

THE NEW TESTAMENT

PARABLES OF JESUS



Year 1– Quarter 4

by

F. L. Booth

©2005
F. L. Booth
Zion, IL 60099

CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE	
CHART NO. 1 - Parables of Jesus in Chronological Order	
CHART NO. 2 - Classification of the Parables of Jesus	
LESSON 1 - Parables of the Kingdom No. 1	
The Parable of the Sower	1 - 1
LESSON 2 - Parables of the Kingdom No. 2	
I. The Parable of the Tares	2 - 1
II. The Parable of the Seed Growing in Secret	2 - 3
III. The Parable of the Mustard Seed	2 - 5
IV. The Parable of the Leaven	2 - 7
LESSON 3 - Parables of the Kingdom No. 3	
I. The Parable of the Hidden Treasure	3 - 1
II. The Parable of the Pearl of Great Price	3 - 3
III. The Parable of the Drawnet	3 - 5
IV. The Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard	3 - 7
LESSON 4 - Parables of Forgiveness	
I. The Parable of the Two Debtors	4 - 1
II. The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant	4 - 5
LESSON 5 - A Parable of the Love of One's Neighbor	
The Parable of the Good Samaritan	5 - 1
A Parable of Jews and Gentiles	
The Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen	5 - 4
LESSON 6 - Parables of Praying	
I. The Parable of the Friend at Midnight	6 - 1
II. The Parable of the Importunate Widow	6 - 3
LESSON 7 - Parables of Self-Righteousness and Humility	
I. The Parable of the Chief Seats	7 - 1
II. The Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican	7 - 3

LESSON 8 - Parables of the Cost of Discipleship

- I. The Parables of the Rash Builder and the King at War 8 - 1
- II. The Parable of the Unprofitable Servants 8 - 4

LESSON 9 - Parables of the Invitation of God

- I. The Parable of the Great Supper 9 - 1
- II. The Parable of the Marriage of the King's Son 9 - 4

LESSON 10 - Parables of Repentance No. 1

- I. The Parable of the Lost Sheep 10 - 1
- II. The Parable of the Lost Coin 10 - 4
- III. The Parable of the Prodigal Son 10 - 6

LESSON 11 - Parables of Repentance No. 2

- I. The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree 11 - 1
- II. The Parable of the Two Sons 11 - 4

LESSON 12 - Parables of the Importance of Preparing for the Future

- I. The Parable of the Rich Fool 12 - 1
- II. The Parable of the Watchful Servants 12 - 3
- III. The Parable of the Unjust Steward 12 - 5
- IV. The Parable of the Ten Virgins 12 - 8

LESSON 13 - Parables of Individual Responsibility

- I. The Parable of the Pounds 13 - 1
- II. The Parable of the Talents 13 - 4
- A Comparison of the Parables of the Pounds and the Talents 13 - 7

PREFACE

DEFINITION. A parable is "a short, simple story designed to communicate a spiritual truth, religious principle, or moral lesson; a figure of speech in which truth is illustrated by a comparison or example drawn from everyday experiences" (*Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, [Thomas Nelson Inc. Nashville, TN, 1995] p. 943). A parable is sometimes defined as "an earthly story with a heavenly meaning" (*And Jesus Said*, William Barclay, [The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, PA, 1970], p. 12).

The word parable is from the Greek *parabole*. *Para* means "beside," and *ballo* means "to throw." The idea is to throw or place something beside another thing to make a comparison. A parable, then, is a simple story which compares earthly matters to spiritual truths.

INTERPRETATION. A parable generally teaches only one basic truth. It is not possible to learn the whole gospel message from one parable.

In order to understand the parable, it is necessary to have knowledge of the historical background and setting of the story. The political, social, geographical, and religious circumstances at the time the parable was spoken must be considered.

A parable is not the primary source of doctrine. Rather, the parable illustrates and confirms doctrine.

PURPOSE. Jesus the Christ is the master teacher. At the end of his sermon on the mount, "...the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Matt. 7:28-29). Jesus used various means to impart his message to mankind—one was to speak in parables.

First, Jesus' teaching in parables was a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. "All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 13:34-35; Ps. 78:2).

Second, when asked by his disciples, "Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given" (Matt. 13:10-11). Believers read the parables and accept them with faith, understanding because their minds are spiritual. Unbelievers refuse to perceive and understand God's truth because their minds or hearts are hardened.

NUMBER AND CLASSIFICATION. The New Testament records over thirty parables spoken by Jesus. Chart No. 1 lists thirty-two parables considered for this study. Chart No. 2 classifies the parables under eleven different subjects.

CHART NO. 1

PARABLES OF JESUS IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

	Matt.	Mark	Luke
1. The two debtors			7:36-50
2. The rich fool			12:16-21
3. The watchful servants			12:35-40
4. The barren fig tree			13:6-9
5. The sower	13:1-9, 18-23	4:1-9, 14-20	8:4-15
6. The tares	13:24-30, 36-43		
7. The seed growing in secret		4:26-29	
8. The mustard seed	13:31-32	4:30-32	13:18-19
9. The leaven	13:33		13:20-21
10. The hidden treasure	13:44		
11. The pearl of great price	13:45-46		
12. The dragnet	13:47-50		
13. The unmerciful servant	18:21-35		
14. The good Samaritan			10:25-37
15. The friend at midnight			11:5-13
16. The chief seats			14:7-11
17. The great supper			14:15-24
18. The rash builder and king at war			14:25-35
19. The lost sheep	18:12-14		15:3-7
20. The lost coin			15:8-10
21. The prodigal son			15:11-32
22. The unjust steward			16:1-9
23. The unprofitable servants			17:5-10
24. The importunate widow			18:1-8
25. The Pharisee and publican			18:9-14
26. The laborers in the vineyard	20:1-16		
27. The pounds			19:11-27
28. The two sons	21:23-32		
29. The wicked husbandmen	21:33-46	12:1-12	20:9-18
30. The marriage of the king's son	22:1-14		
31. The ten virgins	25:1-13		
32. The talents	25:14-30		

CHART NO. 2

CLASSIFICATION OF THE PARABLES OF JESUS

I. PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM

- 5. The sower
- 6. The tares
- 7. The seed growing in secret
- 8. The mustard seed
- 9. The leaven
- 10. The hidden treasure
- 11. The pearl of great price
- 12. The dragnet
- 26. The laborers in the vineyard

II. PARABLES OF FORGIVENESS

- 1. The two debtors
- 13. The unmerciful servant

III. A PARABLE OF THE LOVE OF ONE'S NEIGHBOR

- 14. The good Samaritan

IV. A PARABLE OF JEWS AND GENTILES

- 29. The wicked husbandmen

V. PARABLES OF PRAYING

- 15. The friend at midnight
- 24. The importunate widow

VI. PARABLES OF SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HUMILITY

- 16. The chief seats
- 25. The Pharisee and publican

VII. PARABLES OF THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

- 18. The rash builder and king at war
- 23. The unprofitable servants

VIII. PARABLES OF THE INVITATION OF GOD

- 17. The great supper
- 30. The marriage of the king's son

IX. PARABLES OF REPENTANCE

- 19. The lost sheep
- 20. The lost coin
- 21. The prodigal son
- 4. The barren fig tree
- 28. The two sons

X. PARABLES OF THE IMPORTANCE OF PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

- 2. The rich fool
- 3. The watchful servants
- 22. The unjust steward
- 31. The ten virgins

XI. PARABLES OF INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

- 27. The pounds
- 32. The talents

LESSON 1- PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM NO. 1

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

Matt. 13:1-9, 18-23; Mark 4:1-9, 14-20; Luke 8:4-15

INTRODUCTION. The parable of the sower is one of only three parables (the sower, the mustard seed, the wicked husbandman) that is found in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Also, it is one of the few parables Jesus explained for his disciples and others with them. Some have called the parable of the sower, *the parable of parables*, because it really contains four parables in one with each emphasizing one basic truth.

In New Testament times farming was simple. The *common ground* in Palestine was divided into long narrow strips. There was no fence around the strips, but separating the strips was a path or right of way upon which anyone could walk. These paths were beaten as hard as pavement from the many passers-by. In many areas the land consisted of outcroppings of bedrock, and the surface of this *rocky terrain* was covered with only a thin layer of soil. Ridding the ground of *thorny weeds* was a continual problem. If the roots escaped the plow or if the weeds had produced seeds, a new growth of thorny weeds was inevitable.

The farmer carried his seed in a bag which was slung around his neck and shoulders. In the fall when the long, hot summer was ended, the farmer walked through the field and cast or broadcast the seed upon the ground. Then he plowed the field to cover the seed, waited for the winter rain to germinate the seed, and looked forward to the harvest the following year.

A. THE PARABLE

1. As the sower scattered his seed, where did some of the seed fall? What happened to this seed? (Matt. 13:3-4)
2. Name the second type of ground described. What happened to the seed that fell on this ground? (Matt. 13:5-6)

3. Name the third type of ground. What happened to the seed that fell there? (Matt. 13:7)
4. Name the fourth type of ground. Describe what occurred to the seed which fell on this ground. (Matt. 13:8)

B. THE INTERPRETATION

1. What is the seed?
 - a. Matt. 13:19
 - b. Mark 4:14
 - c. Luke 8:11
2. Although the parable does not identify the sower, who are the sowers of the seed?
 - a. John 3:1-2
 - b. Mark 16:14-15
 - c. Acts 8:1, 4
3. What does the ground where the seed was sown represent? (Matt. 13:19; Mark 4:15; Luke 8:12)
4. *The wayside ground* has been described as the hard, packed walkway at the side of or between the cultivated fields.
 - a. What kind of heart does this ground represent? (Matt. 13:19)
 - b. The fowls that devoured this seed represent whom?

Matt. 13:19

Mark 4:15

Luke 8:12

- c. What two words does Jesus use to describe this one? (John 8:44)
 - d. How does Peter describe this one? (I Pet. 5:8)
5. The *stony places* have been described as a thin layer of soil over bedrock.
- a. What kind of heart does this ground represent? (Matt. 13:20-21)
 - b. Paul compares those with a shallow faith to _____
tossed to and fro and carried about with every _____.
(Eph. 4:14)
6. *Thorny ground* has always been a problem for farmers, for the thorns and weeds choke out the good seed.
- a. What kind of heart does the thorny ground represent? (Matt. 13:22)
 - b. Those that desire riches face what dangers? (I Tim. 6:9-10)
7. The *good ground* is the fertile soil which is deep enough to receive the seed. The roots have room to grow and spread in order to draw needed moisture and nourishment. Careful cultivation frees the soil from the choking thorns and weeds.
- a. What kind of heart does the good ground represent? (Matt. 13:23)
 - b. Compare the three accounts for a complete picture of the good ground:
they hear the word and _____ it. (Matt. 13:23)
they hear the word and _____ it. (Mark 4:20)
they hear the word and _____ it. (Luke 8:15)
 - c. What is the yield from this type of ground (heart)? (Matt. 13:23)

d. How do we bring forth this fruit? (Luke 8:15)

C. THE PURPOSE. Matthew gives two reasons for Jesus' teaching in parables.

1. Jesus spoke in parables to fulfill prophecy (Ps. 78:2). What is the prophecy? (Matt. 13:34-35)

2. Jesus also spoke in parables because of the hardness of people's hearts.

a. When the disciples asked Jesus why He spoke in parables, He told them

they were selected to understand the _____ of the kingdom of heaven, but to others it was not given. (Matt. 13:10-11)

b. Jesus said He spoke in parables because some have eyes that do not

_____ and ears that do not _____, and neither do they understand. (Matt. 13:13)

Note. Those who hardened their hearts and refused to accept Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, could not understand the true spiritual meaning of the parables:

- *seeing they see not*— they saw Jesus' works and miracles, but their eyes were blind to his Divine power;
- *hearing they hear not* —they heard Jesus' words of salvation, but their ears were deaf to his Divine message.

c. Jesus said the unbelievers, those who see not and hear not, fulfilled the prophecy of what prophet? (Matt. 13:14-15; Isa. 6:9-10)

D. THE LESSON

- » The parable of the sower compares four kinds of ground to four different attitudes toward the word of God.
- » The word is the same. The hearers are different because their hearts are different. Some have hearts that are hardened. Some lack commitment and soon lose interest. Some have an abiding and overpowering desire for the material things of the world. Some hear, understand, and obey.

LESSON 2 - PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM NO. 2

I. THE PARABLE OF THE TARES

Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43

INTRODUCTION. Like the parable of the sower, the parable of the tares is one of the few parables Jesus explained. It is found only in Matthew.

Tares are weeds called bearded darnel grass (*Lolium temulentum*). These weeds look so much like wheat in the early stages that it is almost impossible to distinguish one from the other. Not until the plants head out can the farmer tell the difference, but by then the roots are so intertwined, pulling up the weeds would root out the wheat also.

There were three ways to separate the tares and wheat. The tares did not grow as high as the wheat, and sometimes the wheat was reaped over the top of the darnel. Then the field was set on fire, burning the darnel that remained. Sometimes the reaper separated the wheat and darnel as he reaped, dropping each in bundles. The darnel could then be gathered later and burned. If there was just a small amount of darnel in the field, the seed was picked from the good grain before it was milled. This task was performed by women and was necessary, for the darnel seeds when ground to flour were semi-poisonous.

A. THE PARABLE AND THE INTERPRETATION

The Parable (Matt. 13:24-30)

1. _____ A man who sowed good seed is
2. _____ The field is
3. _____ The good seed is
4. _____ The tares are
5. _____ The enemy who sows them is
6. _____ The harvest is
7. _____ The harvesters are

The Interpretation (Matt. 13:36-43)

- a. the sons of the wicked (evil) one
- b. the end of the world (age)
- c. the Son of man
- d. the sons of the kingdom
- e. the angels
- f. the world
- g. the devil

8. Compare the gathering and burning of the tares with the end of the world. (Matt. 13:41-42)
9. Describe what occurs when the wicked are cast into the fire. (Matt. 13:42)
10. Describe the righteous. (Matt. 13:43)
11. How can we distinguish the good from the bad? (Matt. 7:20)

B. THE LESSON

- » This parable contrasts good and evil—there is evil in the kingdom as well as good. Just as the farmer cannot distinguish the tares in its early stages, neither are we able to identify hypocrites and deceivers at first.
- » As the farmer must be patient before separating the wheat from the tares, so we too must be patient and longsuffering, guarding against rash and premature judgments of people.
- » The parable of the tares is a parable of the harvest, depicting the conflict between good and evil, between God and Satan. Satan is the enemy, but God and good will triumph in the end.



Head of Wheat

II. THE PARABLE OF THE SEED GROWING IN SECRET

Mark 4:26-29

INTRODUCTION. The parable of the seed growing in secret, recorded only by Mark, follows his account of the parable of the sower and describes the growth of the seed which fell on the good ground. Like the parable of the sower, the seed is the word (Mark 4:14), and the ground represents those who hear the word and accept it (Mark 4:20).

The emphasis of this parable is on the planting, growing, and harvesting of the seed—"sowing, growing, and mowing." The farmer can plant the seed, but the sprouting, growing, pollinating, and maturity belong to God. The apostle Paul described the growth and development of the word in a similar manner, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase" (I Cor. 3:6).

The seed growing in secret is a parable of patience. Once the seed is planted the farmer must wait patiently for the harvest time. The parable also teaches that the kingdom belongs to God. The farmer sows and reaps, but God holds the secret of the growth and life of the seed. Finally, the parable is one of confidence. The process of growth is slow, but it is certain.

A. THE PARABLE

1. The kingdom of God is compared to the farmer that sows his seed and then does what? (Mark 4:26-27)

Note. The farmer lives in his usual way while the seed germinates. When the word is sown into receptive hearts, it too must have time to germinate.

2. What happens to the seed? Does the farmer understand the process? (Mark 4:27)

Note. The secret of the sprouting and growth of the seed belongs to God, and man's wisdom cannot explain it. In the same manner the word sprouts and grows secretly in the good and honest heart.

3. Describe the growth of the seed. (Mark 4:28)

Note. The growth and development of the seed is gradual and occurs in stages. The spiritual growth of the word also is a gradual process. First there is belief, then obedience, and eventually maturity.

4. When the fruit is ripe, what occurs? (Mark 4:29)

Note. The seed was sown in the beginning in order that a harvest would follow. The word is preached that hearers might receive it, obey it, and produce a harvest of souls for the kingdom of God.

B. THE LESSON. The lesson is the same, both in the natural and spiritual realms.

- » The seed must be sown in order for there to be a harvest.
- » Growth occurs gradually, develops in necessary stages, and takes place by the secret power of God.
- » Patience is necessary, but in due time the seed germinates, grows, and produces a harvest.



Growth Cycle

III. THE PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED

Matt. 13:31-32; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18-19

INTRODUCTION. Jesus spoke two parables to teach how the kingdom would grow, the mustard seed and the leaven. These two parables should be considered together. The parable of the mustard seed teaches the *extensive growth* (external, vast, outward spread), whereas the parable of the leaven teaches the *intensive growth* (internal, intense, great power) of the kingdom.

In this parable the kingdom of heaven is compared to the mustard seed. From this tiny seed grows the mustard tree, reaching to a height of seven to eight feet, with twelve feet not being unusual. In the same manner, from a small beginning the kingdom of heaven spread throughout the whole world.

This parable was meant to be an encouragement to Jesus' followers. His disciples were uneducated fishermen whose task was to take the gospel message to the whole world. In a few short years they "turned the world upside down" (Acts 17:6), and the tiny gospel seed had been "preached to every creature which is under heaven" (Col. 1:23). From the smallest beginning came the greatest blessing ever bestowed upon mankind—the forgiveness of sins through the sacrificial blood of the Son of God.

A. THE PARABLE

1. Jesus compared the kingdom of heaven to what? (Matt. 13:31; Mark 4:30-31; Luke 13:18-19)
2. What unique feature of the mustard seed makes this parable so impressive? (Matt 13:32)
3. What was the number of disciples that were gathered in Jerusalem after Jesus' ascension? (Acts 1:15)

4. With this small beginning, what did the apostle Paul declare some thirty years later? (Col. 1:23)
5. In this parable Jesus alluded to a prophecy of the kingdom (Ezek. 17:22-24).
 - a. The Lord will plant a young and tender twig where? (Ezek. 17:22)
 - b. The tree will bring forth _____ and bear _____.
(Ezek. 17:23)
 - c. Under it and in the shade of the branches will dwell _____.
(Ezek. 17:23)
6. Daniel's prophecy of the kingdom compared the growth of the kingdom to a stone that became a great _____ and filled the whole _____. (Dan. 2:35)

B. THE LESSON

- » Often the greatest things come from the smallest beginnings. The tiny mustard seed grows and becomes a tree greater than all the herbs. The kingdom (church) gradually increased from a humble and despised beginning until it filled the whole world.
- » The mustard tree provides a lodging place for the birds of the air. The kingdom of God continues to grow and offer shelter to those who seek it.
- » God's word is pure and steadfast. The prophecies of the Old Testament have been fulfilled, and God's plan for the salvation of mankind cannot be thwarted.

...they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. (Acts 2:41).

...many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand. (Acts 4:4)

...believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women. (Acts 5:14)

IV. THE PARABLE OF THE LEAVEN

Matt. 13:33; Luke 13:20-21

INTRODUCTION. The parable of the mustard seed declares the *fact* of the growth of the kingdom of heaven—it was extensive, vast, reaching out to the four corners of the world. The parable of the leaven is also about the growth of the kingdom, but this parable teaches the *way* or *manner* of the growth—it was intensive, internal, having great power and force.

In the parable of the leaven both Matthew and Luke state that a woman hid leaven in "three measures" of meal. The measure is a *saton*, equal to about 13 liters or 3/8 bushel. Three *sata* or measures would be 39 liters or slightly more than a bushel. Thus a little leaven added to a large quantity of meal permeated the entire mixture. Although the leaven disappeared in the meal, it worked secretly and invisibly and after a time the results were visible.

A. THE PARABLE

1. Jesus compared the kingdom to what? (Matt. 13:33)
2. What did the woman do? What was the result? (Matt. 13:33)
3. What is the gospel? What effect does it have? (Rom. 1:16)
4. When one obeys Christ, what occurs? (II Cor. 5:17)

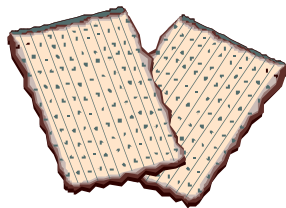
5. How can one Christian help to change the world (leaven a whole lump)?

a. Mark 16:15-16

b. Matt. 5:16

B. THE LESSON

- » As the power of the leaven changes the meal, so the power of the gospel of the kingdom has changed the whole world.
- » The leaven which is hidden in the meal works secretly and steadily until the effect of its power is apparent. The gospel which is hidden in the hearts of individuals works mysteriously, spreading gradually until its power influences human society.
- » Each individual Christian must spread the gospel and let his light shine.



Unleavened Bread



Leavened Bread

LESSON 3 - PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM NO. 3

I. THE PARABLE OF THE HIDDEN TREASURE

Matt. 13:44

INTRODUCTION. This one verse parable is found only in Matthew. Previously in Matthew, Jesus had compared the kingdom to small things—a mustard seed and leaven. In this parable of the hidden treasure and the one to follow—the parable of the pearl of great price—Jesus declared the great value of the kingdom. This parable tells of a man who found a treasure hidden in a field. He willingly sold all that he had to buy the field.

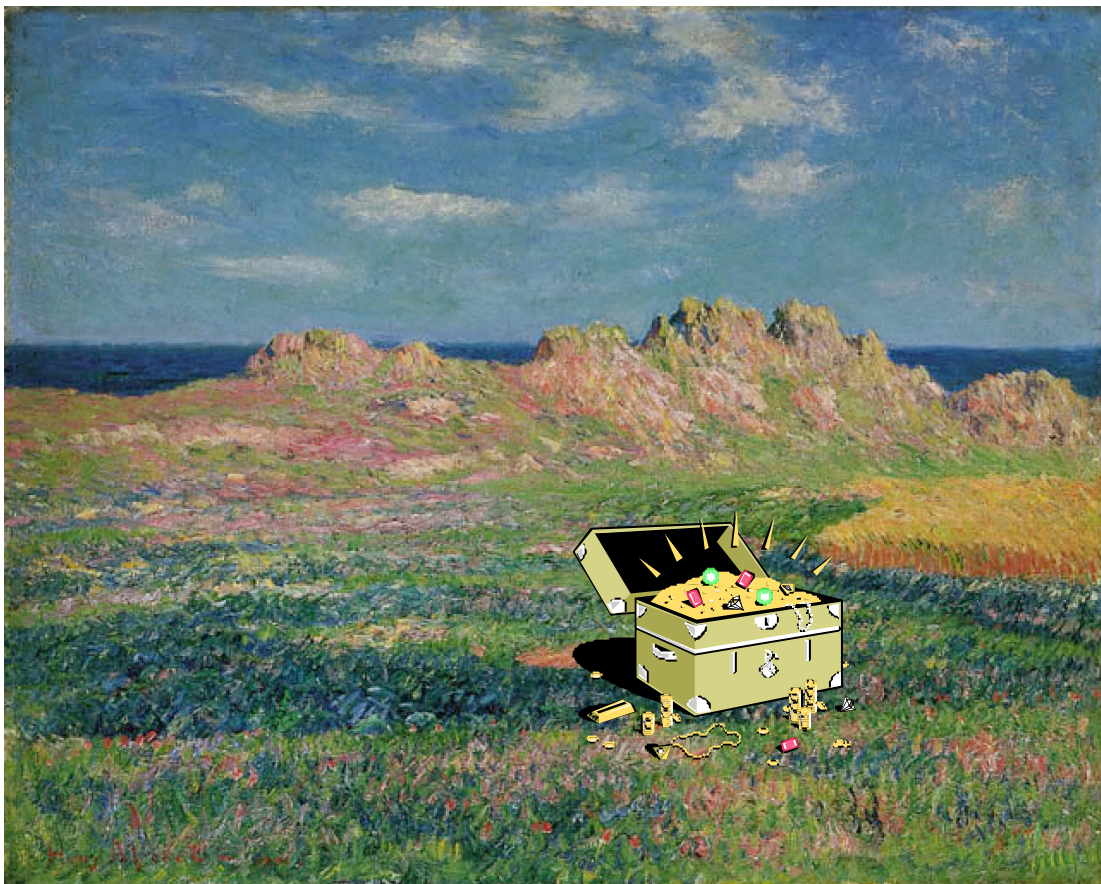
It is unprofitable to speculate on the legality or morality of the find and purchase of the field. It was common practice in Jesus' time to bury valuables as a means of preserving one's property. Therefore, Jesus again used an illustration that was familiar to his hearers to teach a spiritual lesson—the value of the kingdom of God.

A. THE PARABLE

1. Jesus compared the kingdom of heaven to what? (Matt. 13:44)
2. Describe the man's actions and attitude. (Matt. 13:44)
3. What often happens to treasures that are stored? (Matt. 6:19)
4. Where should Christians store treasure? (Matt. 6:20)
5. What is the reward of one who sells all that he has for Christ? (Matt. 19:29)

B. THE LESSON

- » The greatest treasure in this world and the world to come is the kingdom of heaven.
- » Those who find the word of God (the treasure) should joyfully and eagerly be willing to give all they have to obtain the blessings of the kingdom.



II. THE PARABLE OF THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

Matt. 13:45-46

INTRODUCTION. This parable and the parable of the hidden treasure occur only in Matthew and form a pair. Both parables teach the great truth concerning the value of the kingdom. The parable of the hidden treasure was about a man who *found* by accident a hidden treasure. The parable of the pearl of great price is about a man who was *searching* for goodly pearls.

In New Testament times pearls were in great demand. The merchants found pearls in the Red Sea, but they had to go to the Persian Gulf and India to find the finest quality pearls. The merchant described by Jesus found a pearl of great value and sold everything he had in order to buy it.

A. THE PARABLE

1. Jesus compared the kingdom of heaven to what? (Matt. 13:45)
2. What did the man find and do? (Matt. 13:46)
3. Whom should we seek and why? (Isa. 55:6)
4. What are Christians to seek first? (Matt. 6:33)
5. What does Jesus say about those who sincerely seek him? (Matt. 7:7)
6. What does God do for those who believe and diligently seek him? (Heb 11:6)

B. THE LESSON

- » We must seek the Lord while He may be found (Isa. 55:6).
- » We must seek first the kingdom of God (Matt. 6:33).
- » Those who search diligently will find the kingdom (Matt. 7:7; Heb. 11:6).



Pearls are formed in six tropical species of oysters that live on rocky ocean bottoms. The oyster is lined with a smooth, iridescent substance known as mother-of-pearl. When a foreign body such as a grain of sand accidentally becomes trapped within its shell, the oyster gradually covers it with layers of the mother-of-pearl. This process forms the pearl. Cultured pearls, which require about four years to produce, are created by artificially inserting the foreign object into the oyster. Pearls are the only gems made by a living process, and the only gems that come from the sea.

III. THE PARABLE OF THE DRAWNET

Matt. 13:47-50

INTRODUCTION. The parable of the dragnet is recorded only by Matthew. It is similar to the parable of the tares, yet there are differences. Both emphasize the judgment day and the ultimate separation of the good from bad. Jesus interprets for his disciples the parable of the tares and also gives a brief explanation of the parable of the dragnet.

The parable of the tares depicts the mixture of the good and bad in the kingdom and stresses patience until the harvest. The parable of the dragnet compares the kingdom to a dragnet cast into the sea, drawing every kind of fish. When the net is filled, it is drawn to shore and the separation of good and bad takes place. Just as the net could not and did not discriminate between the good and bad (both were gathered together), so we must not be selective in our efforts to teach and preach the gospel. In the judgment (when the net is filled) then the separation of the righteous and unrighteous will take place.

The dragnet is a large net sometimes as long as half a mile. The bottom is weighted with bits of lead and the top is supported with corks. At times the fisherman fastened one end of the net on shore, then pulled the other end with the boat in a semicircle back to the shore. Other times the net was drawn between two boats. When the fishermen returned to the shore, they sorted the fish, keeping the good and throwing back the bad.

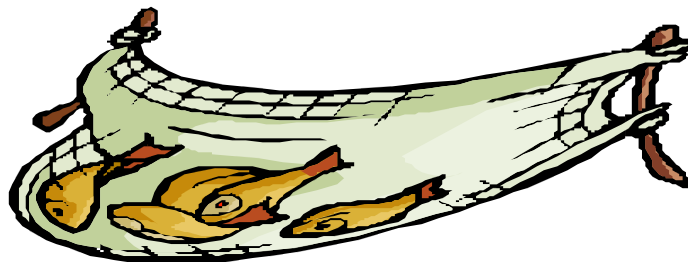
A. THE PARABLE AND THE INTERPRETATION

1. The kingdom is compared to what? (Matt. 13:47)
2. Describe what occurred when the net was drawn to shore. (Matt. 13:48)
3. Describe the end of the world. (Matt. 13:49-50)

4. To whom are we to preach the gospel? (Mark 16:15)
5. Jesus came for what purpose? (Luke 19:10)
6. What invitation does Jesus extend? (Matt. 11:28)
7. What does Jesus say about those who come to him (call him Lord)? (Matt. 7:21)
8. Why is it that not all who come to Jesus will be saved? For your answer refer to the parable of the sower.

B. THE LESSON

- » The gospel is for everyone. Jesus came to seek and save the lost, and He extends his invitation to all.
- » The gospel will draw all kinds of people. Some will be good and some will be bad.
- » In the day of judgment there will be a final separation of the good and bad.



IV. THE PARABLE OF THE LABORERS IN THE VINEYARD

Matt. 20:1-16

INTRODUCTION. This parable is found only in Matthew and follows the story of the rich young ruler (Matt. 19:16-22). After the young man went away sorrowfully because he had great possessions, Peter asked Jesus, "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?" (Matt. 19:27). Apparently Peter had the concept of "so much work—so much reward." The Jews believed in a doctrine of merit; that is, by keeping the law and doing good deeds, one could come to God and claim rewards. But eternal life is the gift of God, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9). This parable teaches that God rules in his kingdom and literally gives his grace to all who come to him.

The Law of Moses required that hired laborers be paid at the end of the day's work (Lev. 19:13). The worker was to be paid each day before sunset because he was poor and needed the money for himself and his family (Deut. 24:15). A normal day's wage was a *denarius* (penny, KJV; shilling, ASV), worth about seventeen cents.

In Palestine the grape harvest occurred at the end of August and early September. The rains came about the middle of September, so gathering the grapes before the rainy season commenced required every available worker. The work day began at 6 a.m. and continued to 6 p.m.

A. THE PARABLE

1. The kingdom of heaven is like a man that did what? (Matt. 20:1)
2. What was the agreed upon wage? (Matt. 20:2)

3. What agreement did the householder make at the third hour with those in the marketplace? (Matt. 20:3-4)

Note. There was no agreement regarding a specific amount for the wage.

4. What other times did the householder look for workers? (Matt. 20:5-6)
5. What reason did those at the eleventh hour give for being idle? (Matt. 20:7)
6. What instructions did the lord of the vineyard give to his steward when evening came? (Matt. 20:8)
7. Those hired at the eleventh hour received what wage? (Matt. 20:9)
8. What did those hired at the first hour receive? (Matt. 20:10)
9. What was their reaction? (Matt. 20:11-12)
10. What was the lord's response? (Matt. 20:13-14)
11. The lord said it was _____ for him to do what he wanted with his own. Then he asked the complaining laborers if their _____ was evil. (Matt. 20:15)

Note. An evil eye is an expression referring to jealousy. Those who were hired first were envious of the others who received the same wage.

12. Who shall be first? Who shall be last? (Matt. 20:16)

Note. In the parable those who were hired last received their wages first. In the kingdom it is the quality of service that is important, not the length of service or seniority. God's promised reward to the laborer in his kingdom is the gift of eternal life and is available to all who serve him.

B. THE LESSON

- » God continually seeks those to work in his vineyard (kingdom).
- » God's reward, eternal life, is bestowed by his grace, not by our works. The reward is given to all workers in God's kingdom, whether one comes at an early or late age.



Vineyard

LESSON 4 - PARABLES OF FORGIVENESS

I. THE PARABLE OF THE TWO DEBTORS

Luke 7:36-50

INTRODUCTION. In this parable Jesus was invited to the house of Simon the Pharisee for a meal. The homes of the wealthy usually consisted of several rooms opening onto a courtyard where meals were eaten in the warm weather. People of that day usually reclined when eating, leaning on the left elbow with the right hand free and the feet stretched out behind.

Rabbis (masters, teachers) were constantly followed by people eager to hear their words. It was not at all unusual for people to follow them into a house and stand behind them while they were dining in order to learn from them. In this story a woman who was a sinner entered Simon's house and stood behind Jesus while He dined. She brought with her an alabaster box of ointment as a gift for Jesus.

Simon was a Pharisee who was very careful to keep the law and looked with contempt on anyone who did not. Yet Simon did not extend the common hospitality of the day to Jesus. When a guest arrived, a servant stood at the door with water to wash the guest's feet. While the guest reclined at the table, a servant dropped a little scented oil on the guest's hair or burned sweet incense around his head for a short period. When a Rabbi came to dine, the host greeted him with a kiss of peace. All of these acts of common hospitality Simon did not do for Jesus.

As the woman stood behind Jesus, she was overwhelmed by emotion and began to weep. When her tears fell on his feet, she loosened her hair and wiped them dry. Next she kissed his feet and anointed them with the perfume. The woman acted from a deep sense of love for Jesus. She was painfully aware of her sinful condition and wished to express her gratitude to the one who had freed her from the bondage of her sins.

For Simon this incident was extremely embarrassing. If the money to buy the ointment came as a result of the woman's sinful life, the gift was an abomination (Deut. 23:18). Untying her hair in public was very immodest, and touching one of his guests was regarded as an act of defilement. Jesus knew Simon's thoughts and thus told him the parable.

A. THE PARABLE

1. Who invited Jesus to eat with him? (Luke 7:36)
 2. Describe the woman. What did she bring with her? (Luke 7:37)
 3. Describe the woman's actions. (Luke 7:38)
 4. What did the Pharisee say to himself? (Luke 7:39)
 5. What did Jesus say to the Pharisee? What was the Pharisee's name? (Luke 7:40)
 6. What was the amount of the debt owed by each debtor? (Luke 7:41)
- Note.* The *denarius* (pence, KJV; shilling, ASV) was a Roman coin containing about seventeen cents worth of silver metal and was the amount of one day's wage in New Testament times. Five hundred denarii would be about \$85.00 and more than one year's earnings. Fifty denarii would be \$8.50 and more than one month's wages. Both amounts were considerable sums at that time.
7. What did the creditor do? What question did Jesus ask of Simon? (Luke 7:42)

8. What was Simon's answer? Was he correct in his interpretation of the parable? (Luke 7:43)

Note. By his answer Simon pronounced judgment upon himself. He was a debtor to Jesus, but he did not seek Jesus' forgiveness. In addition, his lack of love proved he did not have forgiveness.

9. List the acts of hospitality Simon had neglected to do for Jesus. (Luke 7:44-46)
10. List the acts of love the woman had done for Jesus. (Luke 7:44-46)
11. Jesus' conclusion is stated in Luke 7:47.
- a. Those who are forgiven many sins _____
 - b. Those who are forgiven few sins _____
12. What did Jesus tell the woman? (Luke 7:48)
13. What did the other guests think about the incident? (Luke 7:49)
14. How was the woman saved? (Luke 7:50)
15. The characters and their debts related in the parable represent the people and their behavior in the story. Match the two columns.

Parable

the lender or creditor
the large debtor
the small debtor
the debt

Story

sin
the woman
God
Simon

B. THE LESSON

- » All are debtors (sinners) and are in need of God's forgiveness (Rom. 3:23).
- » The sinful woman was saved by her faith. She then expressed her gratitude to Jesus by acts of love. In the same manner when our faith in the Savior leads us to obedience, then our love and gratitude are expressed in our service to him. The greater our sense of sin, the greater will be our gratitude and love (Luke 7:47).
- » Jesus told the woman to go in peace. When our sins are forgiven, we too have peace with God through Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:1).



II. THE PARABLE OF THE UNMERCIFUL SERVANT

Matt. 18:21-35

INTRODUCTION. This parable, found only in Matthew, followed a question by Peter, "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?" (Matt. 18:21). Peter was trained in the law and the prophets as well as Jewish tradition. The Jewish rulers taught that man's duty was to forgive three times but no more. By stretching forgiveness to seven times, Peter had gone well beyond the Jewish tradition. Imagine Peter's surprise when Jesus replied, "seventy times seven," or seventy sevens! The idea is completion times completion or infinity. Jesus then spoke a parable about forgiveness to illustrate God's mercy, justice, and forgiving love.

In the parable the servant owed the king 10,000 talents (about \$10,000,000 or more). The amount was more than could be paid in a lifetime of work. The first servant's fellow servant owed 100 *denarii* (pence, KJV; shillings, ASV) to the first servant. This amount was about \$17.00, a debt that could be paid in time. Although the king forgave the first servant his enormous debt, the servant refused to extend mercy to his fellow servant.

The parable teaches that justice and mercy are equally important. As God's mercy and forgiveness have no bounds, no limits, our mercy and forgiveness of others must likewise have no bounds, no limits.

A. THE PARABLE

1. How many times did Peter suggest that one ought to forgive a brother who had sinned against him? (Matt. 18:21)
2. What was Jesus' answer? (Matt. 18:22)
3. What amount did one servant owe his king? (Matt. 18:23-24)

4. Since the servant could not pay the debt, what did the king propose to do? (Matt. 18:25)

5. What did the servant do? (Matt. 18:26)

6. Describe the king's reaction. What settlement did he make with the servant? (Matt. 18:27)

Note. Although justice demanded payment of the debt, the king granted mercy and forgiveness.

7. How much did the fellow servant owe the first servant? Describe the actions of the first servant. (Matt. 18:28)

8. How did the second servant respond? (Matt. 18:29)

9. How did the first servant conclude the matter? (Matt. 18:30)

Note. Again justice demanded payment of the debt, but the first servant showed no mercy and was unforgiving.

10. When the king was told what occurred, what did he say to the first servant? (Matt. 18:31-33)

11. What was the punishment of the first servant? (Matt. 18:34)

12. What was Jesus' conclusion and interpretation of the parable? (Matt. 18:35)

B. THE LESSON

- » We are servants in God's kingdom and our debt is sin.
- » Justice demands that we pay our debt, but God in his mercy sent his Son to die on the cross to pay the debt for us.
- » As God in his loving kindness has forgiven our sins, we ought to forgive those who sin against us.

LESSON 5 - A PARABLE OF THE LOVE OF ONE'S NEIGHBOR

THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN

Luke 10:25-37

INTRODUCTION. This parable followed a question by a lawyer (scribe). The lawyer asked Jesus what he had to do to inherit eternal life. Jesus asked the lawyer what was written in the law. The lawyer answered correctly—to love God and his neighbor. However, the lawyer, desiring to justify himself, continued by asking Jesus to define "neighbor."

The parable relates the story of a man traveling the road from Jerusalem to Jericho who was beaten, robbed, and left wounded on the side of the road. The city of Jerusalem is located on hills about 2500 feet above sea level. Jericho lies in the Jordan River valley near the north end of the Dead Sea which is some 1200 to 1300 feet below sea level. From Jerusalem the seventeen-mile-long road to Jericho descends 3500 feet, winding between steep and barren cliffs. In Bible times the road was sometimes called the "red" or "bloody way" due to the many bandits that preyed upon the travelers.

Although the story is about the man who was attacked, the main character is the Samaritan. To gain a full appreciation of the parable, it is necessary to understand the origin of the Samaritans and the utter disdain the Jews had for them.

In 931/30 B. C. the United Kingdom of Israel was divided after the death of Solomon into the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. The northern kingdom continued to 722 B. C. when the city of Samaria fell to Shalmaneser V, King of Assyria, after a siege of three years. As a result of this defeat, most of the people of the northern kingdom were carried away into Assyrian captivity. The Assyrians then populated the country with peoples from other conquered nations who intermarried with the Jews that were left. Thus the Samaritans were a mixed race, and the Jews did not normally associate with them.

A. THE PARABLE

1. What question did the lawyer ask of Jesus? (Luke 10:25)
2. What was Jesus' reply? (Luke 10:26)
3. What did the lawyer answer? (Luke 10:27)
4. When Jesus told him he had answered correctly, what did the lawyer ask? (Luke 10:28-29)

Note. The lawyer knew the law, but he wanted to know if love has limits.

5. Describe what happened to the man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho. (Luke 10:30)
6. Who passed by first, and what did he do? (Luke 10:31)
7. Who passed by next, and what did he do? (Luke 10:32)
8. When the Samaritan saw the wounded man, what prompted him to help? (Luke 10:33)
9. Describe the Samaritan's care of the wounded man. (Luke 10:34)
10. What arrangements did the Samaritan make with the innkeeper? (Luke 10:35)

11. What question did Jesus ask the lawyer? (Luke 10:36)
12. What was the lawyer's answer and Jesus' final instruction to him? (Luke 10:37)

Note. The lawyer, refusing to say the despised word "Samaritan," acknowledged that the neighbor was the one who showed mercy.

B. THE LESSON

- » The parable teaches that love and compassion have no limits. "Love your neighbor" includes "love your enemy" (Matt. 5:43-44).
- » The parable illustrates the golden rule, "And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise" (Luke 6:31).
- » Love and compassion must be coupled with action. "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only..." (Jas. 1:22).

*...Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,
and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength,
and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself.
Luke 10:27*



A PARABLE OF JEWS AND GENTILES

THE PARABLE OF THE WICKED HUSBANDMEN

Matt. 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-18

INTRODUCTION. This parable was spoken by Jesus on Tuesday of his final week on earth. By that time the Jewish rulers were actively plotting to put Jesus to death.

The parable is about a man who planted a vineyard. Vineyards were common in Palestine, and grapes were the most important fruit in Judea. After the landowner planted the grapevines, he put a fence of wood or stone or a hedge of thorns around the vineyard to protect it from the wild animals. A watch tower was built in the middle of the vineyard as a lookout against thieves and animals, especially foxes. A winepress was also provided. The press consisted of two vats dug in the ground and lined with stone. The vats were dug on different levels and connected with channels. The grapes were trodden on the upper level, generally by the feet of men, and the juice ran through the openings and was collected in the lower vat.

The parable of the wicked husbandmen is distinct from others in that every detail has meaning:

- the vineyard is the nation of Israel;
- the householder or master of the vineyard is God;
- the husbandmen are the priests, scribes, and elders of the Jews;
- the servants who were sent are the prophets of God;
- the son is Jesus.

A. THE PARABLE AND THE MEANING

1. *God cared for his chosen people, the children of Israel, and "planted" them in the land of Canaan.*
 - a. Describe the vineyard. (Matt. 21:33)
 - b. Before the householder went away, to whom did he lease his vineyard? (Matt. 21:33)

2. *God was patient and sent his prophets to his people.*

- a. What did the husbandmen (vinedressers) do to the servants that came to receive the fruits—the householder's share of the produce? (Matt. 21:34-35)
- b. What did they do to the second group of servants? (Matt. 21:36)

3. *God then sent his own Son.*

- a. How did the householder perceive his son would be received? (Matt. 21:37)
- b. How does Mark describe the son? (Mark 12:6)
- c. Why did the husbandmen kill the son? (Matt. 21:38)

Note. The Jewish rulers plotted the death of Jesus because they feared they would lose their inheritance—their place or position of religious authority, and their nation—the civil government they dominated (John 11:47-53).

- d. Where was the son killed? (Matt. 21:39)
- e. Where was Jesus crucified? (Heb. 13:12)

4. *Because his Son was rejected, God destroyed the nation of Israel. His kingdom was taken from them and given to another nation, the Gentiles.*

- a. Jesus asked his listeners what the lord of the vineyard would do to the husbandmen when he returned. What was their answer? (Matt. 21:40-41)
- b. What did they say the lord would do with his vineyard? (Matt. 21:41)

- c. Jesus asked if they had read the scriptures and quoted Ps. 118:22-23.

"The _____ which the builders rejected, the same is become the _____..." (Matt. 21:42)

Note. Jesus (the stone) who was rejected by the builders (the Jews) was the cornerstone or foundation of the kingdom, the church.

- d. As the vineyard was taken from the wicked husbandmen and given to others, so the kingdom was taken from the Jews and given to whom? (Matt. 21:43)

- e. Paul stated that the salvation of God was sent unto whom? Why? (Acts 28:28)

- f. What will happen to those that fall on the stone (Jesus)? What will happen to those upon whom the stone (Jesus) falls? (Matt. 21:44)

5. When the chief priests and Pharisees heard the parable, what did they perceive? (Matt. 21:45)

6. Although they plotted to kill Jesus, why did they fear to take him at that time? (Matt. 21:46)

B. THE LESSON

- » God demonstrated his patience and longsuffering toward those who opposed him by sending his messengers, the prophets, and then his only beloved Son.
- » Those who reject the Son of God will be cast out of his kingdom, but those who accept Jesus as the Christ and obey his gospel message will be blessed and received into his kingdom.

LESSON 6 - PARABLES OF PRAYING

I. THE PARABLE OF THE FRIEND AT MIDNIGHT

Luke 11:5-13

INTRODUCTION. This parable found only in Luke is an illustration by Jesus to his disciples encouraging prayer. One of the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray. Jesus instructed his disciples in his model prayer, then followed with this parable which teaches the value of persistence in prayer.

A man who had an unexpected visitor late at night had no food to set before his guest. He went to his neighbor's house to borrow bread but found the door barred and shut. Hospitality was very important in Palestine in New Testament times, but it was not unusual to have no bread late at night. Bread was baked by the women each day, but they made only enough to last for one day so there would be no waste. The loaves of bread were about the size of a stone that could be held in one's hand. Three of these small loaves made a meal for one person.

The homes of the poor generally had just one room which was used as sitting room, dining room, and bedroom. The floor was packed earth covered with reeds and rushes. At night the livestock was often brought in the house to prevent their theft by robbers. At one end of the room was a raised platform upon which mats were spread and used as beds for the family. Although the door to the house was left open during the day and anyone could go in and out, when the sun set, the door was closed and barred. Once the family was sleeping, anyone getting up to find a needed item would disturb the whole family.

A. THE PARABLE

1. What time did the man go to his friend's home? What did he request? (Luke 11:5)

2. Why did he disturb his friend at such a late hour? (Luke 11:6)

3. What was the response of the friend? (Luke 11:7)

4. Why did the neighbor arise? (Luke 11:8)

Note. The word importunity or persistence means shamelessness in this instance. The borrower's shameless persistence caused his neighbor to grant his request.

5. Name three ways to approach God. (Luke 11:9-10)

6. When a child asks his father for the things listed below, what does the father *not* give him? (Luke 11:11-12)

- loaf of bread
- fish
- egg

7. What application did Jesus then make to parable? (Luke 11:13)

B. THE LESSON

- » In praying we must ask, seek, and knock. These three ways to approach God emphasize persistence, for seeking is more than asking, and knocking is more than seeking.
- » God will answer our prayers if our petitions are asked in faith and are according to his will.

II. THE PARABLE OF THE IMPORTUNATE WIDOW

Luke 18:1-8

INTRODUCTION. This parable tells the story of a widow who sought justice from a judge. She did not have a lawyer, nor did she have any witnesses to support her claim. Even her adversary did not appear in court. Her chance of being heard by the judge appeared hopeless. Nevertheless, due to her persistence, the judge finally heard her complaint and gave her justice.

A widow in Israel was often poor and had a difficult time. God had pledged to execute justice for the widow (Deut. 10:17-18), and had placed a curse on anyone who perverted justice due her (Deut. 27:19). Even so, widows were generally defenseless and apt to be oppressed by those in power.

The parable of the importunate (persistent, troublesome) widow resembles that of the parable of the friend at midnight, but the friend asked his neighbor for a gift (bread), while the widow asked a judge for justice. The necessity of persistent prayer is the message of both parables.

A. THE PARABLE

1. What is the point of the parable as stated by Jesus? (Luke 18:1)
2. Describe the judge. (Luke 18:2)
3. What did the widow ask of the judge? (Luke 18:3)
4. What was the judge's attitude toward God and toward man? (Luke 18:4)
5. Why did he avenge the widow? (Luke 18:5)

6. Who shall avenge the elect? Why? (Luke 18:6-7)

Note. Jesus contrasts the unrighteous judge with the righteous God, the despised widow with God's elect, and the widow's persistence with the prayers of the elect. Jesus asks, shall not God avenge his elect "though he bear long with them?"

7. God will avenge in what manner? (Luke 18:8)

Note. God may delay avenging his elect in order for them to develop patience and strengthen their faith. Nevertheless, God is just, and at the proper time his justice will come suddenly and speedily.

8. What question did Jesus ask? (Luke 18:8)

Note. Jesus warns his listeners to be persistent in their prayers and not to become discouraged and lose their faith.

B. THE LESSON

- » We ought always to pray and not grow weary.
- » God answers prayer according to his timetable and his will.
- » We must increase our faith daily so that we will be prepared when Jesus comes again.

*As for me, I will call upon God;
and the Lord shall save me.
Evening, and morning, and at noon,
will I pray, and cry aloud:
and he shall hear my voice.
Ps. 55:16-17*

LESSON 7 - PARABLES OF SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HUMILITY

I. THE PARABLE OF THE CHIEF SEATS

Luke 14:7-14

INTRODUCTION. Jesus spoke this parable when He had been invited to eat at the home of a Pharisee on the Sabbath day. At the feast was a man with dropsy, a disease that caused swelling and bloating in the body due to an abnormal accumulation of fluid. Jesus asked the lawyers and Pharisees present if it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath day. Receiving no answer, He healed the man and sent him on his way. Jesus then reasoned with those present, "Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day?" Again there was no answer (Luke 14:1-6). Jesus then spoke this parable.

Large feasts on the Sabbath day were common in New Testament times although the food was prepared before the Sabbath commenced in obedience to the instructions given the Israelites in the wilderness (Ex. 16:23). The tables were arranged in the form of a U. The servants entered the open end and served the guests from the middle area which was left vacant. Around the outer edge of the tables, couches or cushions were placed upon which the guests reclined as they ate. Each couch or cushion generally held three people, with the middle seat regarded as the place of highest honor. In addition, the seats closest to the master of the feast were chief seats and greatly prized.

The exact hour of the meal was not always specified. Those of lower estate generally arrived early as they were grateful for the invitation and eager to participate in the festivities. Those who were of higher importance and esteem, at least in their own eyes, arrived late in order to be seen by all. If one of the early arrivals took a seat that was too high a place, he might be asked to move down to make room for the one of higher honor who had arrived later. This of course would be very humiliating.

A. THE PARABLE

1. Jesus spoke this parable to whom? What had He observed? (Luke 14:1, 7)
2. What did Jesus advise those at the feast? (Luke 14:8)
3. What might the host request? (Luke 14:9)
4. What were Jesus' instructions to those who were invited to a feast? Why? (Luke 14:10)
5. What is the lesson of the parable? (Luke 14:11)
6. What kind of humility does Jesus require? (Matt. 18:4)
7. What humble act did Jesus perform as an example to his disciples? (John 13:1-5)
8. What was the lesson of this example? (John 13:15-16)
9. Jesus told his host that he should not invite only friends and relatives to his feasts. Why? (Luke 14:12)
10. Rather, he should invite the poor and handicapped. Why? (Luke 13-14)

B. THE LESSON

- » Jesus stated the lesson of the parable. "For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 14:11).
- » Our humility and love for others are demonstrated by deeds for which we do not expect to be repaid.

II. THE PARABLE OF THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN

Luke 18:9-14

INTRODUCTION. The setting for this parable is the temple in Jerusalem which was the designated place of prayer. The times of prayer were 9 a.m. and 3 p.m., but men went there at any time if they were near and desired to pray. If one was far away, he directed his prayer toward the temple at the appropriate time. An example of this is Daniel while in Babylonian captivity praying three times daily at his window which faced Jerusalem (Dan. 6:10). In this story two men went to the temple to pray—a Pharisee and a publican. These two men represent the extremes of the Jewish religious and social classes of that day.

THE PHARISEES. This religious group was the strictest sect of the Jews (Acts 26:5). The sentiments of their beliefs began in the hearts and minds of the Jews after their return to the land of Israel from Babylonian captivity in accordance to the decree of Cyrus in 539 B. C. (Ezra 1:1-4). Some of the returning captives believed in a strict separation between themselves and the neighboring heathen peoples. Eventually these Jews became known as Pharisees or "separatists" which is the meaning of the word.

The Pharisees were careful students of the Law of Moses and interpreted the law with exactness, but to the written law they added their traditions. They believed that additions to the written law had been spoken by Moses to the elders of Israel, and that these additions had been passed orally down through the ages, with the prophets also making additions. Thus these oral additions to the law, numbering in the thousands, covered every action of their daily lives and became traditions to be followed as carefully as the written law.

Consequently, the Pharisees separated themselves from those who did not strictly observe these traditions, shunning social contacts and business dealings with them. Becoming haughty and self-righteous, they divided all mankind into two classes: themselves and the rest of the world.

THE PUBLICANS. Taxes, taxes, and more taxes! The Roman governors were in charge of all financial matters. The general or direct taxes were collected by Roman officers as a part of their official duties. These taxes went into the imperial treasury and were very heavy. A census was taken by the Romans in Egypt, and thus perhaps throughout the whole empire, every fourteen years. The purpose of the census was to levy a poll tax—a tax for the privilege of existing.

In addition, the Romans required a certain amount of customs or tolls from a specified area. The right to collect these taxes was sold to the highest bidders called publicans. These publicans or tax collectors paid to Rome the required amount of taxes and then kept for themselves anything they collected over that amount. There were import and export taxes on everything that went in and out of the country: taxes for entering a walled city, market, or harbor; taxes for crossing a bridge; taxes for using roads; taxes on carts hauling merchandise; taxes on each wheel of the cart; taxes on the animal pulling the cart. Taxes, taxes, and more taxes!

Naturally these publicans were extremely unpopular, for many were dishonest and made their living by extorting high taxes from the citizens. Those publicans who were Jews were doubly despised by their fellow countrymen for selling themselves to the Romans. They were considered as sinners and renegades.

THE PARABLE. This parable thus contrasts the haughty, self-righteous attitude of the Pharisee with the humble manner of the publican. The Pharisee prayed a short prayer of "I's." Five times the Pharisee said "I" in his prayer (Luke 18:11-12; KJV, ASV, NKJV, NASB). Although the law set aside one day of the year for fasting, the Day of Atonement now known as Yom Kippur (Lev. 23:27-32), this man fasted twice weekly according to the traditions of the Pharisees. The law required tithing of the fruit of the field and the firstlings of the flocks and herds (Deut. 14:22-23), but this man gave in addition tithes of the tiny herbs of the garden according to the traditions of the Pharisees (Matt. 23:23). In his prayer the Pharisee asked for nothing, confessed nothing, and contrasted his virtues to the sins of the publican.

The publican, meanwhile, stood afar off. He did not lift his eyes to heaven, but smote his breast and prayed for mercy.

The Pharisee full of pride believed he was justified before God, for he had not only kept the law, he had gone beyond it. Yet the publican was the one who went home justified, for he humbled himself and asked for mercy.

A. THE PARABLE

1. To whom was this parable spoken? (Luke 18:9)

Note. The parable is addressed to all with such attitudes. The Pharisee merely becomes the example.

2. Who went to the temple to pray? (Luke 18:10)
3. Describe the Pharisee's prayer. (Luke 18:11-12)
4. Describe the publican's prayer. (Luke 18:13)
5. Which man was justified? Why? (Luke 18:14)
6. To whom is the Lord nigh (near)? Whom does He save? (Ps. 34:18)
7. Whom does God resist? To whom does He give grace? (Jas. 4:6)
8. If we humble ourselves, God will do what? (Jas. 4:10)

B. THE LESSON

- » Jesus stated the lesson of the parable. "...every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 18:14).
- » Those who are humble, asking for God's mercy, will be justified, but those who are self-righteous, confessing nothing and asking for nothing, God will resist.

LESSON NO. 8 - PARABLES OF THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

I. THE PARABLES OF THE RASH BUILDER - THE KING AT WAR

Luke 14:25-35

INTRODUCTION. These two parables, the rash builder and the king at war, are often called twin parables because they were spoken by Jesus together and teach the same lesson—the cost of discipleship. The parables illustrate that discipleship has a price, and one needs to count the cost if he plans to follow Jesus.

The first parable concerns the building of a tower—probably a tower in a vineyard from which a watchman could guard the vineyard. The second parable pertains to a king preparing for war.

Jesus had previously warned his disciples regarding the perils they would face as they preached the gospel of the kingdom.

- To the twelve: "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves..." (Matt. 10:16)
- To the twelve: "But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake..." (Matt. 10:17-18)
- To the twelve: "And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake..." (Matt. 10:22)
- To the seventy: "...behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves." (Luke 10:3)

A. THE TWIN PARABLES

1. How many heard Jesus as He spoke the two parables? (Luke 14:25)

2. In order to come to Jesus, what must one do? (Luke 14:26)

Note. Hate in this passage does not mean despise; rather, it means to love less, or to prefer one thing over another.

3. In order to be a disciple, we must bear what? (Luke 14:27)

4. Before building a tower, the wise builder does what? (Luke 14:28)

5. If the builder is unable to complete his building, what will happen?
(Luke 14:29-30)

6. Before leading an army of 10,000 against another army of 20,000, the wise king will do what? (Luke 14:31)

7. Rather than going into battle against such great odds, the king will do what? (Luke 14:32)

8. In order to be Jesus' disciple, we must do what? (Luke 14:33)

9. If salt has lost its savor (ability to season), it is not fit for anything and men shall do what with it? (Luke 14:34-35)

B. THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP. In another passage Luke tells of three men who wished to follow Jesus and the problems involved.

1. What did the first man tell Jesus? (Luke 9:57)

2. What was Jesus' answer? (Luke 9:58)

Note. Jesus neither accepted nor refused the man's offer—He merely pointed out the reality and cost of following him.

3. When Jesus told a second man to follow him, what did the man request? (Luke 9:59)

4. What was Jesus' reply? (Luke 9:60)

Note. In contrast to the first man who was eager to follow Jesus and had to be cautioned, the second man wanted to delay. Jesus could have had several reasons for the answer He gave, but again the message is count the cost.

5. What did the third man want to do? (Luke 9:61)

6. What was Jesus' answer? (Luke 9:62)

Note. The third man, just as the second man, had something to do that came first. Jesus compared following him to plowing—if the plowman looks back when he is plowing, the rows will be crooked. Once we determine to follow Jesus, we cannot look backward to past joys of the world, for then we will be unfit for the kingdom.

7. The apostle Paul said he did not consider he had attained or laid hold of eternal life, but "...forgetting those things which are _____, and reaching forth unto those things which are _____, I press toward the mark for the _____ of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 3:13-14)

C. THE LESSON

- » Discipleship involves total commitment—only those totally committed to Jesus can be his disciples.
- » Jesus told his listeners the cost of this discipleship. "...whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:33).

II. THE PARABLE OF THE UNPROFITABLE SERVANTS

Luke 17:5-10

INTRODUCTION. In this parable of the unprofitable servants, there is a glimpse of the master-servant relationship during New Testament times. A slave was expected to do whatever his master commanded. When he had performed all that his master commanded, he did not receive any thanks, for he had done only his duty.

The disciples asked Jesus to increase their faith. Jesus told his disciples if they had faith as a grain of mustard seed, they could tell a tree to uproot itself, plant itself in the sea, and it would obey. Jesus then told his disciples this parable to illustrate what it means to be a servant.

Servants do not work for rewards, they work for their master because it is their duty. In the same manner we are the servants of God. When we have done all we possibly can for the kingdom of God, we have done only that which is our duty. We are saved by the grace of God through faith (Eph. 2:8-9). We can never earn our salvation, for it is the gift of God, not payment for our services.

A. THE PARABLE

1. What request did the disciples make of Jesus? (Luke 17:5)
2. Jesus told his disciples if they had faith as small as a mustard seed, they could do what? (Luke 17:6)
3. What duties did the servant perform? (Luke 17:7)
4. When the servant comes in from the field, what does his master expect him to do? (Luke 17:7-8)

5. What reward does the master give his servant? (Luke 17:9)
6. How does this parable illustrate our relationship to God? (Luke 17:10)
7. As servants of God, what do we need? (Ps. 119:125)
8. What is the whole (all) of man? (Eccl. 12:13)
9. What does Paul, a minister of Christ and steward of the mysteries of God, say is required of stewards? (I Cor. 4:1-2)
10. We are saved by the grace of God through faith; it is the _____
of God, not of _____. (Eph. 2:8-9)

B. THE LESSON

- » We are the servants of God. The faithful servant obeys the commands of his master.
- » We cannot earn our salvation; it is the gift of God.

*Know ye that the Lord he is God:
it is he that hath made us,
and not we ourselves;
we are his people,
and the sheep of his pasture.
Psalm 100:3*

LESSON 9 - PARABLES OF THE INVITATION OF GOD

I. THE PARABLE OF THE GREAT SUPPER

Luke 14:15-24

INTRODUCTION. The parable of the great supper was told by Jesus when He was invited to eat at the house of a Pharisee on the Sabbath day. The Pharisee was one of the rulers of the synagogue, and Jesus was invited in order that He might be watched, for the Pharisees were seeking an occasion to accuse him of violating the law (Luke 14:1). He healed a man who had dropsy (Luke 14:2-6) then told the parable of the chief seats (Luke 14:7-11). He admonished his host to entertain the poor, maimed, lame, and blind—those who are distressed, in need of help, and unable to repay the hospitality (Luke 14:12-14).

After Jesus had finished his discourse, one of the guests said, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God" (Luke 14:15). The Jews believed that the kingdom of God would commence with a great festival. Jesus then spoke the parable of the great supper which is about a householder who prepared a great feast.

In New Testament times it was common for the host to plan a feast and invite the guests. At the proper time when the supper was ready, the host then sent his servants to summon the guests. The summons to dinner was to be honored as though it were a command, and to refuse the hospitality was an insult.

In this parable the invited guests refused the summons of the servants by offering various excuses. As a result the host sent his servants into the city streets to bring in the poor, maimed, blind, and lame. When there was still room at the feast, he sent his servants to the country to bring in more guests.

The general meaning of the parable is clear. God sent his servants forth offering the blessings of the kingdom. Those who refuse the invitation and reject Jesus will be excluded from the kingdom. Those who hear the message and receive it will be partakers of the kingdom and in communion with Jesus Christ.

Specifically, the parable teaches that the Jews who were God's chosen people received the original invitation to the kingdom. When they refused the blessings offered by God and rejected his Son, the invitation or gospel was then extended to the Gentiles and others who were more worthy to receive the blessings of the kingdom.

A. THE PARABLE

1. What did one of the guests invited to the home of the Pharisee say? (Luke 14:15)

2. When the "certain man" sent his servants to bid the guests to come to his feast, what happened? (Luke 14:16-18)

Note. The "certain man" who made the great supper represents God.

3. What excuse did the first man offer? (Luke 14:18)

Note. This excuse was one of necessity. Because of his possessions the man could not come, and he asked to be excused.

4. What excuse did the second man give? (Luke 14:19)

Note. This excuse was one concerning the affairs of business. It was not convenient for the man to come, and he asked to be excused.

5. What excuse did the third man make? (Luke 14:20)

Note. This excuse was one regarding social obligations. It was impossible for the man to come, and he did not ask to be excused.

6. When the master heard the report of the servant, what did he instruct him to do? (Luke 14:21)

7. When the servant obeyed, what did he tell his master? (Luke 14:22)
8. What did the lord then command the servant? (Luke 14:23)
9. What did the lord say about the guests who had been invited originally? (Luke 14:24)

B. THE LESSON

- » God has extended his invitation to come and partake of his kingdom. Those who make excuses or delay will lose their place.
- » We should not delay because of the love of possessions, the affairs of business, or social obligations. These become stumbling blocks when they interfere with our service to Christ and his church.
- » There is room in the kingdom.

*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are
heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me;
for I am meek and lowly in heart:
and ye shall find rest unto your souls.
For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.
Matt. 11:28-30*

II. THE PARABLE OF THE MARRIAGE OF THE KING'S SON

Matt. 22:1-14

INTRODUCTION. The parable of the marriage of the king's son is similar to the parable of the great supper, yet there are differences. The two parables were spoken on different occasions. The great supper was told during a meal at the house of a Pharisee. The marriage of the king's son was told at the temple during Jesus' last week on earth. When Jesus related the story of the great supper, the Pharisees and lawyers were watching Jesus, hoping to entrap him. When Jesus spoke the parable of the marriage of the king's son, the Jews were actively plotting to kill him.

In the parable of the great supper, the "certain man" who represents God invited guests to his feast as a friend. The guests simply refused the invitation. In the marriage of the king's son, the host is a king. His feast is his son's marriage supper and, therefore, not to be disregarded. Some of the invited guests were merely indifferent to the invitation, but others rejected it with violence. The king avenged this insult by sending his armies to destroy the murderers and burn their city.

The servants of the king then went to the highways to find guests for the feast as did the servants in the great supper. However, in this parable when the king arrived at the feast, he discovered one of the guests was not dressed in suitable wedding garments. The man was bound and cast into outer darkness.

The meaning of this parable is also clear. The king represents God, the son represents Christ, and the wedding supper represents the blessings of the gospel age, the kingdom. The servants are the messengers who proclaim the gospel message and "all things are ready"—the kingdom is ready to receive the faithful. Those who reject the invitation are the Jews. The armies of the king burning the city possibly refers to the Roman armies who destroyed and burned Jerusalem in A. D. 70, for God has often used heathen nations to execute his vengeance.

The servants then take the gospel message to the Gentiles. Both bad and good are called. The arrival of the king signifies the judgment, and the one without the wedding garment represents those who have not "put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27). The man is excluded from the kingdom and cast into outer darkness. "For many are called, but few are chosen" (Matt. 22:14).

A. THE PARABLE

1. The kingdom of heaven is like a _____ who made a _____ for his _____. (Matt. 22:1-2)
2. What happened when the servants were sent to summon the guests? (Matt. 22:3)
3. When the king sent other servants forth, what were they to tell the guests? (Matt. 22:4)
4. What did the invited guests do? (Matt. 22:5-6)
5. What did the king do in his anger? (Matt. 22:7)
6. What did the king say about the invited guests? (Matt. 22:8)
7. Where were the servants to go next, and whom were they to gather? (Matt. 22:9-10)

8. When the king arrived, what did he see? (Matt. 22:11)

Note. The custom in some societies was for a king or wealthy host to supply each guest at a feast with clothes made especially for the occasion. The garment was a vest that could be placed over the person's clothes or a mantle that was hung on the shoulders. Refusing the gift would be a sign of contempt and a gross insult to the host, and in some instances worthy of death.

9. What did the host say to the man? What was the man's reaction? (Matt. 22:12)

Note. The man was without excuse and stood self-condemned.

10. What did the king command? (Matt. 22:13)

11. What is the conclusion of the parable? (Matt. 22:14)

12. How do we put on Christ? (Gal. 3:27)

13. In Rev. 19:7-8 there is a picture of the marriage of the Lamb (Christ) and his bride (the church).

a. Describe the clothes of the bride.

b. What do these clothes represent?

B. THE LESSON

- » Many are called by the gospel but few are chosen.
- » The Jews were called by God to be his chosen people, but when they rejected his Son, their city and nation were destroyed.
- » Those who are called to the kingdom must put on Christ and clothe themselves in garments of righteousness.

LESSON 10 - PARABLES OF REPENTANCE NO. 1

I. THE PARABLE OF THE LOST SHEEP

Matt. 18:12-14; Luke 15:3-7

INTRODUCTION. The parable of the lost sheep is about a shepherd who cares for a hundred sheep, and when one becomes lost, he seeks it until he finds it. The shepherd in the parable represents Jesus who is the good shepherd (John 10:1-18).

Although this parable is recorded in both Matthew and Luke, it is likely Jesus spoke the parable on two different occasions. In Matthew, Jesus was discussing humility with his disciples and called a little child to him as a model of true humility. Jesus told his disciples in order to enter the kingdom, one must humble himself and become as a little child. Just as the Son of man is come to save that which is lost, the parable tells of the shepherd who cares for his sheep and seeks the one that wanders away. God cares for his people and is not willing for any of these "little ones" to perish (Matt. 18:1-14).

In Luke's account of the parable, publicans and sinners surrounded Jesus in order to hear him. This caused the Pharisees and scribes to be offended and murmur that Jesus received sinners and ate with them. Although the publicans (tax collectors) were themselves Jews, they were considered as traitors because of their dealings with the Romans. They were social outcasts as were the "sinners," those who failed to observe the traditions of the elders, particularly the regulations regarding washing and purification. As Jesus came to seek and save the lost, He associated with all classes of the Jewish social order. He spoke the parable of the lost sheep to this crowd and compared the publicans and sinners to the lost sheep. The shepherd in the story searched for his one sheep that had strayed. Finding the lost sheep, he carried it home on his shoulders rejoicing. In the same manner Jesus searches for those who are lost, and there is joy and rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents.

The shepherd was a familiar figure in Palestine. His equipment consisted of a *rod*, *staff*, *water-skin*, *scrip*, and *sling*.

The *rod* was like a shepherd's crook, used for walking and catching wandering sheep. At night the shepherd held his rod across the entrance to the sheepfold, and each sheep had to pass under it. The shepherd could then quickly inspect each sheep as it passed under the rod into the fold. The *staff* was a sturdy stick about three or four feet long with a knob of wood on the top. This was the shepherd's weapon with which he could beat off wild animals or thieves.

The *water-skin* contained water for the shepherd, and the *scrip* held his food. The *sling* was extremely important, and shepherds were experts in the use of a sling—consider David's encounter with Goliath (1 Sam. 17). The shepherd did not have a dog to help with the herding. Instead he used the sling to drop a stone in front of a straying sheep to turn it back to the herd.

In New Testament times sheep were used for their wool and seldom for eating. As a result the shepherd knew his sheep and called them by name. Likewise, the sheep knew their master's voice and responded to the call of no other. The shepherd walked in front of the sheep, leading them, and risking his life for them. He was the first to encounter the dangers—wild animals, robbers, dangerous rocky areas. At night the shepherd laid across the entrance to the fold, for there was no gate; thus he was the door to the sheepfold. The shepherd had to produce the fleece of any sheep that was missing. Therefore, when a sheep strayed from the flock, the shepherd tracked and searched until he found it, dead or alive. When the sheep was found alive, there was great rejoicing.

A. THE PARABLE

1. How many sheep are in the parable? (Luke 15:3-4)

2. What does the shepherd do when one sheep is lost? (Luke 15:4)

Note. The wilderness in this instance is a grassy area which is the normal place of pasture and the proper place to leave the flock.

3. What does the shepherd do when he finds the lost sheep? (Luke 15:5)

4. What does he do when he arrives home with the lost sheep? (Luke 15:6)

5. What is the meaning of the parable? (Luke 15:7)

B. THE LESSON

- » Jesus is the good shepherd who seeks and saves the lost (John 10:1-18; Matt. 18:11; Luke 19:10).
- » There is constant joy in heaven over the many who are righteous and faithful, but when one sinner repents, there is sudden and great rejoicing over this lost one who enters the fold of God.



II. THE PARABLE OF THE LOST COIN

Luke 15:8-10

INTRODUCTION. The parable of the lost coin forms a pair with the parable of the lost sheep, and they both have the same general meaning. A woman who had ten silver coins lost one of the coins in her house. She lit a lamp and swept until she found it, then she called her neighbors to rejoice with her. The lost coin like the lost sheep represents the lost sinner. However, unlike the lost sheep that wanders and strays by itself, the coin was lost because someone lost it. It is tragic when one sins, but it is even worse when one causes another to sin. In addition, the sheep knows when it is lost, but the coin did not know it was lost just as some people are unaware of their lost condition. In both parables there is great joy and rejoicing in heaven over the repentance of one lost sinner.

Houses of the poor class in Palestine generally had just one or two rooms and the space was shared with the animals. Some houses were constructed without windows, but others had a small opening near the ceiling for ventilation. Consequently, the houses were dark. The floors might be packed dirt covered with reeds and rushes. Others were made of large stones with sizable cracks between them.

The coin in the parable was the Greek *drachma* which was nearly equal to the Roman *denarius*, worth about seventeen cents and equal to one day's wage. If the coin was part of the household treasury, its loss would be a large financial hardship. More likely, the coin was part of a necklace or headdress worn by a Jewish woman and part of her dowry. The item was the sign of a married woman and equivalent to our modern wedding ring. Losing one of the pieces of this ornament would, therefore, cause dismay and worry because the sentimental value would be as great as the monetary value.

A. THE PARABLE

1. How many pieces of silver did the woman have, and how many did she lose? (Luke 15:8)
2. What did she do to find the coin? (Luke 15:8)
3. When she found the coin, what did she do? (Luke 15:9)
4. What occurs when a sinner repents? (Luke 15:10)
5. Jesus came to seek and save the lost, but what is the mission of all disciples of Christ? Who will be saved? (Mark 16:15-16)

B. THE LESSON

- » As the woman searched carefully for her coin, so Christians must diligently seek the lost and preach the gospel in order to save sinners.
- » Christians must be careful they do not cause others to stumble and sin.
- » There is great joy and rejoicing by the angels over one sinner who repents.

*It is impossible but that offences will come:
but woe unto him, through whom they come!
It were better for him that a millstone were
hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea...
Luke 17:1-2*

III. THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON

Luke 15:11-32

INTRODUCTION. In the fifteenth chapter of Luke, Jesus spoke three parables—the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son, or sometimes appropriately referred to as the lost son. It is important to remember to whom Jesus was speaking. Jesus was surrounded by two groups—the publicans (tax collectors) and sinners who were the moral outcasts of Jewish society, and the self-righteous Pharisees and scribes. The Pharisees' concept of God was that He approved of good people but had no use for sinners. In these three parables Jesus teaches that God seeks the sinner, waiting and watching for him to come and partake of the blessings of the kingdom, and that there is great joy in heaven over one sinner who repents. Jesus called the publicans and sinners to repent, and He called the Pharisees and scribes to accept the sinner and rejoice in his salvation.

The parable of the prodigal son is about a father and his two sons. The younger son, tiring of parental supervision, asked his father for his portion of the inheritance. The Jewish laws of inheritance were specific—the elder son was to receive a double portion (Deut. 21:17). In this case the elder son would receive two-thirds of the inheritance and the younger son one-third.

After receiving his portion, the younger son went to a far country and spent all he had in riotous or wasteful living. When a famine arose his only means of employment was feeding swine, the unclean animals Jews were forbidden to eat or touch (Lev. 11:1-8). He even desired the food of the pigs, probably the seed pod of the carob tree of which the pod or husk alone was eaten.

Presently the young man "came to himself" and decided to return to his father, confess his sin, and ask to become a hired servant. There were three classes of servants on a Jewish estate: there were the bondservants who belonged to the master but enjoyed numerous privileges (Ex. 21:2-6; Lev. 25:39-46); there were the lower class servants who were subordinate to the bondmen (Luke 12:45); there were the

temporary hired servants who were hired on a daily basis. Thus the son intended to ask his father to make him a hired servant, one of the lowest rank. However, he never had the opportunity to make the request.

While the returning son was still afar off, his father ran to him to greet him. When the young man confessed his sin, his father interrupted him and ordered that his son be honored with three significant items: the robe, the best robe, kept for special guests and festive occasions; the ring, the signet ring, symbolizing authority; sandals, signifying sonship, for slaves went barefoot. The fatted calf was killed and there was a merry feast.

Unlike the two previous parables, this one does not end with the joyful celebration. The father had an elder son who was angry and envious of the honor bestowed upon his brother. As the younger son, the prodigal, symbolized the publicans and sinners, the elder son represented the self-righteous Pharisees who would rather see punishment for sinners than forgiveness. The elder son was a good man, but his goodness was hard and cold, without love and mercy.

The loving father, the real hero of the story, is a reflection of the merciful God. He was forgiving and rejoiced when his younger lost son repented and was found. He pleaded tenderly with the elder son to accept his brother and celebrate his return. The father told his elder son, "...all that I have is thine." The inheritance had already been divided, all that remained belonged to the elder son. These words of the father declare the nature of the kingdom of God, for all spiritual blessings are to be found in the heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 1:3).

A. THE PARABLE

1. This story concerns what three characters? (Luke 15:11)
2. What did the younger son ask of his father? (Luke 15:12)

3. What did he do some days later? (Luke 15:13)
4. What happened when he had spent all his inheritance? (Luke 15:14)
5. What occurred next? (Luke 15:15-16)
6. How did he reason with himself? (Luke 15:17)
7. What did he determine to tell his father when he returned home? (Luke 15:18-19)
8. What occurred when he was still afar off? (Luke 15:20)
- Note.* The kiss indicated reconciliation and peace.
9. What did the son tell his father? (Luke 15:21)
10. What did the father order? (Luke 15:22-23)
11. What did the father tell the servants about his son? (Luke 15:24)
12. Where was the elder son? What did he hear as he returned home? (Luke 15:25)
13. Whom did he call to inquire about what he heard? What was the response? (Luke 15:26-27)

14. What was the elder son's reaction? Who pleaded with him? (Luke 15:28)

15. What was the elder son's complaint? (Luke 15:29-30)

16. What was the father's answer? (Luke 15:31)

17. How does the parable end? (Luke 15:32)

Note. The parable ends without our knowing what the elder brother did. He had been working in the field, but his father invited him to the feast. In the same manner the Pharisees who had been careful to do the works of the law were invited by Jesus to partake of the joys of the kingdom. Did they accept the invitation?

B. THE LESSON

- » God is loving and forgiving, waiting and watching for sinners to repent and come to him.
- » There is great joy and celebration in heaven when one sinner repents.
- » Christians must be forgiving, too, accepting those who repent and rejoicing in their salvation.

*...Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.
It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad:
for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again;
and was lost, and is found.
Luke 15:31-32*

LESSON 11 - PARABLES OF REPENTANCE NO. 2

I. THE PARABLE OF THE BARREN FIG TREE

Luke 13:6-9

INTRODUCTION. Fig trees were important in Palestine and symbolic of Israel's prosperity. During Solomon's reign as king, a time of peace and great prosperity, "And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon" (1 Kings 4:25).

Fig trees are cultivated all over the land of Palestine and especially in the mountain areas. The trees grow generally 10 to 15 feet high, and their thick foliage provides dense shade in the summer. In warm climates such as Israel, the fig tree produces two crops each year, an early one which is ripe about June, and a later, more important one which is ripe about August.

By December the leaves of the fig tree have shed and the trees are bare until the end of March when the leaf buds begin to appear. At the same time, tiny figs begin to grow. When they reach the size of a cherry, most of them fall to the ground. These "unripe" and "immature figs" are called *taksh* and may be and are eaten as they fall. Some of these immature figs remain on the tree, ripen to perfection about June, and are then known as "early figs" or "first-ripe" (Isa. 28:4; Jer. 24:2; Hos. 9:10). The first-ripe figs are greatly desired for their delicate flavor (Mic. 7:1). These first-ripe figs grow on the old wood of the tree, while the second crop which ripens in August grows upon the new spring shoots of the tree.

The fig tree in this parable was planted in a vineyard. For three years the owner had sought fruit upon the tree and had been disappointed—the tree was barren. He told the vinedresser to cut the tree down, for not only was the tree unproductive, it occupied space which might be more profitably used. In addition, the tree took nourishment from the soil needed for the grapevines. But the vinedresser pleaded for one more year to care for the tree, and if it did not bear then, he would cut it down.

Jesus spoke this parable when He was told of the Galilaeans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices (Luke 13:1-2). Jesus said that those slain were not sinners above other Galilaeans, and further gave the example of the tower in Siloam falling and killing eighteen (Luke 13:4). In both cases the point was "...except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3, 5).

In the parable, then, the owner of the vineyard represents God, the fig tree denotes the Jewish nation, and the vinedresser depicts Christ offering a final opportunity to the Jews to repent. God had nurtured his people, the children of Israel, protected and carefully cultivated them, but they were fruitless and unproductive, deserving to be destroyed. However, Jesus, the vinedresser, interceded on their behalf, and they were allowed further opportunity to repent. The parable ends with the door of repentance left open and the time of grace extended. Nevertheless, there is a limit to the patience and longsuffering of God, and when the Jews failed to heed the call to repentance, God allowed the Romans to destroy their nation and cities in A. D. 70.

A. THE PARABLE

1. What did a certain man plant? Where did he plant it? (Luke 13:6)

2. When he came seeking fruit, what did he find? (Luke 13:6)

3. How long had he been seeking the fruit? (Luke 13:7)

4. What did he tell the vinedresser to do? (Luke 13:7)

5. In addition to the fact that the tree was unproductive, what other reason did the man give for cutting it down? (Luke 13:7)

6. What did the vinedresser request, and what would he do? (Luke 13:8)
7. What would be the fate of the tree? (Luke 13:9)
8. How do we glorify God and become disciples of Jesus? (John 15:8)
9. What about the patience and longsuffering of God? (II Pet. 3:9)
10. What will occur when the day of the Lord comes? (II Pet. 3:10)

B. THE LESSON

- » To be disciples of Jesus, we must bear fruit.
- » God is merciful and patient, not willing that any perish, but that all come to repentance.
- » When God's patience is exhausted and the time for man's repentance has ended, judgment will occur.



First-ripe and Second Figs

II. THE PARABLE OF THE TWO SONS

Matt. 21:23-32

INTRODUCTION. The parable of the two sons followed the questioning of the authority of Jesus by the chief priests and elders. Jesus countered their question by one of his own—was the baptism of John from heaven or men? The chief priests could not answer the question. If they said, "from heaven," then they would be condemned for not believing John. If they said, "from men," they feared the multitude who believed John was a prophet. Jesus then spoke the parable.

A man who owned a vineyard had two sons. The father asked the first son to go work in the vineyard. He flatly and rudely refused, but later repented and went. The father asked the second son to go to the vineyard and work. The second son politely and respectfully agreed, but did not. Which of the two sons did the will of the father? (*Note: the text regarding the actions of the two sons varies depending on the version of the Bible used.*)

Although this parable is a simple story, the application and meaning are significant. The first son (second son in some versions), who refused his father but repented, represents the publicans (tax collectors) and sinners of Jesus' day who openly transgressed the laws of God. However, when John the Baptist preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3), these social and moral outcasts believed and repented, doing the will of the Father.

The second son (first son in some versions), who agreed to work but did not, represents the religious leaders, chief priests, and elders. They were proud of their righteousness and works of the law. Nevertheless, they did not believe the preaching of John, and when they saw the repentance of the publicans and sinners, they still did not believe. They professed zeal for the Father with an outward display of obedience, but inwardly they refused the word of God.

A. THE PARABLE

1. What question did the chief priests and elders ask Jesus? (Matt. 21:23)
2. What question did Jesus ask the religious leaders? (Matt. 21:24-25)
3. What problem did this present to the religious leaders? (Matt. 21:25-26)
4. What was the religious leaders' answer to Jesus, and what was his reply to them? (Matt. 21:27)
5. Jesus then spoke the parable. When the man with two sons asked his first son to work in the vineyard, what was the answer? (The answer may differ depending on the Bible version used.) (Matt. 21:28-29)
6. What response did the second son give to his father? (Again the answer may differ depending on the Bible version used.) (Matt. 21:30)
7. When Jesus asked the religious leaders, who did the will of the father, what was their answer? (Again the answer may differ.) (Matt. 21:31)
8. What did Jesus tell these men about the publicans and sinners? (Matt. 21:31)
9. What contrast did Jesus make between these religious leaders and the publicans and sinners? (Matt. 21:32)
10. One time when Jesus was teaching the multitudes, He spoke to them about John. What had the publicans done when they heard the message of John? What had the Pharisees and lawyers done? (Luke 7:29-30)

B. THE LESSON

- » James gives a brief but pointed lesson for the parable of the two sons. "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only..." (Jas. 1:22).

LESSON 12 - PARABLES OF THE IMPORTANCE OF PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

I. THE PARABLE OF THE RICH FOOL

Luke 12:13-21

INTRODUCTION. As Jesus was teaching the multitude one day, a man in the crowd asked him to judge a family dispute. The man and his brother were quarreling over their inheritance. The laws of inheritance were clear—the eldest son received a double portion of the inheritance, and the remainder was divided equally among the other children (Deut. 21:17). Jesus refused to become a judge in earthly matters, for his mission was to attend to the spiritual concerns of the people. Jesus gave a warning against covetousness and then spoke the parable of the rich fool.

This parable is a story about a rich farmer and his covetousness. Apparently the farmer was honest and industrious. He had gained his wealth from the productivity of his land which was a blessing from God. Then one year his harvest was so great he did not know where to store it. He devised a plan to hoard his possessions and enjoy a life of comfort and pleasure, but suddenly and unexpectedly death called and his soul was required.

Barns in Palestine were generally caves and underground pits or cisterns where grain could be stored. The storage pits were carefully prepared and dry, preserving the grain for long periods. In addition, since they were underground, the pits were concealed from robbers. In this parable, the farmer planned to enlarge the pits by pulling down the old walls and extending them.

Notice in the parable the rich man's use of "I" and "my." His thoughts were only of himself. His surplus could have been shared with his neighbors and the poor. Although his blessings were from God, God was not in his plans. He had forgotten the two great commandments—"love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" and "love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matt. 22:37-39).

A. THE PARABLE

1. What did one from the multitude ask Jesus? What was Jesus' answer? (Luke 12:13-14)
2. What warning did Jesus give the man? (Luke 12:15)
3. What problem did the rich man have? (Luke 12:16-17)
4. How did he plan to solve his problem? (Luke 12:18)
5. What did he propose to do with his storehouse of goods? (Luke 12:19)
6. What had God determined for the man? (Luke 12:20)
7. What about the man's wealth? (Luke 12:20)
8. What problem do we have when we lay up treasures for ourselves? (Luke 12:21)
9. Where should we lay up our treasures? Why? (Matt. 6:19-21)
10. What should we seek first? (Matt. 6:33)

B. THE LESSON

- » Covetousness is idolatry (Col. 3:5).
- » We need to prepare for the future by storing our treasures in heaven, not on earth (Matt. 6:19-21).

II. THE PARABLE OF THE WATCHFUL SERVANTS

Luke 12:35-40

INTRODUCTION. We do not know the hour the Son of man comes. In this parable Jesus presented to his disciples two illustrations for watchfulness. The first illustration promises a joyful occasion, the second is a warning of impending calamity.

In the first incident servants were admonished to watch for the return of their lord who was at a wedding. Whatever time the lord knocked, the servants were expected to immediately open the door and receive their lord with honor. Then the joyful event took place, for the master took the place of the servants. He made his servants sit at his table, and he served them.

The second illustration concerned a robbery. If the master of the house had known what hour the thief was coming, he would have watched and prevented the theft from occurring. Houses in New Testament times were built of stone or clay. The roofs consisted of light beams laid across the walls, with the spaces between filled with clay, closely packed rushes and reeds. It was relatively easy for thieves to dig a hole in the walls or roof, break through, and plunder the house.

The meaning of the parable is clear. The disciples and all believers are told to watch and wait for the Lord's return which involves both a great promise and a warning. To those who are prepared, the coming of Jesus will be a joyous event. Jesus, like the master in the parable, will reward those servants who are faithful and watching. For those who are unprepared, Jesus' coming will be sudden and unexpected, like a thief who breaks in and brings disaster.

A. THE PARABLE

1. What instructions did Jesus give to his disciples? (Luke 12:35)
2. They were to be like servants waiting for what? (Luke 12:36)

3. When the lord returns, what will he do for the faithful servants? (Luke 12:37)
4. The servants will be blessed if they are watching even If the master comes at what time? (Luke 12:38)
5. How can the master prevent the thief from breaking into his house? (Luke 12:39)
6. Why does Jesus warn us to be ready? (Luke 12:40)

B. THE LESSON

- » The primary application of the parable is the second coming of Jesus. We must be prepared for no man knows the hour of Jesus' return.
- » There is a secondary principle which applies to every individual. We must be prepared for no one knows when death will come.

*Blessed are those servants, whom the lord
when he cometh shall find watching...
Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man
cometh at an hour when ye think not.
Luke 12:37, 40*

III. THE PARABLE OF THE UNJUST STEWARD

Luke 16:1-9

INTRODUCTION. The parable of the unjust steward is probably the most difficult of all the parables to understand. In New Testament times a wealthy man hired a manager or steward to oversee his estate. The steward was responsible to his master, but he had charge of his master's possessions and controlled large sums of money. This was a position of trust but often presented opportunity for dishonesty.

In this story the steward was accused of wasting his master's goods. The rich man, the master, called the steward to make an accounting, and then he discharged him. The steward quickly had to devise a plan. He couldn't dig nor could he beg for a living, so he contrived a way to make friends so they would receive him into their homes when he lost his stewardship.

He called his master's debtors one by one. To each one he reduced the amount of debt, telling each to write a new contract. The lord commended the steward for his shrewdness. He did not approve of the steward's dishonesty, but the lord admired his wisdom in preparing for his future. The parable teaches that the sons of light or the spiritually minded must use their worldly possessions to secure spiritual treasures. The world and all it contains belong to God (Ps. 24:1), and we are the stewards of God's possessions. Therefore, we must use wisely what God has entrusted into our care in order that we will be received into the heavenly kingdom.

A. THE PARABLE

1. Of what was the steward accused? (Luke 16:1)
2. What did the rich man tell his steward? (Luke 16:2)
3. How did the steward reason within himself? (Luke 16:3)

4. What did he resolve to do? (Luke 16:4)

5. What was the amount owed by the first debtor? What did the steward tell him to do? (Luke 16:5-6)

Note. One hundred measures of oil was a great quantity of oil, approximately 900 gallons. The debtor willingly collaborated with the dishonest steward.

6. What was the amount owed by the second debtor? What did the steward tell him to do? (Luke 16:7)

Note. One hundred measures of wheat was approximately 1000 bushels. Again, the second debtor also agreed to reduce his debt and thus defraud the lord.

7. Why did the lord commend the unrighteous steward? (Luke 16:8)

Note. The steward was unrighteous, but the lord commended him, not for his dishonesty, but for his wisdom (shrewdness).

8. The sons of the world are wiser (shrewder) than who? (Luke 16:8)

Note. Jesus states that the people of the world sometimes use better judgment in caring for their worldly treasures and affairs, than do the sons of light (the people of God) in preparing for their heavenly treasures and spiritual futures.

9. Jesus instructed his disciples to make friends by means of mammon, that when they fail they will be received into what? (Luke 16:9)

Note. The application of the parable is found in this verse. The steward used mammon of unrighteousness (worldly possessions, and in this case not his own) to make friends who would support him when he was dismissed from his stewardship. He prepared for his future on earth. As disciples of Jesus we should prepare for our spiritual future by using our worldly possessions wisely and unselfishly to gain God's favor that we may be received into heaven when "ye fail"

(when we die—KJV, NKJV), or “it fails” (the mammon—ASV, NASB), for we cannot take our earthly wealth with us into eternal life.

10. Verses 10-13 further explain the parable. In these verses faithfulness is commended rather than shrewdness or prudence.

- a. Those that are faithful in _____ are faithful in _____; those that are unrighteous in _____ are unrighteous in _____. (Luke 16:10)
- b. If we are not faithful in the unrighteous mammon (worldly possessions), how can we be trusted with _____? (Luke 16:11)
- c. If we are not faithful in what belongs to another, who will give us _____. (Luke 16:12)
- d. No servant can serve two masters. Why? (Luke 16:13)

B. THE LESSON

- » We are the stewards of God's creation.
- » We must prepare for the future by using our worldly possessions wisely in order that we will be received into heaven by God and entrusted with the true riches.

*No servant can serve two masters:
for either he will hate the one, and love the other;
or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other.
Ye cannot serve God and mammon.
Luke 16:13*

IV. THE PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS

Matt. 25:1-13

INTRODUCTION. The parable of the ten virgins is a story based on the wedding customs of Palestine in New Testament times. There were two stages to a Jewish marriage.

First there was the betrothal which was a promise of marriage and a binding agreement. Although the betrothed couple did not live together, they were considered legally married. Breaking the agreement required a bill of divorcement. Unfaithfulness was considered adultery (Deut. 22:23-24).

The second stage was a ceremony that involved "bringing home the bride." The bridegroom's friends escorted the bride and her attendants from the bride's home to the home of the groom. Generally the procession occurred at night with the participants carrying torches. As the procession wound along the streets of the city or village, the onlookers would shout with joy.

After the wedding party entered the groom's house, a marriage supper followed. The festivities continued for a week with the bride and groom treated as royalty, wearing their finest clothes and doing no work. Love songs were sung, speeches were made in honor of the couple, and elaborate feasts were prepared for the guests.

This parable then is a description of the festive occasion known as "bringing home the bride." However, the story does not concern the bride, but rather the young virgins who were part of the wedding party. Young women, virgins, prepared the bride at her home to receive her bridegroom. The exact time of his arrival was unknown, and in this case, he was delayed. When the bridegroom did arrive to claim his bride, the joyous procession to the groom's home began. Since these festivities occurred at night, the attendants of the bride and groom carried torches for illumination.

The lamps or torches were made of oil-drenched rags inserted in a copper vessel which was attached to a long pole. The lamp contained very little oil, and a fresh supply had to be added frequently. The reserve supply of oil was carried in another vessel in the other hand of the torchbearer.

In the parable, five of the young women or virgins were wise and five were foolish. All took their lamps, but only five took an extra supply of oil. When it was time to meet the bridegroom and join the procession, the five foolish virgins did not have enough oil to keep their lamps burning. While they went to find more oil, the procession concluded, and the five foolish virgins were shut out of the feast.

The parable represents Jesus as the bridegroom and his return. Those who are wise will constantly endeavor to do the will of God and thus be prepared for Jesus' coming. Those who are foolish and negligent will be unprepared and excluded from the kingdom when Jesus returns.

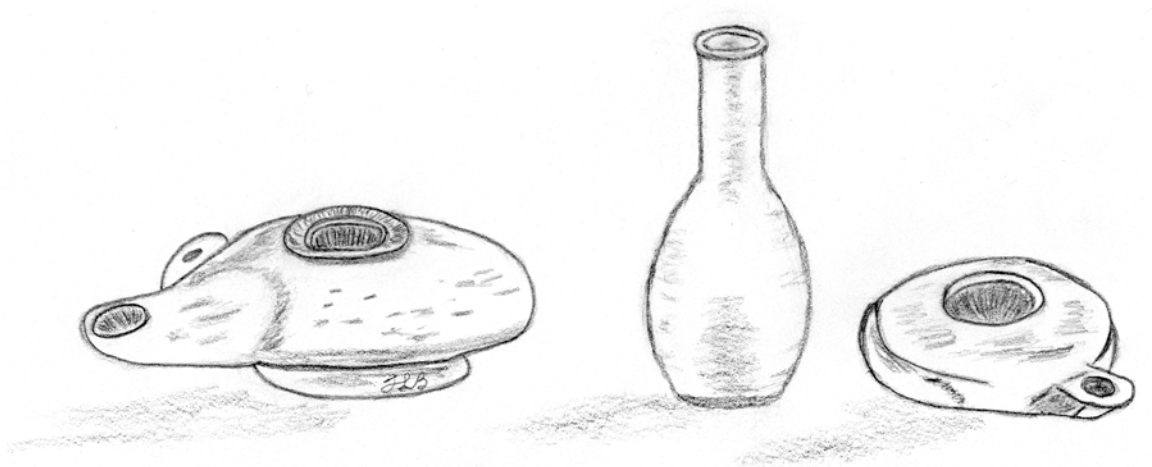
A. THE PARABLE

1. The kingdom of heaven is like what? (Matt. 25:1)
2. Describe the ten virgins. (Matt. 25:2-4)
3. What did they do while the bridegroom tarried? (Matt. 25:5)
4. When did the bridegroom come? What did the virgins do? (Matt. 25:6-7)
5. What did the foolish virgins ask of the wise virgins? (Matt. 25:8)
6. What did the wise virgins answer? (Matt. 25:9)

7. While the foolish virgins were away, what occurred? (Matt. 25:10)
8. When the foolish virgins arrived, what did they say? (Matt. 25:11)
9. What was the answer? (Matt. 25:12)
10. What is the application of the parable? (Matt. 25:13)

B. THE LESSON

- » We do not know when Christ will come again.
- » We must watch and be prepared which is the responsibility of each individual.



LESSON NO. 13 - PARABLES OF INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

I. THE PARABLE OF THE POUNDS

Luke 19:11-27

INTRODUCTION. The parable of the pounds and the parable of the talents are quite similar, but there are differences. The times and places are different. The parable of the pounds was spoken to multitudes as Jesus journeyed to Jerusalem from Jericho for the Passover feast, his last before his crucifixion. The parable of the talents was spoken to the disciples as Jesus and the twelve were on the Mount of Olives on the third day after Jesus had entered Jerusalem. In the parable of the pounds the master gave the same amount of money to each servant. He did not demand the same result from each, for he knew each had different abilities. In the parable of the talents, the master entrusted different amounts to each servant. Each was given an amount according to his ability.

In the parable of the pounds a nobleman went to a far country to receive a kingdom. He gave each of his ten servants a pound (*mina*—approximately 100 *drachmas* or \$17.00–\$20.00, the amount of wages for 100 days). He instructed the servants to use the money for trade. Meanwhile, the citizens who hated the nobleman sent ambassadors after him with the message that they did not want him to reign over them.

When the nobleman returned, he called his servants for an accounting. The first and second servants each reported a profit and were rewarded. The third returned the pound, criticizing the nobleman and giving excuses for not gaining a profit. The nobleman ordered that the pound be taken from the unprofitable servant. Then he commanded that his enemies who had rebelled against him be slain before him.

The parable not only refers to Jesus' second coming, but also describes in part an incident in history. When Herod the Great died in 4 B. C., his son Archelaus (Matt. 2:22) traveled to Rome in order to receive approval from Caesar to become king in his father's place. While he was on his journey, the Jews sent fifty messengers to

Caesar stating they did not want Archelaus to rule over them. Nevertheless, Caesar appointed him ruler over Judea, Samaria, and Idumaea. Just as Archelaus went to Rome and eventually returned, so Jesus went to heaven and will return at the appointed time.

Jesus spoke the parable of the pounds because the multitude following him supposed the kingdom was about to appear. They expected Jesus to receive a crown at Jerusalem. They did not as yet understand that his kingdom was a spiritual kingdom. The parable was meant to teach that there would be an interim between Jesus' first and second comings and that patience and faithful service were necessary during his absence.

In the parable the nobleman represents Jesus. As the nobleman went to a far country, so Jesus went to heaven. As the nobleman gave his servants money and expected them to work in his absence, so Jesus gives us gifts and blessings and expects us to be fruitful during his absence. As the nobleman commanded that his enemies be slain when he returned, so Jesus will bring vengeance upon his enemies when He comes again (II Thess. 1:7-9).

A. THE PARABLE

1. Why did Jesus speak this parable? (Luke 19:11)
2. Where did the nobleman go and why? (Luke 19:12)
3. What did he give each of his servants, and what were his instructions? (Luke 19:13)
4. What did the citizens do and why? (Luke 19:14)

5. When the nobleman returned, having received his kingdom, he called his servants for an accounting. Fill in the chart. (Luke 19:13, 15-20, 24)

<i>Servant</i>	<i>Pounds Received</i>	<i>Pounds Gained</i>	<i>Reward</i>
-----------------------	-------------------------------	-----------------------------	----------------------

No. 1

No. 2

No. 3

6. What excuses did the third servant make? (Luke 19:21)
7. What was the nobleman's answer? (Luke 19:22)
8. What should the servant have done? (Luke 19:23)
9. When the nobleman commanded those standing by to take the pound from the lazy servant and give it to the man with the ten, what did they say? (Luke 19:24-25)
10. What is the point of the parable? (Luke 19:26)
11. What was to be done to the nobleman's enemies? (Luke 19:27)

B. THE LESSON

- » Jesus has given each of his followers gifts and opportunities to perform service in his absence.
- » Each is responsible for what has been entrusted to him.
- » Those who are industrious and use what has been entrusted to them to the best of their ability will be rewarded according to their efforts. Those who do not use their trust and perform their tasks shall lose all.

II. THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

Matt. 25:14-30

INTRODUCTION. The parable of the talents follows directly the one of the ten virgins in Matthew. While the parable of the ten virgins teaches the importance of watching and preparing for the judgment, the parable of the talents teaches the importance of working while watching for the master's return. Like the parable of the pounds, the talents is an exhortation to the followers of Jesus to use the gifts entrusted to them during his absence. Although the parable was spoken primarily to the twelve disciples, the application is for all believers.

In the story a man called his three servants to him before he left for a far country. He divided his goods among his servants and gave to each amounts or talents according to his ability. He expected the servants to use the talents and make a profit. A talent in New Testament times was not a coin, but a weight—a sum of money weighing a talent and varying in amount in different nations. The value of these talents in this story is not known, but a talent of silver could run from \$1000.00 to \$2000.00. A talent of gold would naturally be much more.

When the master returned, he called his servants for an accounting. The first two used their talents well and gained a profit. The master was pleased, commended and rewarded them. The third servant, however, buried his talent and began to make excuses for his neglect. In addition he criticized his lord. The master ordered that the talent be taken from the unprofitable servant, and that he be cast into outer darkness.

A. THE PARABLE

1. A man going to a far country delivered his goods to whom? (Matt. 25:14)
2. The man gave each according to what? (Matt. 25:15)

3. Fill in the chart below indicating the amount each servant received and gained. (Matt. 25:15-18)

<i>Servant</i>	<i>Talents Received</i>	<i>Talents Gained</i>	<i>Total Talents</i>
No. 1			
No. 2			
No. 3			

4. What did the third servant do with his talent? (Matt. 25:18)
5. When the lord returned and called for an accounting, what did the first servant tell him? (Matt. 25:19-20)
6. What commendation did the lord give him? (Matt. 25:21)
7. What did the second servant tell his lord? (Matt. 25:22)
8. What commendation did the lord give him? (Matt. 25:23)
9. What did the third servant tell his lord? (Matt. 25:24-25)
10. What did the lord call this servant? (Matt. 25:26)
11. What should the servant have done with the money? (Matt. 25:27)
12. What was done with the servant's one talent? (Matt. 25:28)

13. What is the application of the parable? (Matt. 25:29)

14. What was the fate of the wicked servant? (Matt. 25:30)

B. THE LESSON

- » Jesus has given each of his followers gifts and opportunities to be used in the service of the kingdom.
- » The gifts have been bestowed in proportion to the ability of the individual believer, and the amount of service required is according to that ability. To whom much is given much is required (Luke 12:48).

Opportunities + Abilities = Responsibility

- » Those who faithfully use their abilities will enter into the joy of the Lord. Those who neglect to use their abilities will be cast into outer darkness.



*For unto whomsoever much is given,
of him shall be much required...
Luke 12:48*

A COMPARISON OF THE PARABLES OF THE POUNDS AND THE TALENTS

The Pounds Luke 19:11-27

- Spoken to the disciples and a multitude
- Spoken on the road between Jericho and Jerusalem
- Spoken just prior to the triumphal entry into Jerusalem
- Each servant received the same gifts
- The profits of each servant were different
- The rewards for the faithful servants were in proportion to their service and abilities
- The unprofitable servant lost his gift

The Talents Matt. 25:14-30

Spoken to the disciples

Spoken on the Mount of Olives

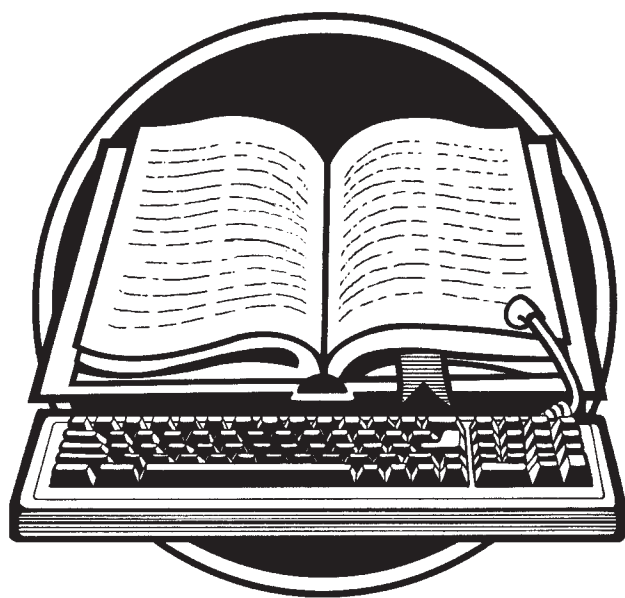
Spoken the third day after the entry into Jerusalem

Each servant received an amount of gifts according to his ability

The profits of each servant were in proportion to his gift

The rewards for the faithful servants were the same

The unprofitable servant lost his gift and was cast into outer darkness



www.padfield.com

Sermon Outlines
Bible Class Books
Bible Class Curriculum
PowerPoint Backgrounds
Bible Land Photographs
Church Bulletin Articles

This booklet is protected by Federal Copyright Laws. Individuals and local congregations are allowed to reprint this book. No one is allowed change the contents. This book may not be placed on any other Web site, nor is it allowed to be sold.