

THE PARABLES OF JESUS



THE PARABLES OF JESUS

CLASS OUTLINE AND QUESTIONS FROM NEIL R. LIGHTFOOT

<u>PARABLE</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>REFERENCE</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>INSTRUCTOR</u>
1. INTRODUCTION	WHAT IS A PARABLE?		7/1	GLENN
2. THE SOWER	RESPONSIBILITY FOR HEARING	MATT 13:1-9 18-23	7/4	JOHN
3. THE SEED GROWING OF ITSELF	GROWTH OF THE KINGDOM	MARK 4:26-29	7/8	RUSS
4. MUSTARD SEED / THE LEAVEN	GROWTH OF THE KINGDOM	MATT 13:31-32 13:33	7/11	RUSS
5. HIDDEN TREASURE / COSTLY PEARL	TRUE VALUES	MATT 13:44 13:45	7/15	GLENN
6. THE TARES / THE DRAGNET	MIXTURE OF GOOD AND BAD	MATT 13:24-30 MATT 13:47-50	7/18	RUSS
7. THE TWO DEBTORS	LOVE AND FORGIVENESS	LUKE 7:36-50	7/22	GLENN
8. THE UNMERCIFUL SERVANT	LOVE AND MERCY	MATT 18:21-35	7/25	RUSS
9. THE GOOD SAMARITAN	LOVE AND NEIGHBORLINESS	LUKE 10:25-37	7/29	GLENN
10. THE FRIEND AT MIDNIGHT / THE PERSISTENT WIDOW	PERSISTENT IN PRAYER	LUKE 11:5-13 LUKE 18:1-8	8/1	GLENN
11. THE RICH FOOL	LAYING UP TREASURE FOR SELF	LUKE 12:13-21	8/5	RUSS
12. THE BARREN FIG TREE	TRAGEDY OF FRUITLESSNESS	LUKE 13:1-9	8/8	RUSS
13. THE WISE AND FOOLISH BUILDERS	HEARING AND DOING	MATT 7:24-27 LUKE 6:46-49	8/12	GLENN

THE PARABLES OF JESUS

<i>PARABLE</i>	<i>TOPIC</i>	<i>REFERENCE</i>	<i>DATE</i>	<i>INSTRUCTOR</i>
14. THE PARABLE OF THE CHIEF SEATS	HE WHO HUMBLES HIMSELF	LUKE 14:7-11	8/15	RUSS
15. THE PARABLE OF THE GREAT SUPPER	BANQUET OF THE KINGDOMS	LUKE 14:15-24	8/19	GLENN
16. PARABLE OF THE TOWER / PARABLE OF THE KING	COUNTING THE COST	LUKE 14:28-30 LUKE 14:31-33	8/22	GLENN
17. THE PARABLE OF LOST SHEEP / LOST COIN / PRODIGAL SON	THIS MAN RECEIVETH SINNERS	LUKE 15:1-7 LUKE 15:8-10 LUKE 15:11-32	8/26	RUSS
18. THE PARABLE OF THE DISHONEST STEWARD	CHRISTIAN PRUDENCE	LUKE 16:1-13	8/29	GLENN
19. THE PARABLE OF THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS	GLIMPSE INTO ETERNITY	LUKE 16:19-31	9/2	RUSS
20. THE PARABLE OF THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN	GOD BE MERCIFUL	LUKE 18:9-14	9/5	RUSS
21. THE PARABLE OF THE LABORERS IN THE VINEYARD	UNDESERVED FAVOR	MATT 19:27 -- 20:16	9/9	GLENN
22. THE PARABLE OF THE TWO SONS	TEST OF TWO SONS	MATT 21:28- 32	9/12	RUSS
23. THE PARABLE OF THE WICKED HUSBANDMEN	GOODNESS & SEVERITY OF GOD	MATT 21:33- 43	9/16	GLENN
24. THE PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS	THOSE WHO WERE READY	MATT 25:1-13	9/19	GLENN
25. THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS	FAITHFUL SERVICE	MATT 25:14- 30	9/23	RUSS
26. THE PARABLE OF THE SHEEP AND GOATS	IF ONLY WE HAD KNOWN	MATT 25:31- 46	9/26	RUSS
27. THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD	JESUS OUR LOVING SHEPHERD	JOHN 10: 1 - 18	9/30	GLENN

#1 INTRODUCING THE PARABLES

“The parables comprise more than one-third of the record teachings of Jesus. The Master of all teachers often put men to thinking by using pictures. He did not leave principles of the Way of life in abstraction, but brought them down within reach of ‘humble doors.’ Instead of saying, ‘Beware of ostentation in religion,’ he said, ‘Don’t blow your trumpet when you are giving.’ This preference for vigorous figures of speech results in his frequent use of parables. It has been said that all the world loves a story. Certainly all the world remembers Jesus’ parables more than anything else He said.” (Neil R. Lightfoot)

QUESTIONS:

1. What is the literal meaning of the word *parable*?
2. A parable is often defined as “an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.” Is this an adequate definition? Why?
3. Read 2 Samuel 12:1-7 and Isaiah 5:1-7. What is the main point of each of these Old Testament parables?
4. Comment on Jesus’ use of parables. List several reasons why you think Jesus often spoke in parables.
5. In interpreting a parable, what is the first and most important thing to do?

#2 RESPONSIBILITY FOR HEARING

Parable of the Sower

- 13:1** On that day after Jesus went out of the house, he sat by the lake.
13:2 And such a large crowd gathered around him that he got into a boat to sit while the whole crowd stood on the shore.
13:3 He told them many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow.
13:4 And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them.
13:5 Other seeds fell on rocky ground where they did not have much soil. They sprang up quickly because the soil was not deep.
13:6 But when the sun came up, they were scorched, and because they did not have sufficient root, they withered.
13:7 Other seeds fell among the thorns, and they grew up and choked them.
13:8 But other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundred times as much, some sixty, and some thirty.
13:9 The one who has ears had better listen!"



- 13:18** "So listen to the parable of the sower:
13:19 When anyone hears the word about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches what was sown in his heart; this is the seed sown along the path.
13:20 The seed sown on rocky ground is the person who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy.
13:21 But he has no root in himself and does not endure; when trouble or persecution comes because of the word, immediately he falls away.
13:22 The seed sown among thorns is the person who hears the word, but worldly cares and the seductiveness of wealth choke the word, so it produces nothing.
13:23 But as for the seed sown on good soil, this is the person who hears the word and understands. He bears fruit, yielding a hundred, sixty, or thirty times what was sown."

MATT 13:1-9, 18-23

QUESTIONS:

1. List and discuss in the light of the Scriptures some of the chief responsibilities of the Sower.
2. Jesus said that the seed of the kingdom is the Word of God? What implications does this statement have for the restoration of primitive Christianity in this current time?
3. What are the four conditions of the heart represented by the four kinds of soil?
4. Does God harden a person's heart before the person hardens his own heart?

#3 GROWTH OF THE KINGDOM (1)

THE SEED GROWING OF ITSELF

4:26 He also said, “The kingdom of God is like someone who spreads seed on the ground.

4:27 He goes to sleep and gets up, night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how.

4:28 By itself the soil produces a crop, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head.

4:29 And when the grain is ripe, he sends in the sickle because the harvest has come.”

MARK 4:26-29

QUESTIONS:

1. What is the kingdom called in the New Testament? In what different senses is the word “kingdom” used in the New Testament? What is meant by “the kingdom of heaven”?
2. What is the main lesson of the Parable of the Seed Growing of Itself? List three ways in which the growth of the kingdom is like the growth of seed?
3. Discuss the problem of spiritual growth (a) for congregations, and (b) for individuals.
4. In every congregation there are different levels of spiritual development. How should this affect our interactions?
5. The growth of the kingdom is from God. In what way are we guilty of overlooking this important truth?



#4 GROWTH OF THE KINGDOM (2)

PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED

13:31 He gave them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field.

13:32 It is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest garden plant and becomes a tree, so that the wild birds come and nest in its branches.”

MATT 13:31-32

THE PARABLE OF THE LEAVEN

13:33 He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and mixed with three measures of flour until all the dough had risen.”

MATT 13:33

QUESTIONS:

1. Tell something about the growth of the mustard seed. Why would Jesus use it as an illustration of the growth of the kingdom?
2. List some of the lessons of the Parable of the Mustard Seed. What is the main lesson?
3. What is the main lesson of the Parable of the Leaven?
4. It has been said that Christianity “is on the inside trying to get out.” Explain this statement.
5. Leaven does not cease it work “until the whole is leavened.” What does this suggest concerning Christian responsibility?

#5 TRUE VALUES

THE PARABLE OF THE HIDDEN TREASURE

13:44 “The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure, hidden in a field, that a person found and hid. Then because of joy he went and sold all that he had and bought that field.

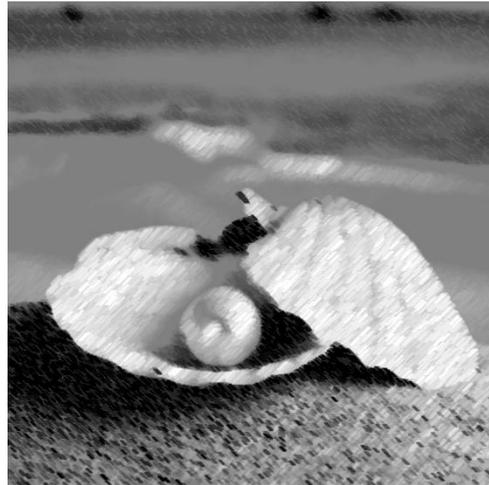
MATT 13:44

THE PARABLE OF THE COSTLY PEARL

13:45 “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant searching for fine pearls.

13:46 When he found a pearl of great value, he went out and sold everything he had and bought it.

MATT 13:45-46



QUESTIONS:

1. Discuss the moral problem involved in the Parable of the Hidden Treasure. What is your appraisal of the problem?
2. Finding a lost treasure gives joy. What lesson is here for the Christian?
3. List several outstanding marks of character in the life of the pearl merchant. What do you think is the main lesson of the parable?
4. What does it mean to give up everything for Christ? Does this mean that we can own no physical properties or possess any material goods?

#6 MIXTURE OF GOOD AND BAD

THE PARABLE OF THE TARES

13:24 He presented them with another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a person who sowed good seed in his field.

13:25 But while everyone was sleeping, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away.

13:26 When the plants sprouted and bore grain, then the weeds also appeared.

13:27 So the slaves of the owner came and said to him, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Then where did the weeds come from?’

13:28 He said, ‘An enemy has done this.’ So the slaves replied, ‘Do you want us to go and gather them?’

13:29 But he said, ‘No, since in gathering the weeds you may uproot the wheat with them.

13:30 Let both grow together until the harvest. At harvest time I will tell the reapers, “First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned, but then gather the wheat into my barn.””



MATT 13:24-30

THE PARABLE OF THE DRAGNET

13:47 “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was cast into the sea that caught all kinds of fish.

13:48 When it was full, they pulled it ashore, sat down, and put the good fish into containers and threw the bad away.

13:49 It will be this way at the end of the age. Angels will come and separate the evil from the righteous

13:50 and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

MATT 13:47-50

QUESTIONS:

1. Why should the Parables of the Tares and the Dragnet be studied together?
2. How was the darnel separated from the wheat? What significance is this?
3. Discuss some of the problems in the Parable of the Tares. Does the question of church discipline rightly belong in the parable? What does “the field” represent? What is meant by gathering “out of his kingdom”?
4. Read the following Scriptures: Matthew 25:31-46; John 5:28-29; Acts 17:30-31; Romans 14:12; 2 Corinthians 5:10. Discuss these passages and their connection with the main lesson.

#7 LOVE AND FORGIVENESS

THE PARABLE OF THE TWO DEBTORS

7:36 Now one of the Pharisees asked Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table.

7:37 Then when a woman of that town, who was a sinner, learned that Jesus was dining at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfumed oil.

7:38 As she stood behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. She wiped them with her hair, kissed them, and anointed them with the perfumed oil.

7:39 Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him, that she is a sinner."

7:40 So Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." He replied, "Say it, Teacher."

7:41 "A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed him five hundred silver coins, and the other fifty.

7:42 When they could not pay, he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?"

7:43 Simon answered, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled." Jesus said to him, "You have judged rightly."

7:44 Then, turning toward the woman, he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house. You gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears wiped them with her hair.

7:45 You gave me no kiss of greeting, but from the time I entered she has not stopped kissing my feet.

7:46 You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with perfumed oil.

7:47 Therefore I tell you, her sins, which were many, are forgiven, thus she loved much; but the one who is forgiven little loves little."

7:48 Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

7:49 But those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this, who even forgives sins?"

7:50 He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

LUKE 7:36-50

QUESTIONS:

1. Tell something about the houses and the eating customs of the people of Palestine.
2. The Pharisees scoffed at Jesus because He received sinners. Comment on what our attitude should be toward sinners in light of I Corinthians 15:33.
3. What was the basic difference between Simon and the sinful woman? Were both sinners?
4. It has been said that love of God and hatred of sin are the reverse sides of a coin. Discuss this concept.

#8 LOVE AND MERCY

THE UNMERCIFUL SERVANT

18:21 Then Peter came to him and said, “Lord, how many times must I forgive my brother who sins against me? As many as seven times?”

18:22 Jesus said to him, “Not seven times, I tell you, but seventy-seven times!”

18:23 “For this reason, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his slaves.

18:24 As he began settling his accounts, a man who owed ten thousand talents was brought to him.

18:25 Because he was not able to repay it, the lord ordered him to be sold, along with his wife, children, and whatever he possessed, and repayment to be made.

18:26 Then the slave threw himself to the ground before him, saying, ‘Be patient with me, and I will repay everything.’

18:27 The lord had compassion on that slave and released him, and forgave him the debt.

18:28 After he went out, that same slave found one of his fellow slaves who owed him one hundred silver coins. So he grabbed him by the throat and started to choke him, saying, ‘Pay back what you owe me!’

18:29 Then his fellow slave threw himself down and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will repay you.’

18:30 But he refused. Instead, he went out and threw him in prison until he repaid the debt.

18:31 When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were very upset and went and told their lord everything that had taken place.

18:32 Then his lord called the first slave and said to him, ‘Evil slave! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me!’

18:33 Should you not have shown mercy to your fellow slave, just as I showed it to you?’

18:34 And in anger his lord turned him over to the prison guards to torture him until he repaid all he owed.

18:35 So also my heavenly Father will do to you, if each of you does not forgive your brother from your heart.”

MATT 18:21-35

QUESTIONS:

1. What is the background leading up to this parable? Was Peter’s “seven times” a generous number?
2. Discuss the Lord’s “seventy times seven” in view of Luke 17:3-4 and Matthew 5:23-24; 18:15-17.
3. Read Matthew 7:1-5. How does it fit in with this parable?
4. What lessons can be gained from the different sums of money owed in the parable? How often does your brother sin against you? How often do you sin against God? How much do you owe God? Can you ever pay Him? What can you do?

#9 LOVE AND NEIGHBORLINESS

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

- 10:25** Now an expert in religious law stood up to test Jesus, saying, “Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”
- 10:26** He said to him, “What is written in the law? How do you understand it?”
- 10:27** The expert answered, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself.”
- 10:28** Jesus said to him, “You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.”
- 10:29** But the expert, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”
- 10:30** Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him up, and went off, leaving him half dead.
- 10:31** Now by chance a priest was going down that road, but when he saw the injured man he passed by on the other side.
- 10:32** So too a Levite, when he came up to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.
- 10:33** But a Samaritan who was traveling came to where the injured man was, and when he saw him, he felt compassion for him.
- 10:34** He went up to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought to an inn, and took care of him.
- 10:35** The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take care of him, and whatever else you spend, I will repay you when I come back this way.’
- 10:36** Which of these three do you think became a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?”
- 10:37** And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

LUKE 10:25-37

QUESTIONS:

1. What is meant by the term “lawyer”? What kind of man was this lawyer? In what respects was he wise and yet unwise?
2. Describe briefly the background that led up to the strife between the Jews and the Samaritans. Why do you think Jesus chose a Samaritan to be the hero of the story?
3. What lessons are learned from the conduct of the priest and the Levite?
4. Read Matt 5:43-48, and Romans 12:14-21. How does the concept of neighborliness differ from the narrow Jewish concept?



#10 PERSISTENT IN PRAYER

THE FRIEND AT MIDNIGHT

11:5 Then he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread,

11:6 because a friend of mine has stopped here while on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him.'

11:7 Then he will reply from inside, 'Do not bother me. The door is already shut, and my children and I are in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything.'

11:8 I tell you, even though the man inside will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of the first man's sheer persistence he will get up and give him whatever he needs.

11:9 "So I tell you: Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you.

11:10 For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

11:11 What father among you, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead of a fish?

11:12 Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?

11:13 If you then, although you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

LUKE 11:5-13

THE PERSISTENT WIDOW

18:1 Then Jesus told them a parable to show them they should always pray and not lose heart.

18:2 He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected people.

18:3 There was also a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.'

18:4 For a while he refused, but later on he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor have regard for people,

18:5 yet because this widow keeps on bothering me, I will give her justice, or in the end she will wear me out by her unending pleas.'"

18:6 And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unrighteous judge says!

18:7 Won't God give justice to his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he delay long to help them?

18:8 I tell you, he will give them justice speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

LUKE 18:1-8

QUESTIONS:

1. In what sense is prayer a responsibility? How is it also a privilege?
2. Do you feel the average prayer is often too vague and general? How can this be overcome?
3. Only a few requirements for acceptable prayer are touched on in these two parables. Name some other requirements that are taught in the Scriptures.

#11 LAYING UP TREASURE FOR SELF

THE RICH FOOL

12:13 Then someone from the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”

12:14 But Jesus said to him, “Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator between you two?”

12:15 Then he said to them, “Watch out and guard yourself from all types of greed, because one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”

12:16 He then told them a parable: “The land of a certain rich man produced an abundant crop,

12:17 so he thought to himself, ‘What should I do, for I have to store my crops?’

12:18 Then he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.

12:19 And I will say to myself, “You have plenty of goods stored up for many years; relax, eat, drink, celebrate!”

12:20 But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded back from you, but who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’

12:21 So it is with the one who stores up riches for himself, is not rich toward God.”



LUKE 12:13-21

QUESTIONS:

1. Describe the occasion of the Parable of the Rich Fool. What was wrong with the brother who wanted an equal share of the inheritance? What was the Jewish law on inheritance?
2. What is covetousness? (Tell what it is not, and then tell what it is.) Give several reasons why covetousness is such a threat to Christians today.
3. Comment on this statement: “The basis for inventory of a man’s life is not the same as in his business.”
4. How is it true that a false philosophy of life results in a false conception of happiness?

#12 TRAGEDY OF FRUITLESSNESS

THE BARREN FIG TREE

- 13:1** Now there were some present on that occasion who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices.
- 13:2** He answered them, "Do you think these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered these things?"
- 13:3** No, I tell you! But unless you repent, you will all perish as well!
- 13:4** Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower in Siloam fell on them, do you think they were worse offenders than all the others who live in Jerusalem?"
- 13:5** No, I tell you! But unless you repent you will all perish as well!"
- 13:6** Then Jesus told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came looking for fruit on it and found none.
- 13:7** So he said to the worker who tended the vineyard, 'For three years now, I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and each time I inspect it I find none. Cut it down! Why should it continue to deplete the soil?'
- 13:8** But the worker answered him, 'Sir, leave it alone this year too, until I dig around it and put fertilizer on it.
- 13:9** Then if it bears fruit next year, very well, but if not, you can cut it down.'"

LUKE 13:1-9

QUESTIONS:

1. What misconception of sin is connected with the murder of the Galileans and the fall of the tower in Siloam? How does all of this lead up to the Parable of the Barren Fig Tree?
2. Tell something of the importance of the Palestinian fig tree.
3. Discuss the primary application of the parable, enumerating what each aspect of the parable represents.
4. What lesson can be drawn from the owner's patience and tolerance?



#13 HEARING AND DOING

THE WISE AND FOOLISH BUILDERS



7:24 “Everyone who hears words of mine and does them is like a wise man who built his house on rock.

7:25 The rain fell, the flood came, and the winds beat against that house, but it did not collapse because it had been founded on rock.

7:26 Everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them is like a foolish man who built his house on sand.

7:27 The rain fell, the flood came, and the winds beat against that house, and it collapsed.

MATT 7:24-27

6:46 “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and don’t do what I tell you?”

6:47 “Everyone who comes to me and listens to my words and puts them into practice – I will show you what he is like:

6:48 He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep, and laid the foundation on bedrock. When a flood came, the river burst against that house but could not shake it, because it had been well built.

6:49 But the person who hears and does not put my words into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the river burst against that house, it collapsed immediately, and was utterly destroyed!”

LUKE 6:46-49

QUESTIONS:

1. Compare and contrast the accounts of the parable as given in Matthew and Luke.
2. Read James 1:22-25. Discuss this passage in connection with the parable.
3. There are many reasons why we fail to put the words of Jesus into action. Discuss those mentioned in the lesson. Suggest other reasons also. What is your main obstacle in doing God’s will?

#14 HE WHO HUMBLER HIMSELF

THE PARABLE OF THE CHIEF SEATS

And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief seats; saying unto them, When thou art bidden of any *man* to a wedding, sit not down in the highest seats; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest seats. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest seats; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher; then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

LUKE 14:7-11

QUESTIONS:

1. What is a parable? The Parable of the Chief Seats does not tell a story. In what sense is it a parable?
2. Give the background and the occasion of this parable. Tell something about the eating customs and the seating arrangements in homes during Greek and Roman times.
3. Read the following Scriptures: Matthew 23:12; Luke 18:14; Philippians 2:3, 4; James 4:10; 1 Peter 5:5,6. Also read Luke 22:24-27 and John 13:1-17. Discuss these passages in which the principle of humility is applied.
4. What is the beginning point of humility? List some of the things that should serve to keep us humble.
5. The Pharisees loved the chief seats (Matt 23:6). What are some things in our lives that parallel their desire for the chief seats?
6. Define humility. Can one become proud of one's humility?

#15 BANQUET OF THE KINGDOMS

THE PARABLE OF THE GREAT SUPPER

And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed *is* he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God. Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one *consent* began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel *them* to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.

LUKE 14:15-24



QUESTIONS:

1. What lessons are to be drawn from the fact Jesus compared his kingdom to a banquet?
2. Discuss the nature of the three excuses that were offered. Are the things mentioned wrong in themselves? How do our excuses today compare with the excuses of the invited guests?
3. Give the significance of the statement: "Go out of the city to the highways and hedgerows. I want my house to be full."
4. Are our individual members just taking care of the "good" people or do we relate ourselves to community problems and needs?

#16 COUNTING THE COST

PARABLE OF THE TOWER

For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have *sufficient* to finish *it*? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish *it*, all that behold *it* begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.

LUKE 14:28-30

PARABLE OF THE KING

Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.

LUKE 14:31-33

QUESTIONS:

1. What “hard saying” does Jesus make prior to his speaking of the parable of the Tower. List several possible interpretations for this saying. What does it mean in your opinion?
2. What is the main lesson of the parables of the Tower and the King? Do you think we have neglected to give due attention to these parables?
3. What are some of the questions an individual should ask himself before becoming a Christian?
4. What are some of the questions an individual should ask herself after becoming a Christian?
5. What is “total commitment”?

#17 THIS MAN RECEIVETH SINNERS

THE PARABLE OF LOST SHEEP

Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. And he spake this parable unto them, saying, What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found *it*, he layeth *it* on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together *his* friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.



LUKE 15:1-7

LOST COIN

Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find *it*? And when she hath found *it*, she calleth *her* friends and *her* neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

LUKE 15:8-10

PRODIGAL SON



And he said, A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to *his* father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to *me*. And he divided unto them *his* living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with Riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of

thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put *it* on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on *his* feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill *it*; and let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and entreated him. And he answering said to *his* father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, 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 15:11-32

QUESTIONS:

1. What is the occasion of these parables? How is the occasion an insight into their interpretations?
2. The parables teach something on how one becomes lost. What are some of the ways indicated in the parables?
3. What points in the parables show God's attitude toward the lost?
4. What did the young man lose by leaving home? What were the steps that brought him back to his father?
5. Discuss the lessons we learn from the elder brother.

#18 CHRISTIAN PRUDENCE

THE PARABLE OF THE DISHONEST STEWARD

And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward. Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. So he called every one of his lord's debtors *unto him*, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore. And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations. He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true *riches*? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own? 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 16:1-13

QUESTIONS:

1. Why is the story in this parable considered to be unusual?
2. What are some points that make it difficult to interpret?
3. What are the two basic attitudes toward money? Are there other attitudes beside these?
4. The parable is a lesson on faithful stewardship. What is a steward? How does this parable about rascals teach on faithful stewardship?
5. What attitude toward Christian living is presented in this parable?



Small text at the bottom of the illustration: "Small text at the bottom of the illustration: PARABLE OF THE DISHONEST STEWARD. LUKE 16:1-13. Artist: Jerry Lutz." The text is too small to read clearly but appears to be a caption or artist credit.

#19 GLIMPSE INTO ETERNITY

THE PARABLE OF THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that *would come* from thence. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.



LUKE 16:19-31

QUESTIONS:

1. What is unusual about this parable?
2. Discuss what is meant by the following: 1) "fared sumptuously," 2) Abraham's bosom, 3) Hades. Is this story a picture of death before or after the Judgment Day? Give reasons for your answer.
3. Discuss the statement "There is a great gulf fixed." What lessons are to be gained here?
4. Why was the rich man condemned? In what ways does he serve as a warning to us?

#20 GOD BE MERCIFUL

THE PARABLE OF THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN

And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men *are*, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as *his* eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

LUKE 18:9-14

QUESTIONS

1. Who were the Pharisees? What was their attitude toward others? Describe their traditions.
2. Why were the tax collectors so despised?
3. What was wrong with the Pharisee's prayer? The Bible says that he "prayed with himself." What did that mean?
4. Contrast the results of the two prayers. What do you think was the difference between the two prayers?
5. Is the primary goal of this parable to teach the right attitudes behind prayer? Is it possible for Christians to have the Pharisee's attitude in activities other than prayer?



#21 UNDESERVED FAVOR

THE PARABLE OF THE LABORERS IN THE VINEYARD



Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore? And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life. But many *that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.* For the

kingdom of heaven is like unto a man *that is* a householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, And said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, *that* shall ye receive. So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them *their* hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that *were hired* about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received *it*, they murmured against the goodman of the house, Saying, These last have wrought *but* one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take *that* thine *is*, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.

MATT 19:27 – 20:16

QUESTIONS:

1. Why is this parable often regarded as being difficult to understand? What unusual features are in this parable?
2. What interpretations have been suggested to get around the owner's apparent injustice? Was the owner, in fact, unjust to any of his workers?
3. To whom was this parable originally addressed? In its original setting, this parable serves as a warning to what two groups?
4. Should a store owner pay the most to those who work hardest and longest? Should the Lord reward on the same basis? What is the difference?

#22 TEST OF TWO SONS

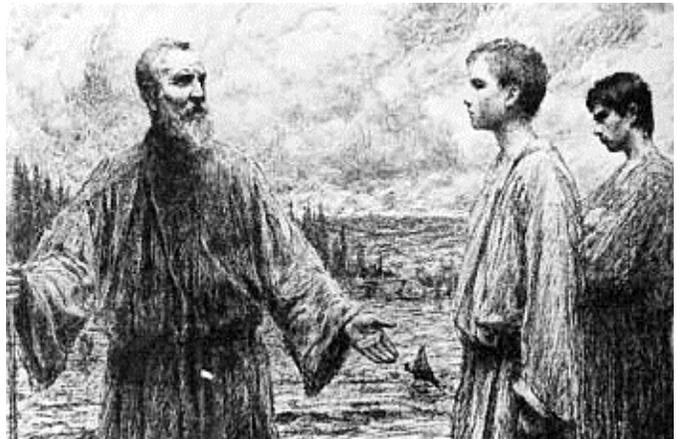
THE PARABLE OF THE TWO SONS

But what think ye? A *certain* man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I *go*, sir: and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of *his* father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen *it*, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.

MATT 21:28-32

QUESTIONS:

1. What was the original application of this parable? Whom did the two sons represent?
2. This parable teaches that God calls men into his vineyard. Discuss the nature of this call and its significance.
3. What were the sons called to do? When were they to begin? What lessons are to be learned here?
4. What types of persons today are similar to the two sons?
5. What does this parable teach on repentance?



#23 GOODNESS & SEVERITY OF GOD

THE PARABLE OF THE WICKED HUSBANDMEN

Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country: And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise. But last



of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast *him* out of the vineyard, and slew *him*. When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out *his* vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons. Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

MATT 21:33-43

QUESTIONS:

1. Describe briefly the background that leads to this parable. In what way does this parable describe the historical situation of the Jewish nation?
2. What evidences are there that God has been infinitely patient in his dealings with humans? Discuss this in light of the severity of his justice.

#24 THOSE WHO WERE READY

THE PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS

Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five *were* foolish. They that *were* foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, *Not so*; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

MATT 25:1-13

QUESTIONS:

1. Tell something about a Jewish marriage feast. How is a marriage feast an appropriate figure to use in teaching on Christ's kingdom?
2. Were the wise maidens selfish?
3. What does this parable teach about opportunities?

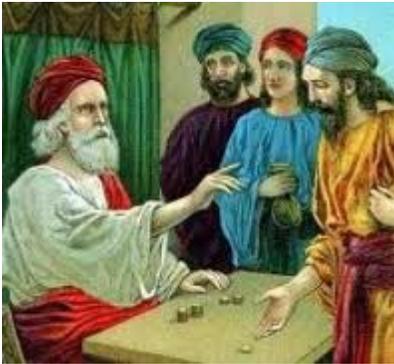


#25 FAITHFUL SERVICE

THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

For *the kingdom of heaven is* as a man travelling into a far country, *who* called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.

Mat 25:16 Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and



made *them* other five talents. And likewise he that *had received* two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, *thou* good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou

into the joy of thy lord. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, *there* thou hast *that is* thine. His lord answered and said unto him, *Thou* wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and *then* at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give *it* unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

MATT 25:14-30

QUESTIONS:

1. Compare and contrast this parable with the Parable of the Pounds (cf. Luke 19:11-27).
2. What lessons are to be derived from the fact that the master gave talents to each of his servants? What is a talent? What do the talents represent?
3. Why did the one talent man fail? What was his view of the master and? What was the master's view of him?
4. How is it that "we lose what we fail to use"? Is this true of spiritual matters, too?

#26 IF ONLY WE HAD KNOWN

PARABLE OF THE SHEEP AND THE GOATS

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was hungry, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungry, and fed *thee*? or thirsty, and gave *thee* drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took *thee* in? or naked, and clothed *thee*? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done *it* unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungry, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did *it* not to one of the least of these, ye did *it* not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.



MATT 25:31-46

QUESTIONS:

1. In what sense is this picture of judgment not a parable? In what sense is it a parable?
2. What is the main lesson of this story?
3. Jesus teaches here the importance of little things. Why are little things so important?
4. What quality does Christ possess which enables him to be identified with the person in need?

#27 JESUS OUR LOVING SHEPHERD

THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD



Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of

strangers. This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them. Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have *it* more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is a hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my *sheep*, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, *and* one shepherd. Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

JOHN 10: 1 – 18

QUESTIONS:

1. Why would the use of sheep in this parable make it easier for the listeners to understand the meaning of the parable?
2. What is the primary responsibility of a shepherd? In what ways does a shepherd provide for his flock?
3. How are the sheep able to tell the difference between a foe and a friend, or a hireling and a true shepherd?