wise to give careful thought before engaging in some earthly enterprise, it is more significant that they do so when deciding to become a disciple.

- **What "costs" do you think would have discouraged a disciple of Jesus in the first century from staying committed to following Jesus?**

- Here are some examples: Some disciples would have been discouraged at the thought of possibly being rejected by their Jewish family and friends. Other disciples would have been discouraged at the accusation of Gentiles that they were a threat to the morals of society.

Foolish Builder and Wise King

- **What "costs" do you think discourages disciples of Jesus today from staying committed to discipleship?**
 - Here are two: Some disciples in Third World countries are discouraged by violent persecution of Christians. Some disciples in this country are discouraged because they are portrayed through the media as gullible, unintelligent or intolerant
- **What would these parables suggest we do as we teach others to become a Christian?**
 - We should teach them to think realistically about the sacrifices God will and may expect of them.

- **Is it worth it? Cost of being a disciple**

- 2 Timothy 3:12 - “¹²In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,”

- The only way to avoid paying the price of persecution is to reject Jesus or become a Christian hypocrite. Either way, one’s soul is as good as lost.

- 2 Corinthians 4:16-17 - “¹⁶Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. ¹⁷For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.”

- Paul claimed that paying this price was quite little in comparison with his hope. Paul counted the cost of discipleship and measured it by relative time. Paying the price on earth for a little while was worth reaping the benefit in heaven forever.

Foolish Builder and Wise King

- **Another cost of discipleship is paid in self-denial:**
- Titus 2:11-12 - “¹¹For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. ¹²It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age,”
 - The lure of ungodliness and its pleasures is great but the genuine disciple must be able to deny their influence and deny himself their indulgence. Christians forfeit the license to fornicate, drink and swear that others exploit. **Is the hope of salvation worth paying this price?**
 - Paul told the Corinthian saints to flee sexual immorality,
 - 1 Corinthians 6:20 - “For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s”
 - Acts 20:28, Rom. 6:23 - “Whenever we are counting the cost, it is good to remember that God redeemed our own souls from damnation with his own precious blood.”

Foolish Builder and Wise King

- **Question for thought**
- **Think about an example of how a disciple of Jesus today might show that they did not count the cost of being a disciple**
- **Weekly Challenge**
- Jesus used the motivation of avoiding shame to encourage commitment to discipleship.
- **Next week be prepared to give 2-3 examples of what it would take to motivate some disciples today not to get discouraged and quit following Christ.**
- **Next week: Lazarus and the Rich Man (Luke 16:19-31)**

PARABLES OF JESUS

Lazarus and the Rich Man

Lazarus and the Rich Man

- **Weekly Challenge**
- **Who would like to give some examples of factors that would help motivate somebody to be committed to Christian discipleship?**

Lazarus and the Rich Man

- Luke 16:19-26 - ¹⁹“There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. ²⁰At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores ²¹and longing to eat what fell from the rich man’s table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. ²²“The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried. ²³In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. ²⁴So he called to him, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.’ ²⁵“But Abraham replied, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. ²⁶And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been set in place, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.’

Lazarus and the Rich Man

- Luke 16:27-31 - ²⁷“He answered, ‘Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family, ²⁸for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.’ ²⁹“Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.’ ³⁰““No, father Abraham,’ he said, ‘but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’ ³¹“He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’”

Lazarus and the Rich Man

- This parable is one of those "example parables" (like the parable of the Good Samaritan). Since this story does not have one of Jesus introductory formulas (i.e. "The Kingdom of Heaven is like ..." or "It is like ?") and since one of the characters is named, some believe it could be referring to an actual situation Jesus knew.
- Jesus is using the story to convey an important lesson. The unnamed rich man provides an example of a life to shun.
- While there are some details about life after death in this parable, it would be inappropriate to press the details to obtain a theology of the afterlife.
- Its basic message points to an important issue to be observed in this life. So we will be visualizing the differences between Lazarus and the Rich Man.

- **Differences between Lazarus and the Rich Man**

- **Description of who Lazarus was....**

- This is the only parable that Jesus told in which he named one of his characters. There is no reason to conclude that this Lazarus is the same as the Lazarus who Jesus raised from the dead in John 11.
- The name "Lazarus" means "God has helped" (possibly an abbreviation of "Eleazar"). The name suggests what Lazarus experiences (namely God relieves his suffering while the rich man did not).
- Notice that Lazarus "was laid" at the rich man's gate suggesting that he was lame or handicapped. His helplessness is underscored by the fact that he cannot even defend himself against the street dogs who lick his sores and prevent them from healing

- **Description of the Rich Man...**

- It is probably significant that the rich man is not named. In the Oriental world, not to be remembered is an indication of dishonor.
- Sometimes this parable is referred to as the “Parable of Dives” or “Lazarus and the Dive”. The Western tradition that names him "Dives" comes from the fact that the Latin Vulgate opens the parable with "A certain man Dives ?". However, the Latin word dives is an adjective meaning rich and not a personal name.
- His wealth is accentuated by the fact that he wears purple and fine linen which were worn by royalty or those who were favored by royalty.
- He certainly lives in a large home since it comes with a gate.
- The gap between a person of great social clout and one with none could not be wider.

Lazarus and the Rich Man

- **Where is Lazarus' taken?**

- The angels carry him to a place that is simply described as Abraham's bosom, which is probably the equivalent to paradise, the place where the dead go before final judgment.
- Luke 23:43 - “⁴³Jesus answered him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

- **Where does the rich man go after death?**

- While the NIV may say that the rich man goes to hell, the Greek word is actually hades which was used by the Greeks for the abode of the dead. This word was used by Greek speaking Jews as a translation for the Hebrew word Sheol, which means the grave.
- The rich man is not in hell (the place of final torment or punishment), though there are flames. Instead, he is in a place of torment where he waits for the final judgment (Though it is true that his judgment is already anticipated.)

Lazarus and the Rich Man

- **This parable could have made its point against insensitivity towards the suffering poor by stopping with the description of the rich man in torment. Why do you think Jesus continues on to discuss the rich man's desire to warn his brothers?**
- Jesus' point here that God revealed in scripture that he wants his covenant people to show compassion to the poor.
- The rich man and his brothers have no excuse for not doing what God' expressly revealed through Moses and the prophets.

Lazarus and the Rich Man

- **To whom is the parable directed and what is the occasion?**
 - The parable is directed towards the Pharisees whom Luke describes as lovers of money (v. 14). The Pharisees had sneered at Jesus' parable of the Shrewd Manager (16:1-12). It was first to them that the lesson of this parable was directed.
 - A Jewish audience would agree with Jesus that the rich man is responsible for not helping Lazarus because he should have known from the Law and the prophets that mercy to the needy and oppressed is a significant attribute that God wants in his people.

Lazarus and the Rich Man

- **Most Jews would have concluded that Lazarus was lame, that is why he was "laid" at the rich man's gate (v. 20). During the first century, what did many Jews think caused diseases like paralysis?**
 - Many would think that sin caused paralysis. Yet surprisingly, God elevated the one who deserved to be lame because of some unknown sin above the one who was free of deformities.
- **What are the lessons from the two explicit characters (Lazarus and the rich man) and the one implied character (God)?**
 - There are three lessons taught: (1) Those who belong to God's kingdom should put their hope in God to help them.
 - (2) Those who belong to God's kingdom must not be insensitive to the needs of the poor.
 - (3) God has revealed through Moses and the prophets what he expects his people to know and do.

Lazarus and the Rich Man

- Think of an organization or company that claims to represent Christian values, has wealth, power and social status but does nothing to alleviate the suffering of the poor.
- **In what ways can we do things that will show real compassion for the needs of the poor?**

Lazarus and the Rich Man

- Luke 12:16-21 - “¹⁶And he told them this parable: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. ¹⁷He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’ ¹⁸“Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. ¹⁹And I’ll say to myself, “You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.” ²⁰“But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’ ²¹“This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.””

Lazarus and the Rich Man

- **What sin do they think that this man committed?**
 - We need to recognize that his sin was like that of the rich man. He gave no thought of giving some of his abundance to the poor.
- **NEXT WEEK!!!**
- **Parable of the Pharisee and Tax-Collector (Luke 18:9-14)**

PARABLES OF JESUS

Pharisee and Tax Collector

Pharisee and Tax Collector

- This is another illustration of an “example narrative” just like the parable of the Good Samaritan.
 - We get to hear of two characters who set both an example to follow and one to avoid
- This parable is only found in Luke’s Gospel
- Luke places it alongside the parable of the unjust judge or persistent widow ([Luke 18:1-8](#)), which encourages persistent prayers, because it also makes reference to prayer.

Pharisee and Tax Collector

- Luke 18:9-14 - “⁹To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: ¹⁰“Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’ ¹³“But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’ ¹⁴“I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

Pharisee and Tax Collector

- **Description of Pharisees**

- Many scholars believe that the word "Pharisee" comes from the Hebrew word parus ("separated one"). We do not know if this was a word a Pharisee used for themselves or one used by others to describe them.
- Paul used the word to describe his pre-Christian life -
Phillipians 3:4-5 "If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: 5circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; "
- Josephus, the Jewish Roman Historian who lived in the first century, used to be a Pharisee and gives some details of their beliefs in his Antiquities of the Jews (13.297-98; 18.15) and Jewish Wars (1.110; 2.162).
- It is important to stress here that Pharisees were not paid professional clergy but influential lay persons (farmers, carpenters, merchants).
- They shared a common commitment to piety towards God and strict observance of laws that helped to signify Jewish distinctiveness from Gentiles, in particular laws that related to ritual purity and the Sabbath

Pharisee and Tax Collector

- **Description of the Tax Collector**

- Since he comes to the Temple, this Tax Collector is obviously a Jew.
- Tax Collectors were independent contractors with the government to collect local taxes, tolls and market duties. They would bid for the right to collect these taxes and they had to collect their salary out of what they charged tax payers.
- This commonly involved excessive overcharges (see the account of Zaccaheus the Tax-Collector's confession in Luke 19:8.)
- If tax payers did not comply they risked being imprisoned. Tax Collectors were often characterized as being swindlers and cheaters. It would therefore be somewhat startling, even hypocritical, to find a cheating ally of the Romans in a Jewish holy place of prayer.

Pharisee and Tax Collector

- Different translations will describe the manner of the **Pharisee's prayer** (v. 11a) in various ways.
- The KJV has "stood and prayed with himself".
- The RSV has "stood and prayed thus with himself".
- The TEV (The English Version) has "stood and prayed to himself".
- The NIV has "stood up and prayed about himself".
- The NRSN (New Revised Standard Version) has "standing by himself, was praying thus"

Pharisee and Tax Collector

- **What would be emphasized if we translated the text with either "with", "to" or "about"?**
 - If the meaning is "with", it might suggest to some that the Pharisee prayed silently. This however is not the way Jews during this time prayed. They prayed audibly.
 - Choosing "to" would suggest that the Pharisee was not really praying to God but to himself, which is also unlikely.
 - If we chose "about", it would suggest that the main focus of his audible prayer to God was not on his need for forgiveness but on his desire for recognition of holiness.

Pharisee and Tax Collector

- **Is there any thing about the Pharisee's prayer that justifies calling it "mean-spirited"?**
 - Yes. The way he contrasts himself with others and the contemptuous tone in which he refers to the tax collector.
 - Pharisee was excelling in good deeds. While the Law only required fasting on the Day of Atonement, many Jews in the first century had come to see fasting as a way of showing remorse, penitence and virtue.
 - Some ancient sources indicate that Jews fasted on either Mondays or Thursdays. This Pharisee did both.
 - Ironically though, the Pharisee is devout in the sign of penance (possibly not for himself but on behalf of the nation) but is not actually penitent before God.
 - The Pharisee also excelled in tithing in that he gives a tenth of all that he gets (or more technically, brings into his home).

Pharisee and Tax Collector

- **1st century Jewish Perspective**
- **To whom is the parable directed?**
 - It was directed to disciples who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on others.
- **Would a first century Jew, after hearing the content of the Pharisee's pray, instinctively conclude that the Pharisee was arrogant? In other words, would the pride and pompousness of the Pharisee be self-evident from his prayer?**
 - Maybe not. A similar prayer was spoken by a rabbi some years later and is presented as an example of a godly prayer.
- “I give thanks to Thee, O Lord my God, that Thou has set my portion with those who sit in the Beth ha Midrash (the house of study) and Thou hast not set my portion with those who sit in (street) corners for I rise early and they rise early, but I rise early for words of Torah and they rise early for frivolous talk; I labor and they labor, but I labor and receive a reward and they labor and do not receive a reward; I run and they run, but I run to the life of the future world and they run to the pit of destruction.” (Babylonian Berakhot 28b Rabbi Nehunya ben Hakana)

Pharisee and Tax Collector

- **What would indicate to a first century Jewish audience that the Tax Collector was extremely penitent?**
- First, he did not take the normal posture of prayer, which was standing raising one's hands and eyes towards heaven.
- Second, he beat on his breast. In the Oriental culture this was a dramatic gesture that was usually done by women and only rarely by men.

Pharisee and Tax Collector

- **While there are two explicitly stated characters in the parable (the Pharisee and the Tax-Collector), there is one implied character. Who is it?**
 - God, who justifies the tax collector and not the Pharisee.
- **What are the main lessons from the two explicit characters and the one implied character (God)? There are three lessons taught:**
 - Citizens of the kingdom humble themselves before God with contrite hearts and do not look down upon others.
 - Foreigners to the kingdom boast before God and others what they see as their significant acts of piety and devotion.
 - God will exalt those who act with humility but will bring down those who are arrogant and prideful

Pharisee and Tax Collector

- **REFLECTION**

- **What kind of religious activities are some Christians likely to boast about today?**

- Here are a couple examples: Exemplary Sunday School attendance, amount of time they spend reading their Bible, the percentage of their earning that they contribute to the church.

- **What kinds of people might some Christians feel they are morally superior than?**

- Here are some examples: Christians who feel morally superior to newer Christians; those who feel superior because they are entrusted to lead certain church activities; those who look down on Christians who lack a specific degree of education or who do not have a particular cultural background.

Pharisee and Tax Collector

- APPLICATION
- Write down the names of three Christians you know who display the qualities of humility Jesus is calling for in this parable.
- Then write next to a specific example of what they did that showed you that humility
- **NEXT LESSON: Unforgiving Servant (Slave)**
Matthew 18:9-14