



# Parables of Jesus

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## INTRODUCTION

The study of the parables of Jesus is among the most interesting and rewarding that can be undertaken. Jesus taught people by the use of His parables so that those who might have difficulty in absorbing the doctrines of the kingdom of God by direct teaching, could readily understand by means of the story. The major parables of Jesus are covered in this series of lessons. Most of the teachings of Jesus are illuminated by one or more of His parables. God, the proper use of money, proper attitudes in prayer, and basic teaching regarding the Lord's second coming are all covered by several parables. The necessity of obedient, fruitful service and a forgiving spirit are taught by the parables also. It is our hope that the studies covered in these twelve lessons will inspire you to a deeper study of the Word of God and a greater love for Jesus.

These lessons were written for the Emmanuel Pentecostal Sunday School by the pastor, Robert D. Kalis. This series is now complete. The titles are listed below and are available to any and all:

<b>The Men and Women of Genesis</b>	<b>The Miracles of Jesus</b>
<b>Lessons From Exodus</b>	<b>The Parables of Jesus</b>
<b>The Ten Commandments</b>	<b>The Personal Ministry of Jesus</b>
<b>Wilderness Examples</b>	<b>According to Luke- I &amp; II</b>
<b>Possessing the Land of Promise</b>	<b>We Beheld His Glory (John I)</b>
<b>The Days of the Judges</b>	<b>Full of Grace &amp; Truth(John II)</b>
<b>Israel's Early Kings</b>	<b>Holy Ghost Acts - I &amp; II</b>
<b>Lessons From the Kings</b>	<b>Matthew: The King &amp; His Kingdom-I &amp; II</b>
<b>The Captivity and Return</b>	

## THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

Read: Matthew 13:1-23 Mark 4:1-25 Luke 8:4-18

*Memory Verse: Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have. (Luke 8:18.)*

### What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *Jesus used parables to help the people to understand the truths and principles of the Kingdom of God.*
2. *Jesus' stories are from real life, not fables.*
3. *This parable is a key to help us interpret other parables.*
4. *There will always be mixed results from the ministry of the Gospel.*
5. *What we can and must do in order to bring forth fruit 30, 60 and 100 fold.*
6. *To take warning from the things Jesus mentioned that hinder or prevent fruitfulness.*

**I -- JESUS USES PARABLES:** It has accurately been defined, that a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. The disciples asked Jesus why He taught the people in parables (Mt. 13:10). Jesus explained that he did it because the people, whose eyes and ears and hearts were closed to spiritual things, could not absorb straight doctrinal teaching (Mt. 13:13-15). Indeed, all of us understand a teaching more easily when an illustration is given to illuminate some truth.

About twenty-five of the stories Jesus told will be the subjects of the lessons of this quarter. Sometimes Jesus told several stories to illustrate one subject. For instance, there are three stories on seeking the lost, and three on stewardship. All of the great teachings of Jesus are illustrated in these parables. Since these stories make

Christ's doctrine easy to understand, they are especially useful in our Sunday School, where there are always boys and girls learning the Gospel for the first time; as well as older ones who need the Bible doctrines in simple form in order to make progress in the ways of God. Let us pray that God will enlighten our understanding as we study these stories Jesus told.

**II -- STORIES FROM REAL LIFE:** Several miraculous healings had taken place in and around Capernaum. A young man was raised from the dead at Nain (Lk. 7:11). A centurion's son also had been healed (Lk. 7:1). Great crowds began to follow Jesus. He was anxious not only to heal their bodies, but also to teach them the truths of God which they did not get from their hypocritical religious leaders. As the great crowd pressed about the Savior on the shore of Galilee, he stepped into a boat and taught the people from there while they stood on the shore. It could very well have been that from His location in the boat, Jesus could see a farmer on a nearby hillside sowing the seed of some grain. Certainly the illustration was one that every person present could understand. Jesus' stories are quite different from many fables, such as Aesop's. The latter often employ unreal events, such as talking trees and fish etc., while the illustrations of Jesus are completely natural.

It is certainly clear and logical that as the farmer sows his seed, some of it would fall on the pathway, while some other might easily fall on the uncultivated stony ground, and still other on the edge of a wild field full of thorn bushes and weeds. But a great deal of the seed would fall on prepared ground and it is this seed which brings forth the 30, 60 and 100 fold fruit. How often do the birds come and gobble up the grass seed we sow in the spring. Hard soil and weeds are still major obstacles to a good harvest. Yes, Jesus' stories are from real life and can easily be understood by all.

**III -- THE KEY PARABLE:** When the disciples asked Jesus to explain this parable, he responded, "Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables? (Mk. 4:13). This then is the key parable. It will help us to understand and interpret other parables. This one is fully explained by the Lord Himself. There can be no doubt that the seed is the Word of God, the birds represent the Evil One, the scorching sun pictures temptation and persecution, while unfruitful choking weeds are likened to cares of life, deceitful riches, and other lusts. From this key we can clearly see that the sower is Jesus Himself, and also the preachers of the Word of God after Christ.

The different ground represents those who hear the Word. Add to this key, the Lord's own interpretation of the parable of the tares, which will be the subject of our next lesson, and we have enough clues to help us interpret the other parables with understanding.

**IV -- THE RESULTS OF PREACHING THE GOSPEL:** When Jesus preached the kingdom of God, not everyone accepted His teaching. When He included the Gentiles in the plan of salvation, violent opposition erupted. They tried to push Him over the edge of a cliff. Often, we are told in the Gospel, that some believed and others did not. Many followed Jesus because of His miracles. They enjoyed the bread and fish which He multiplied. They rejoiced to see every miraculous healing. But when He spoke to them of self-denial and cross-bearing, "many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him" (John 6:66). Some who expressed a desire to follow Jesus were overcome by the cares of this life (Lk. 9:57-62). Judas was lost to the deceitfulness of riches. But, thank God, there were some who were faithful. They obeyed His commands. They followed His teaching. They answered His call. So when the earthly ministry of Jesus ended, much seed had not come to mature fruition, but some did indeed and bore exceeding much fruit in the days following Pentecost.

The same pattern applies to the ministry of the early apostles and of Paul in his mission to the Gentiles. Much was sown. Some seemed wasted. Other looked promising for a time, but withered or was choked before it came to maturity. But there was much preaching (sowing) that bore fruit: in Samaria, Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth and Philippi much fruit was borne. In other places such as Athens, Cyprus, Derbe, Lystra, Iconium etc., the harvest was not so prolific. Not all of the believers remained faithful. Thank God there were some lasting results. So it is today. The pattern still holds true. Wherever the Gospel is preached in the power of the Spirit, some will mock, other follow until difficulties arise and some will go through to maturity. This then is the general over-all interpretation of the parable: the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ brings forth a varied response from those who hear it.

**V -- HOW TO BE FRUITFUL:** There is also a personal application of this parable. I ought to consider how I can bring forth abundant fruit from the preaching I hear and the Word of God which I read. The conclusion of the parable as recorded in Mark is the admonition of Jesus, "take heed *what* ye hear" (Mk. 4:24). In the Gospel of Luke, the words of our Lord are, "take heed therefore *how* ye hear" (Lk. 8:18). What we listen

to and how we listen to it is all important. We must be willing to learn. If we come with preconceived ideas, we will hear only what we want to hear. Our hearts must be prepared like the fruitful field. The heart is prepared by prayer for a teachable spirit and a hearing ear. In all three of the Gospel records of this parable the admonition occurs, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Mt. 13:9, Mk. 4:9,; Lk. 8:9).

**VI -- HEEDING THE WARNINGS:** Since the Lord specifically mentions a number of things that prevent mature fruit-bearing, we would do well to note these things. In His explanation of the parable, the Lord declares that the Evil One, represented by the birds, is able to snatch away the seed when the hearer does not understand the Word (Mt. 13:19). Understanding is important. It is mentioned regarding the good and fruitful ground that the hearers *understand* the word (Mt. 13:23). How can we be sure to understand? First we may pray for wisdom (Jas. 1:5). Then we may ask questions of our teachers, and we may also study and meditate to receive light from the Lord.

The hearers who are compared to the seed on stony ground failed to endure persecution and temptation. The followers of Christ must be prepared for trials and persecution. The modern Christian philosophy of prosperity and popularity for every believer is contrary to scripture. "He that shall endure to the end shall be saved" (Mt. 24:13).

The choking weeds are likened unto "cares, riches, and pleasures" (Lk. 8:14), and Mark adds, "lusts of other things" (Mk. 4:19). This is a matter of priorities. We must "seek *first* the kingdom of God and His righteousness." He may add the things as He chooses, but we are not to seek for them. Let us take care not to become so involved with anything of this life that our faithfulness for Christ suffers. Let us be hearers and doers of the Word and so become fruitful 30, 60 and 100 fold. And let us serve the Lord as His witnesses and expect that some of our witnessing will bear fruit as the seed falls onto good ground.

## THE PARABLE OF THE TARES

Read: Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43; Mark 4:26-29;  
Matt. 24:36-42; 7:21-29; Luke 17:26-37

*Memory Verse: Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear let him hear. (Matt. 13:43.)*

### What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *This parable covers the entire period from the earthly ministry of Jesus to the second coming.*
2. *Jesus' own interpretation gives us more keys for unlocking the mysteries of other parables.*
3. *The tares represent false Christians introduced into the body of true believers by the crafty enemy of our Lord.*
4. *This parable contains the basic teaching about the end of the Gospel age and the return of our Lord.*
5. *We must make sure that we are real children of the kingdom and not phony look-alikes.*

**I -- BROADEST PARABLE:** Our Lord explained that the good seed was sown by "the Son of man". He spoke of Himself. The good seed represents the children of the Kingdom. So the parable begins with the earthly ministry of our Lord. Then He tells us that the harvest is the end of the age. So this parable covers the entire period of the Gospel age from the ministry of Jesus to the end of the world. It is a parable about the kingdom of heaven, for it begins with the words "The kingdom of heaven is likened unto..." Five more parables in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew teach us different aspects of this kingdom of heaven. A careful comparison of scripture shows



that the "*kingdom of heaven*," and the "*kingdom of God*" are one and the same. These phrases are completely interchangeable and synonymous.

**II -- JESUS' OWN INTERPRETATION:** When Jesus left the multitude and entered into a house (probably Peter's), the disciples asked Him to explain the parable of the tares to them. The Lord's explanation gives us solid ground for interpreting the symbols in other parables. The keys to Jesus' own interpretation are: The sower of good seed is the Son of man, Jesus Himself; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the Kingdom; and the tares represent the children of the wicked one. The enemy is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels (messengers) of the Son of man. We will see some of these same representations in other parables, and our Lord's explanation of this parable with His interpretation of the parable of the sower will help us to understand those stories which He did not specifically explain.

**III -- WHAT THE ENEMY DID:** Between the sowing of the good seed and the harvest at the end of the age, the wicked one is not idle. "While men slept," we are told, the "enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat." These tares, or "*darnel*" as the Revised Version calls them, are plants that look very much like wheat until the time of harvest. So much alike are the plants that the Son of man forbids his servants to try to uproot the offending counterfeit lest they mistakenly destroy good plants with the bad. They must be allowed to grow together until the harvest, when the difference would be evident and separation easier.

The implication is that Satan would be diligently at work in the world sowing counterfeit Christianity. It must look like the real thing in order to deceive. This wile of the devil has caught millions in its web during the intervening 20 centuries. Beautiful religious systems have sprung up which name the name of our Lord, but fail to bring its followers to the decisive experience of regeneration. Several of these systems have grown to mammoth proportions. The very size adds to the deception. Beautiful ceremony replaces vital contact with the Savior. Gorgeous robes and crowns are substituted for the beauty of inward holiness. Jesus warned his disciples that many, at the end of the age would declare that they had served Him and done many works in His name and yet would be cast out of His kingdom because they had been workers of iniquity. Regeneration is decisive. Any religion that does not bring its adherents the truth of the new birth and the accompanying power to do the will

of God, can be classified as "*tares*", sown by the enemy.

If this is true on a world-wide basis (the field is the world), it is also true in the individual assemblies of believers every where. Somehow, there creep in to every well-regulated congregation certain "members," who although they may work ever so zealously for the church, give no evidence of real regeneration. Sometimes this results from "backsliding." Profession is not complimented by possession. Nostalgic reminiscences of past blessing are not enough. The disciple of Christ must maintain a vital growing testimony. Hollow professing Christians are a stumblingblock to many. But the Lord says we are not to try to root them out. Let both the good and bad grow until the harvest when the separation will be made. We must make sure that our personal Christian experience is vital and on-going. To stand still is to go back. May the Lord keep us growing individually, and as assemblies.

**IV -- THE END OF THE AGE:** We have already noted that the Lord spoke of the judgment day in the Sermon on the Mount (see Matt. 7:21-23). Here, in this parable, we have further teaching on the end of this age and the coming of the Lord to His people. The foundation for the study of the Second Coming is laid in the Gospels by the Lord Jesus Himself. Much foolish conjecture has obtained widespread circulation and acceptance because the basic teaching of Jesus in the Gospels on His Second Coming has been twisted. Let us note how the clear teaching of this parable and teaching in the Olivet discourse harmonize perfectly.

At the time of harvest (the end of the age) the Lord will say to the reapers, "Gather ye first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn" (Matt. 13:31). When Jesus explained the parable to His disciples He repeated the sequence so there could be no mistake, "The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire" (vss. 41-42). "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (vs. 43).

The teaching of Jesus on the second coming to the disciples in the Olivet discourse is in perfect agreement with the teaching in the parable of the tares. Often, however, the clear intention of Jesus' discourse on the last days is twisted to make it say something quite different to what He obviously meant. Consider the portion where Jesus speaks of two in the field and two grinding at the mill (Matt. 24:40,41), and the two in one bed (Luke 17:36). He says that one shall be taken and the other left. It is quite clear from the context that the one taken is the tare, the unprepared

one. He is taken, like the tare, to the burning judgment. In the days of Noah, it was the unbelieving scoffers who were taken and perished in the watery judgment. Noah remained! In the days of Lot it was the wicked moral perverts of Sodom who were taken (gathered out) and burned (like the tares) in the fiery judgment of God. When the holocaust was over, only Lot was left. These are the two illustrations the Lord used to make His teaching clear. Further, when Jesus told the disciples that one would be taken and the other left, they asked Him, "Where Lord?" The obvious direction of their question was, "Taken where, Lord?" (Luke 17:37). The Lord's answer can hardly be misunderstood: "Where the carcass is, there will the vultures be gathered together." It seems indisputable that Jesus meant that the one taken was to be taken to judgment and eternal death. No logical study of these passages can fail to reveal the perfect harmony of these teachings. Unfortunately, ill advised teachers have tried to force the Lord's teaching in the Gospels on the separation of the wicked from the righteous at the end of this age to support their interpretation of the teaching of Paul (I Thess, 5:16-17) regarding being caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. The teaching of the Lord Jesus Himself as found in the Gospels is simple and basic. What we further learn from the more difficult passages in Thessalonians and Revelation must not ever contradict or twist that basic teaching.

**V -- PERSONAL APPLICATION:** What shall I learn from this parable for my own personal spiritual profit? let me make sure that I am the real thing, wheat; and not the imitation, tares. The big difference is not in looks, but in fruit. Let me be less concerned about how I appear unto men and vitally concerned about bringing forth the fruit of righteousness in my life. May I never become one who abuses the grace of God, continuing in sin while presuming that His grace will cover it all up. NO! Let me receive from His grace that which the Lord truly intended: a new birth which brings me the power of God to live an obedient, faithful life of service. Then in the last day I will be among those who shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of my Father.

## PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM

Read: Matt. 13:31-35,44-53; Mark 4:26-34

*Memory Verse: But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. (Matt. 6:33)*

### What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *The different parables illumine various aspects of the kingdom of God.*
2. *It is tremendously important that we develop and come to spiritual maturity.*
3. *The word of the Kingdom has grown phenomenally since its beginning and indeed is influencing the whole world in some ways today.*
4. *Our Lord was willing to pay the great price for our redemption.*
5. *Today there is a mixture of good and bad among believers but the separation is coming at the end of the age.*
6. *Those in God's kingdom should prize the ageless truths and be open to new light and experiences.*

**I -- VARIOUS ASPECTS OF GOD'S KINGDOM:** In the many parables which Jesus used, He described many different aspects of the kingdom of God. In order for His disciples to grasp the various truths concerning His kingdom, Jesus used several different representations. In interpreting the parables, careful reading is important. The keys which the Lord Himself gave us in those parables which He personally interpreted help us to understand the other parables. The parable of the sower is an introduction to the parables. it is not specifically a parable of the kingdom; that is, the words, "the

kingdom of God is like..." do not occur in the parable of the sower. The parable of the tares is the great overview of the entire kingdom of God. It covers all of the period from the teaching of Jesus to the judgment day at the end of the Gospel age. The other parables in Matthew 13, and another in Mark 4, emphasize various truths about the kingdom of God. Taken together they give us a clear understanding of what God's kingdom is like today and what to expect in the future.

**II -- ANOTHER SEED PARABLE:** Mark includes a parable of the kingdom not found in the collection of kingdom parables in Matthew 13. The emphasis in Mark's parable is on maturity. The seed is sown by "*a man*" who represents the Lord Jesus and those who preached the Gospel after Him. The plants are the believers. First the blade; that is the green stalk; then the ear, and finally the full grain in the ear, develop. The individual as a newborn babe, enters the kingdom through the new birth. He desires the sincere milk of the word, that he may grow thereby. He must continue to take nourishment and to exercise himself unto Godliness until he attains the stature of a mature believer. While this is true concerning the individual believer, the emphasis of this parable is that it is exactly so in the development of the church over the centuries. We are told that the sickle is put in to harvest the grain only when that grain is fully matured. Logically then, the harvest, which we know represents the end of the age, can take place only when the grain (the believers) are fully developed. Historically, there has been accelerated development of the church since the reformation. The truths of justification by faith alone, and sanctification by another work of grace, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit have developed the followers of Christ toward maturity. Perhaps there is yet a step or two to be taken before the church is fully ripe and the Lord can put in His sickle. Let us be open to a forward move of God, and have faith for it so that when He appears, we shall be like Him.

**III -- GROWTH AND INFLUENCE:** The parable of the mustard seed emphasizes the phenomenal growth of the church. It also explains that the extensive growth allows questionable characters to join themselves to it. The church certainly had an unpromising beginning. Its leader and founder was executed as a criminal. Eleven frightened men were scattered and shattered at His crucifixion. A few women remained loyal to Him. But this smallest of beginnings, given impetus by the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, "turned the world upside down" in one generation. Communities of believers were estab-

lished in widespread areas of the Roman empire. "All they of Asia" heard the Gospel. Myriads of individuals found their place in this plant of the Lord. Among them were those represented by the birds in the story of Jesus. He told us Himself that the birds represented the evil one. Now we can understand this parable clearly. The phenomenal growth of the church provided a hiding place for children of the wicked one in its branches. As long as severe persecution surrounded the church, no one dared to add himself to the believers, But when the Roman emperor, Constantine, embraced Christianity and there was no great price to pay to become a Christian, all kinds of believers found a home in the once pure church of the Lord. From this influx of "*birds*" much of the apostasy of the church developed. Heathen customs were adopted by the church. Compromises with the heathen culture became common. Although the church was bigger than ever, it was no longer pure. This is true on a local level also. Most well-regulated Holy Ghost assemblies have some "*birds*" lodging in their branches. This is in perfect harmony with the parable of the tares growing in the midst of the wheat. They are not to be driven away by a misguided zeal. Birds make an interesting comparison. No doubt, there are some owls, hawks with sharp beaks, vultures, silly sparrows, big-mouthed pelicans and many more.

The parable of the leaven was understood by every woman in Jesus' audience. They all knew and used the unique characteristic of leaven to advantage in their baking. The emphasis of this parable is on the world-wide influence upon society exerted by the kingdom of God. Note that although Jesus on other occasions associated leaven with the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, on this occasion He specifically states, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven." The kingdom is not likened unto the three measures of meal but unto leaven. This is absolutely decisive in the interpretation of the parable. Certainly the Lord is not saying, "the kingdom of heaven is like hypocrisy" or something evil. What He *is* saying is that the kingdom of heaven, or the church with its teachings would exert a positive influence on the society of the whole world. He is not saying that the whole world will be saved, but simply influenced by Christian principles. This is true in fact. The entire world is better because of the teachings of Christ and the faithfulness of true disciples. The laws of many countries have been influenced by Christianity. Humanitarianism has developed in part at least from Christian compassion. Many phrases of our language have been taken from the Bible. This is what Jesus taught by the parable of the leaven and the parable of the mustard seed: the growth and influence of the followers of Christ would be phenomenal, but its consistency in this age would be mixed. It is good to

remember when it is pointed out that there are hypocrites in the church, that Jesus said it would be so.

**IV -- THE PRICE OF REDEMPTION:** "Ye are bought with a price," "not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ" (I Cor. 6:20, I Pet. 1:18,19). No price that *we* could ever pay would purchase the kingdom of God for us. While it is a valid truth that we ought to "sell all and follow" Jesus, as the rich young ruler was advised; that is not the truth which is emphasized in the parable of the hidden treasure and the pearl of great price. Jesus underlines a different truth concerning the kingdom of God in these two parables. If we remember that the field is the world according to the Lord's interpretation, then this treasure is hidden in the world. The man again represents the Lord. Who can gainsay the assertion that God gave His all when He gave His Son a ransom to purchase redemption for humanity. It ought to encourage every believer to realize that God considers us a treasure worth purchasing at any cost. The parable of the pearl of great price has the same emphasis. The sea often represents humanity in the scriptures and so this pearl of great price, the church, is purchased by the very life of our Lord.

**V -- THE DAY OF SEPARATION:** Though the church today still suffers from the infiltration of children of the wicked one, the day of separation is coming. The parable of the net emphasized this aspect of the kingdom of God. The Gospel net has drawn all kinds of "*fish*" into the catch. Not all are good. There is a mixture. Like the birds in the Gospel tree and the tares in the midst of the wheat, there are bad fish caught in the Gospel net along with the good fish. Just as the harvest at the end of the age will bring about the purging out and burning of the tares; so in this parable, the end of the Gospel age produces a sorting out and a casting away of the bad from among the good. "The angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the righteous, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire."

**VI -- THINGS NEW AND OLD:** Every Christian will recognize in the interpretation of these parables, well known truths that have been understood and taught for many years. But as followers of Christ, we must also be ready for any new move of God which may develop. We must esteem highly the sound old doctrines of the church, and yet at the same time be open to new light which the Lord is sure to give. Let us expect great things from God.

## THE UNFORGIVING SERVANT

Read: Matthew 18:15-35; Matthew 6:9-15; Mark 11:24-26  
 Luke 17:3,4; Colossians 3:12-13

*Memory Verse: Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. (Ephesians 4:32)*

### What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *An unforgiving spirit hinders prayer.*
2. *God freely forgives us our sins.*
3. *We have an obligation to forgive those who wrong us.*
4. *We must follow Jesus' example of asking forgiveness for those who crucified Him.*
5. *We must be sure that when we forgive that it is not superficial, but thorough and from the heart.*

**I -- HARMONY AMONG BRETHREN:** Jesus taught that if a brother sin against another, he should be told of his fault personally by the one wronged. Many misunderstandings could be nipped in the bud if this advice were followed today. Often the sin may be one of thoughtlessness or carelessness. When attention is called to the wrong, perhaps the brother will recognize it and apologize and do what is possible to right the wrong. If so, a victory has been won.

If, however, the wrong is not admitted the attention of the congregation should be called to the case. If the admonition of the congregation does not bring about reconciliation, the offending party should then be counted as a sinner. Jesus promised that whatever should be bound on earth (by believers in harmony) should be bound in heaven, and what things soever ye loose on earth shall be loosed in



heaven. "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where 2 or 3 are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:18-20).

It is clear from the context that disunity hinders prayer. If we desire to have notable answers to prayer we must maintain the unity of the believers. Misunderstandings, jealousies, every root of bitterness, must be dealt with and removed in order to receive the answers to our prayers.

Peter came to Jesus after hearing this teaching and asked the Lord how often he must forgive his brother; seven times? Jesus answered, "Not...until seven times: but until seventy times seven" (that is without limit). A little imagination might help us to understand Peter's question. He had a brother, Andrew. They were partners in the fishing business with James and John. It is possible that Andrew was careless with the equipment. Maybe he forgot to wash out the net. Peter may have scolded him several times for allowing the sea-weed to dry and harden in the net. It may be that Peter had warned Andrew that if he ruined another net he would no longer be a partner in the enterprise. Peter like many other brothers kept a very accurate count of his brother's transgressions. To illustrate the grounds for limitless forgiveness Jesus told a story.

**II -- THE KING FORGIVES:** A certain king took account of his servants. One was brought before him who owed him ten thousand talents (largest Greek number known). The servant had nothing to pay and king ordered that the servant, his wife and children and all his possessions be sold and the payment to be made. The distraught servant fell down at the feet of the king and besought him to have patience. He promised to pay all (an impossible task). The king was moved with compassion. He loosed the servant and wiped out the entire debt, giving him a clean slate.

This is a very clear picture of our condition before Almighty God. We are accountable to Him. Such a debt of guilt on our part, has been accumulated as to render it impossible for us to pay it. yet whenever we come before our King and worship and beseech Him, how quick He is to forgive us all all our sins and give us a new start. "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9). The king in the story is magnanimous. That is how our Lord is, also. May we learn to be like Him.

**III -- BY THE THROAT:** What a relief it must have been to that servant to be free at last

from the impossible debt. Now he could begin to save for himself and his family. He started in at once by finding another servant who owed him one hundred pence (ten dollars at most). He laid hands on him and took him by the throat and demanded payment at once. This servant fell down before him and besought him to have patience and he would pay all. But he was not moved with compassion as the king had been. His heart was hard and his hands greedy. He had the fellow servant cast into prison till he should pay the debt.

The other fellow servants of the king noted what was done. They were sorry and came and told the king. He was very angry with the servant whom he had so freely forgiven, "O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee? Now the pardon of the debtor was revoked. The angry king ordered the unforgiving servant to be delivered to the tormentors till he should pay all that was due (a life sentence for sure).

The conclusion that Jesus made to this parable ought to make every Christian examine himself very, very thoroughly for any unforgiving spirit. There is no more frightening teaching in the whole New Testament. "So likewise shall my Heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." In other words if we cannot forgive the wrongs of our fellow-man against us after having been forgiven the death deserving sins by our King, we will be delivered to the tormentors till we pay for our own sins. God forbid! Let us walk carefully and be quick to forgive. Hold no grudge. Be sure forgiveness is from the heart. This is a very earnest matter.

**IV -- JESUS' EXAMPLE:** Upon occasion I have been mistreated. I have been gyped, misunderstood, wrongfully blamed etc., etc. No doubt, you have experienced many wrongs against yourself. Some have suffered grievous wrongs even to physical and mental harm. Yet none of us, by any stretch of the imagination has endured the wrong our Savior endured when he was falsely accused, betrayed, delivered for envy and finally crucified like a vile criminal. Despite such undeserved treatment he prayed sincerely as He was nailed to that cross, "Father forgive them, they know not what they do." In the face of such terrible wrong our grievances pale into insignificance. Nevertheless, let us deal earnestly with them and be sure we follow the example of our suffering Savior and forgive those who wrong us.

**V -- PRACTICAL FORGIVING:** The grace of forgiveness has little value in an essay or a sermon or as a subject for discussion. Its value is in practice. We can expect dramatic answers to prayer when we forgive from the heart those who wrong us.

Years ago, I once had a disagreement with another Christian. I think we both felt that we had been wronged by the other. We got together and apologized and went our way. I thought everything was right. Deep in my heart however, I often thought, "someday the score will be settled, you will get what is coming to you!" I had no intention of doing anything myself, you know, but I think I would have been glad to see some small punishment meted out. Then the Lord spoke to me, "You want me to bless you, but you have never forgiven that person **from your heart**. In a moment I knew it was so, and dealt with God to root that bitterness entirely out of my life. The blessing of the victory that came to me as a result of that experience is one of the greatest in my Christian life. Is there someone whom you have not forgiven **from the heart** for a wrong committed against you?

It is not the communists and foreign enemies that we need so much to worry about forgiving. It is those much closer to home. A fellow worker on the job, an unfair boss or crooked merchant; a mechanic who took advantage of your predicament, a neighbor who trespasses on your property, a teacher who has favorites (not you), the cop who gives you a ticket, the mother-in-law who competes for your mate's devotion, the brother or sister who doesn't perform the fair share of duties, the friend who gets more honor than he deserves. Perhaps, there are even more serious wrongs which you have endured, an unfaithful partner, a serious swindle, or such mental cruelty as to cause a breakdown. Despite the seriousness of the offences let us be sure to forgive from the heart that we be not delivered to the tormentors and that our prayers be not hindered.

## THE GOOD SAMARITAN

Read: Luke 10:25-37

*Memory Verse: For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.  
(Galatians 5:15)*

### What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *The parable of the good Samaritan was told in response to a lawyer's question as to how to obtain eternal life.*
2. *The ten commandments are summarized in the two statements regarding love for God and our neighbor.*
3. *The story is told to illustrate who is our neighbor and how we can show our love to such.*
4. *Love for our Lord and love for our neighbor is proven by our action. We must be ready to serve and help.*
5. *Jesus Himself is the perfect "good Samaritan," for He came where we were and paid the price for our restoration.*

**I -- TO INHERIT ETERNAL LIFE:** The religious leaders of Israel often attempted to trick Jesus into saying something which could be used against Him. An expert in the Old Testament law stood up to tempt Jesus one day, and asked Him what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus was never caught unawares in these traps which were set for Him. He turned the tables on this lawyer and asked him, "What is written in the law? how readest thou?" The lawyer quoted, "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 neighbor as thyself" (Luke 10:27). He was quoting from Deut. 6:5; & Lev. 19:18. On another occasion when a scribe sincerely asked Jesus which commandment was

most important, Jesus quoted the same two scriptures. It is evident that to obey these two commandments fully is impossible without a Divine new birth.

**II -- SUMMARY OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS:** The first four of the ten commandments all deal with our relationship with God. Ancient traditions state that these four commandments were on the first tablet of stone. The lawyer quoted the summary of them. To be sure, if we love the Lord with heart, soul, strength and mind, we will have no other gods, or graven images, we will honor His name, and hallow His holy days. The ancient traditions also reveal that the last six of the ten commandments were on the second tablet of stone. These six commandments deal with our relationships with our fellow man. They are indeed summarized by the word the lawyer quoted from Lev. 19:18, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Paul explained to the Romans, "He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Rom. 13:9).

**III -- THE PARABLE:** When the lawyer quoted these two summaries of the law, Jesus told him, "Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live." Attempting to justify himself the lawyer asked Jesus, "who is my neighbor?" Now again Jesus wanted the lawyer to answer his own question, so He told a story (see verses 30-35).

"A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho." When Jesus said the certain man went *down* he really meant literally down. the road from Jerusalem to Jericho goes down very steeply. The capital city is at an altitude of 2550 feet while Jericho, only fifteen miles northeast of Jerusalem is 3350 feet lower at 800 feet below sea level. Jericho is close to the Dead Sea and on the edge of the great rift that runs from Jordan south to central east Africa. Jesus may have also meant that *down* to be figurative; for Jerusalem was the location of the temple where the presence of God had been manifested, and Jericho was the city of the curse (Joshua 6:26).

The road itself was a steep winding road in an area which became increasingly desolate as you neared Jericho. The climate at Jericho is sultry, hot and humid, while Jerusalem enjoys a drier and generally more comfortable atmosphere. It was this same treacherous and steep road which Mary and Joseph had to retrace as they looked for their 12 year old son, Jesus, who had stayed behind at Jerusalem, about His Father's business. The road was infamous for its dangers. The Jews from Galilee

used the road to avoid contact with the despised "*neighbors*," the Samaritans. They detoured many extra miles on the east of Jordan and then up this steep and dangerous road to get to Jerusalem for the feast days. The robbers who inhabited the area delighted themselves in falling on lone tourists and pilgrims, often leaving them wounded and naked.

Such was the case of the certain man in our Lord's story. He was left by the bandits, naked, bleeding, and half dead. A priest was first to come upon the tragedy, but perhaps fearing for his own safety, quickly passed by on the other side. A Levite was next to come that way. He at least stopped and looked at the poor victim. Next came a despised Samaritan. When he saw the poor man, he had compassion on him. He was prepared for just such an emergency. He came where he was and bandaged the wounds, after cleansing them with wine and soothing them with oil. He placed the victim on his own beast and brought him to the nearest inn. he cared for him there through the night, and on the next day before resuming his journey, He instructed the keeper of the inn to provide the necessary care at his expense which he would repay as he passed on his next journey. The very words "**good Samaritan**" have become a part of our language. Truly this traveller was a good Samaritan.

**IV -- DO THOU LIKEWISE:** Now the Lord Jesus pointedly asked the lawyer, "Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves?" The lawyer would not take the name "Samaritan" on his lips, but he answered, "He that showed mercy on him." Jesus then concluded the matter by advising the lawyer, "Go and do thou likewise."

Remember, the lawyer asked two questions of the Lord, and the Lord made him answer both questions himself. The first question was what he must do to inherit eternal life, and the answer was to obey the two part summary of the ten commandments. This obedience is impossible without the regeneration that comes through faith in Christ. The second question was, "Who is my neighbor?" To paraphrase the answer, "any needy one with whom I come in contact is my neighbor."

**V -- PRACTICAL APPLICATION:** Six times in the New Testament these words are quoted from Lev. 19:18: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Real kindness in action is the key that opens many hearts to the regenerating power of Christ. It is easy to mind our own business, or to be over cautious and "not to get involved." But the Gospel teaches active love as well as patient forgiveness in its doctrine of love. It is

this kind of love that proves that we are truly disciples of Jesus who loved us enough to get involved and to "come where we were" and pay the price for our deliverance from the thief who comes to kill and steal and destroy.

Sometimes this parable is taken to be a picture of humanity on the downward road from Paradise to the place of a curse, Satan had robbed man of innocence, immortality, and fellowship with God and left him more than half dead, when the Savior came to earth and lifted us up, healing the wounds and paying the full price of redemption. Surely, He is our great example of redeeming love. Let us so love one another that all men shall know that we are His disciples. Let us pray that our eyes shall be opened to the needy around us and then let us be sure not to pass by on the other side.

## LESSON 6

## THE LOST SHEEP, THE LOST COIN AND THE PRODIGAL SON

Read: Luke 15; John 10:1-18; Matthew 18:10-14; Luke 5:24-32;  
Matthew 9:9-13; Luke 7:36-50; Luke 19:1-10; Luke 11:52

*Memory Verse: For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. (Luke 19:10.)*

### What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *Jesus rebuked the Pharisees' attitude against the publicans and sinners.*
2. *Heaven rejoices over every lost one that is found.*
3. *The heavenly Father runs to meet His penitent sons.*
4. *We must be careful not to repel sinners who are coming to Christ.*

**I -- TO SEEK AND TO SAVE:** The scribes and Pharisees constantly found fault with Jesus because He spoke and ate with publicans and sinners. When Jesus called Levi (also called Matthew) from the receipt of custom, to follow Him, Levi made a feast and invited a great company of publicans (tax collectors) and other sinners. The scribes and Pharisees demanded to know why Jesus and His disciples ate and drank with sinners. Jesus explained that the healthy people do not need a physician, but the sick; and that He was come, not call the righteous, but sinners to repentance (see Luke 5:27-32, Matthew 9:9-13).

A similar scene took place when a sinful woman anointed Jesus' feet with an alabaster ointment at a feast which Simon, a Pharisee, made for Jesus. Simon said to himself, "This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner." But Jesus knew very well who and what the woman was, and he knew too, that she was penitent. Simon's attitude, like that of the scribes and Pharisees in general, was frozen into a cold, rigid disdain of every publican and harlot. Jesus had faith for their recovery (see Luke 7:36-50).

When Jesus visited Zacchaeus at Jericho, again there was criticism of Jesus



because He went to be the guest of one who was a publican and a sinner. But through that visit of Jesus salvation came to Zacchaeus and his house (see Luke 19:1-10).

The Pharisees and experts in the law disdained these publicans and sinners in such a way that they made it almost impossible for one of them to repent and start a new life. The Lord rebuked them sharply for their "*holier-than-thou*" attitude on several occasions. "Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered" (Luke 11:52). Jesus warned the chief priests and elders of the Jews that the publicans and harlots would go into the kingdom of God before they would (see Matthew 21:28-32).

**II -- JOY OVER ONE SINNER THAT REPENTETH:** With three parables, Jesus attempted to show the Pharisees how wrong their attitude was. He pointed out how a shepherd that lost one of his hundred sheep would leave the ninety and nine and go out to seek for the lost one. When that sheep was found the shepherd would rejoice and celebrate with his friends over the recovery of that lost sheep. Jesus emphasized the fact that there is "joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance" (Luke 15:7). The point should have been clear to the Pharisees, that the rescue of a lost sinner was a great cause for rejoicing. They chose, however, to freeze the publicans and sinners out of fellowship, with their icy attitude of disdain. Jesus told a similar story on another occasion to His disciples to illustrate the high regard He had for little children (see Matthew 18:10-14).

The second parable Jesus used described a woman who had lost a silver coin. She searched and swept the house until she found it. When it was found she had to tell her friends and neighbors and she expected them to rejoice with her over the recovery of the coin. Surely the salvation of a lost soul is greater cause for rejoicing than the recovery of a misplaced coin. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke 15:10).

The third illustration Jesus used, the parable of the prodigal son, has been evaluated by literary experts as the greatest short story ever written. Aside from its literary genius, it is filled with valuable spiritual lessons. The story is often thought of as that of a man with two sons, one good and one bad. Actually, it is a story of a man with two sons, both bad, but one is restored. The younger son asked for his portion of the father's legacy and then went and wasted it on wine, women, and song. The profligate spending exhausted the inheritance quickly, and when nothing was

left a mighty famine reduced the errant son to desperate circumstances. In his extremity he took a job to herd swine. So far down had he fallen that he was about to feed on the pigs' food. But he "came to himself" and realized that the servants in his father's home which he had so recently despised, were far better off than he was in his present predicament. He determined that he would "eat humble pie" (instead of pig slop) and return to his father. He composed and rehearsed his sincere apology and hoped that dear old Dad would at least let him return home as a servant, for he was unworthy any longer to be considered a son.

**III -- THE FATHER RUNS TO MEET THE REPENTANT:** When the son was still a great way off, the father, who obviously was looking for the lost son, saw him and had compassion on him and ran and embraced him and kissed him. The penitent boy began to recite his practiced speech, but he never finished, for the excited father called for his servants to bring the best robe in the house, a ring for his finger, shoes for his feet, and a fatted calf for a joyful celebration. Oh, what a joyous occasion!

But there was one fly in the ointment. As so often happens at joyful celebrations one sour puss was in a stew because of the honor given to this waster. That was the elder brother outside refusing to join in the joyful celebration. You know how he felt, don't you? "Here I am faithfully performing my duties every day and no one even notices me. And here comes this wicked runaway that causes so much grief and anguish and what do they do? They make a feast. What have I worked so hard for, to be ignored and insulted? Phooey! I won't go to the party."

The father himself came to the older son and begged him to come in and join in the joyful celebration. "Son thou art ever with me and all that I have is thine," he explained, "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" (see Luke 15:32).

The story ends there with the elder brother still outside despite the father's pleading. The message was clear enough. The scribes and Pharisees ought to rejoice over the rescue of harlots and publicans and sinners from their evil ways, even as all heaven rejoices at the return of a wandering soul. Certainly, if the rescue of a lost sheep or the finding of a misplaced coin was cause for rejoicing, the salvation of a lost soul should be infinitely greater reason for joy. The prodigal son, who represents the publicans and harlots, at least and at last came to himself and returned, repentant, to the Father. But the older brother, who represents the scribes and Pharisees, never awakens to the evil of his wrong attitude. We are left in doubt of his recovery from his self-centered superiority.

**IV -- LET US NOT HINDER OR OFFEND:** The attitude of the scribes and Pharisees has not disappeared with their culture. Faithful "*super-saints*" today sometimes find fault with sinners and seekers who are just coming to Jesus. Let us be sure not to put stumbling blocks in the way of young people who, though they may have many lessons still to learn, are at least on their way, returning to the Heavenly Father.

It is worthy of note that when Jesus ate and conversed with the publicans and harlots, there were always results from His contact. Levi the publican became Matthew the apostle. Zacchaeus repented and made restitution. The sinful woman who anointed Jesus' feet could "go in peace" for her sins which were many were forgiven. The fact that Jesus ate and drank with publicans and sinners is not to be taken as license for us to attend every wild celebration we know of. Remember, although Jesus did attend several feasts made by sinners, He always came away with converts. Then, too, remember that Jesus did not choose sinners as His constant companions. He chose to spend His short time with 12 disciples who loved Him and believed in Him. Let us also choose for our closest friends, disciples of Jesus who love and serve Him. Finally, let it also be noted that Jesus spent many a long night in prayer to the Father in heaven which brought to Him the power to bring blessing to the publicans and sinners. Let us, too spend much time in the presence of God so that when we do have contact with sinners, they shall not defile us, but we shall bring blessing and salvation to them. Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth!

## THREE PARABLES ABOUT PRAYER

Read: Luke 11:1-13; Luke 18:1-14

*Memory Verse: The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. (James 5:16.)*

### What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *We may approach God with the confidence of a child to his Father.*
2. *We may be sure that God will provide us with whatever is necessary that we may minister to others.*
3. *Persistence in prayer will bring the power of God against the works of darkness.*
4. *Humility is important in prayer.*

**I--SAY, "OUR FATHER":** What a wonderful introduction into the grace of prayer. Jesus wants us to think of God as our Father. Seldom is such an analogy used in the Old Testament. But quickly, as we begin the reading of the New Testament, we are introduced to the concept of God as a Father. Seventeen times in the sermon on the mount (Matt. 5,6,7), God is called by this loving title: **Father**. the father-child relationship is based on admiration, trust, and love, on the part of the child; and love, generosity, and self-denial on the part of the Father. In general the child has no fear to go to his Dad with requests for necessities or favors. In just such a manner God would like us to learn to approach Him.

With confidence I now draw nigh  
And "Father, Abba Father," cry!

--C. Wesley

Jesus explained that when a child asks his Father for bread, he is not given a stone, or if the child asks for a fish, the Father will not give him a serpent, or if the child requests an egg, he surely is not offered a scorpion. If weak human and mortal

Fathers grant the request of their offspring, how much more will our perfect, heavenly Father grant the request of his children for the Holy Spirit. Let us come like little children and ask our Father for the Holy Spirit. "Every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened" (Luke 11:10). Let us ask the Father for a new infilling of the Holy Spirit, ask for more of the power of the Spirit and indeed for the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Don't be among those who draw back, but believe and receive from the Father, His Holy Spirit.

**II -- HE WILL RISE AND GIVE:** Jesus' first parable about prayer is connected with praying for the Holy Spirit. The teaching which follows the story, applies its lesson to asking for the Holy Spirit. Jesus told of one going to his friend at midnight to ask for three loaves of bread. A visitor had come and there was absolutely nothing to offer him. But now the friend calls out and says, "we are all in bed, the house is all locked up, don't bother me! I can't give you anything tonight." Jesus explained that even though he would not rise and give him bread because he was his friend, he surely would give him all that he needed "because of his importunity" (ch. 11:8). The word importunity means, the act of requesting persistently to the point of troublesome annoyance. So then, persistent requesting on our part, for the wherewithal to minister to the needy who come our way will surely be met by abundant provision. In particular, persistent prayer for the Holy Spirit will inevitably bring to us power from on high to be effective witnesses for our Lord.

A Dutch Reformed pastor who with his wife was seeking for the infilling of the Holy Spirit once said, "But the Bible says 'your heavenly Father knows what things you need before you ask, Use not vain repetitions.'" He wanted to know if he was doing wrong in asking daily, over and over again for the gift of the Holy Spirit. To be sure, there are some things that we need not ask for over and over again. Our daily bread, the necessities of life, food and clothing, these things the Father will provide. We need not take thought nor beseech Him importunately for them. But it is clearly taught in this parable, that for the power and ability to minister to the needy, I can, and must request persistently, to the point of troublesome annoyance, if necessary. Our friend and Father will rise and give us all that we need!

**III -- HE WILL AVENGE:** In another teaching on the subject of prayer Jesus spake a parable to illustrate that we should **always** pray and never give up (Luke 18:1). There

was a judge in a certain city who had no fear of God and who had no regard for any man. He was independent, doing what he pleased. He was his own man. There was also a widow in the city who came to the judge and asked for vengeance on her adversary. Perhaps some Pharisee had taken advantage of her helpless widowhood and had devoured her house and then for a pretense made a long public prayer at the Sabbath services (see Mark 12:38-40). She wanted to be avenged of her adversary. The old, independent judge paid little heed to the poor widow for a while. But she kept coming back. Over and over again her face appeared before the judge. "Avenge me of my adversary," time and time again. Finally, the judge resolved in his thoughts, "though I fear neither God nor man, yet because of his woman's continual coming to trouble me, I will avenge her, just to be rid of this wearying annoyance."

Now Jesus compared the reaction of the unjust judge to a compassionate and righteous Lord. Our loving Lord will not delay His intervention on behalf of His children. We, too have an adversary. He goes about seeking whom he may devour. He has brought great suffering and sorrow to humanity. Now we ought to beseech our compassionate and all powerful judge to avenge us of our adversary. We ought to pray always and never give up. Our Lord will avenge us speedily. Persistent prayer will smash the works of darkness. Sickness is the work of the evil one. Our Lord will avenge us. Evil habits are the result of the wicked one's deception. Persistent prayer will break the bondage and set the captive free. Ignorance and deception have devoured the eternal inheritance of many. Persistent prayer will bring light and truth so that God's glorious legacy may be claimed. Wherever the adversary has been at work, this weapon of persistent prayer will destroy the works of the evil one. Hard hearts can be softened, impossible situations changed. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (James 5:16).

**IV -- A CONTRITE HEART:** Persistent prayer is taught in regard to receiving the Holy Spirit, especially for the purpose of ministering to the needs of those who come our way. Persistent prayer is also urged in our attack upon the works of the evil one. There is one other lesson which Jesus taught by the use of a parable. The lesson is essentially that God will look to, and recognize the prayer of one who comes to Him in prayer with a humble and contrite heart.

A Pharisee and a publican went into the temple to pray. The Pharisee gave thanks, to be sure, but what he gave thanks for was something else. He thanked God that he was not bad like other men. He then told God of all his good deeds. he

boasted of keeping the commandments. Then looking about (to see who was listening) he spied the publican on hands and knees and once again loudly thanked God that he was not like that miserable scum of a publican (tax collectors are seldom popular).

Meanwhile the publican could not so much as lift his head but in deep conviction cried for God to be merciful to him, a sinner. Jesus remarked that the publican went to his house justified while the Pharisee's prayer went unrecognized. We can remember as a result of this parable that we ought not to expect God to grant our petitions on the basis of our good works. We need not advise Him of our good record (real or imaginary). We must come to Him in humility recognizing that we deserve nothing but damnation. To this man, He will look, to him that is of a contrite spirit and broken heart and who trembles at His word.

The Syro-Phoenician woman came like that. She was willing to be a dog, and lick the crumbs which fell from the Master's table. This humble declaration brought high praise from the Savior. "Oh woman," Jesus declared, "great is thy faith. Be it unto thee even as thou wilt" (Matt. 11:28). "For this saying, go thy way, the devil is gone out of thy daughter" (Mk.7:29). Prayer, mixed with sincere humility brought forth this great commendation.

The centurion also, who besought the Lord for his tormented servant acknowledged that he was unworthy to have Jesus come under his roof. This sincere humility coupled with his confidence in the great authority of Jesus evoked a high commendation from the Master. "I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel," Jesus declared.

It is interesting to note that both of these highly commended individuals were non-Jews. Let us learn well the lesson to come before our Lord in true humility making our requests on the basis of His love and power and not on the basis of our self esteem.

We must pray through every obstacle to claim our promised portion of the Holy Spirit from the Father that we may give to those who come our way. We also must learn to persist in prayer until the works of Satan and indeed the evil one himself are destroyed. And we must remember that the prayer of the proud is an abomination to the Lord, but He hears the cry of the humble.

## THREE PARABLES ABOUT STEWARDSHIP

Read: Luke 12:13-34; Luke 16:1-31

*Memory Verse: For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. (I Timothy 6:10.)*

### What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *To resist and overcome the strong desire to possess the material things of this world.*
2. *To use our material blessings for the furtherance of the kingdom of God.*
3. *Proper use of money can bring reward in the hereafter.*
4. *They that accumulate riches make it difficult for themselves to be a part of the kingdom of God.*

**I -- PASSION FOR POSSESSIONS:** To the poor the Gospel was preached (see Matt. 11:5). "The common people heard Him gladly" (Mk. 12:37). Not many wealthy people became disciples of Christ. It was generally believed in the time of Christ that abundant possessions were a direct indication of God's reward for righteousness. They supposed that gain was godliness (I Tim. 6:5). Jesus refuted this doctrine. The rich young ruler, whom Jesus loved, who diligently observed the commandments from his youth, was hindered, in fact prevented, from entering the kingdom of God because of his great possessions. When he turned and went away sorrowfully, Jesus said, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God (Luke 18:24-25).

Jesus used three parables to illustrate the dangers of desiring to be rich, and also to teach how money may be used with wisdom. One day when huge crowds were



surrounding the Lord, one of the company asked Jesus to speak to his brother to divide the inheritance with him. But Jesus rebuked him sharply, saying, "Man who made me a judge or a divider over you?" (Luke 12:14). He warned the crowd to beware of covetousness, "for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (vs. 15). To illustrate this teaching He told the story of the rich fool.

The ground of a certain rich man yielded such an abundant harvest that he did not have room to store the crop. He reasoned to himself that he would build bigger storehouses and store up all his goods and then say to himself, "Thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry" (vs. 19). But God called him a fool, for that very night when all seemed so secure, the rich man's soul was required of him. The grim reaper was sent for this harvest! "Then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" (vs. 20).

Jesus here emphasized how foolish it is to provide so desperately for security in this life when at any time our earthly life can come to an abrupt end. This error is compounded by neglecting to be rich toward God.

A neighbor of mine, some years ago, spent a great deal of time and money preparing his summer home for his retirement. Every summer weekend was spent in some project at the summer home. Costly renovations were made to fit the home for year round habitation. Church and family were often neglected. Great labor went into landscaping. The project was near completion. Retirement only a few months away, when suddenly his soul was required of him. He never had the opportunity to enjoy that for which all his labor had been expended. Certainly God is not opposed to retirement for those who have labored long hard years, nor is He necessarily against comforts of life. But what He *is* against is stinginess toward the kingdom of God and neglect of service for the Lord. We must resist and overcome that natural human tendency which grasps to possess this world's material things. We must learn to practice generosity instead.

**II -- HOW TO INVEST WISELY:** One of the easiest ways to make a fortune is to write a book on how to get rich. Human nature finds it difficult to resist any get-rich-quick scheme. Recently, "How to Rob a Bank (legally)" is bringing its authors healthy dividends from an all too eager public. There is a wise way to use money so that it will yield eternal benefits to the investor. Jesus used a parable to teach this lesson. Another rich man called for his steward who had been accused of wasting his master's

substance. He would have go give account of his financial dealings. The steward realizing that dismissal was certain reasoned out what steps to take. He did not want to dig ditches. He was too proud to beg. He hit upon a shady scheme which would surely make him some friends who would be obliged to help him after he was fired from his position. He called all the debtors of his master and reduced their indebtedness substantially. They, of course, rejoiced at this unexpected windfall. The steward's reasoning was that having done such a favor for these debtors, they would be obliged to help him when his need arose. The rich master commended the unjust steward, not for his honesty to be sure, but for the wisdom and foresight he showed in preparing for the future. Jesus, too, commended the wisdom and foresight of the children of this world, whom, he said, were wiser than the children of light.

We must note that Jesus was certainly not condoning the dishonest use of money for our own future security or for the support of the work of the Lord. He did not commend the dishonesty. His teaching to His followers was that they should use the material things of this world to make friends of those who are in the kingdom of God. Just as surely as the unjust steward was put out of his stewardship, we too must surrender the stewardship of our natural earthly life. We, then, ought to make friends by the wise use of the mammon of unrighteousness (money) that will bring us reward in the kingdom of heaven.

A governor of New Jersey, quite a few years ago, introduced and supported legislation which was a great boon to the insurance companies. He was limited by law to 8 years as governor and those 8 years were almost expired. The legislation was passed by both houses and signed by the governor to the delight of the insurance companies. Predictably, when the governor's term expired he was offered and accepted a top executive position in the insurance field.

We ought to so use our resources for the support and furtherance of the work of the Lord that when our term of life expires there will be a place of honor for us in the eternal habitation of our Lord and His people.

**III -- HOW RICHES HINDER:** The third "certain rich man" which Jesus spoke of has been given the name "Dives" (he sure took a dive at death). He was clothed in royal purple and dined extravagantly every day. Right at the rich man's gate a beggar named Lazarus was laid daily. He was full of sores and hoped to get just some of the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. The dogs had more compassion on poor Lazarus than the rich man had, for they came and licked the sores of the unfortunate beggar.

Now the beggar died and was carried by angels to "Abraham's bosom". The rich man, too, died and was buried, but he awoke in hell. Now he noticed the beggar whom he had so long ignored and cried to Abraham, requesting that Lazarus might come with a drop of cool water to relieve his torment in the flames of hell. The real torment of hell, the great gulf fixed between the place of repose where Lazarus was, and the pit of hell, and the prayer of the rich man for his brothers, are all interesting facets of this parable. What Abraham told the rich man is of first importance; "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" (Luke 16:25). This is certainly not to say that every rich man is going to awake in hell, nor that every beggar will automatically be carried to Abraham's bosom. We have the Lord's teaching in other places on how we (rich or poor) must be saved. What the parable is teaching is that abundant riches hinder a person from coming to Christ for salvation for there is nothing to drive him to Christ. The beggar with his sores and desperate needs of every kind is far more likely to call upon the Lord and be saved.

**IV -- SOME CONCLUSIONS:** There have been wealthy Christians who have used their means wisely and generously for the furtherance of the Gospel. R. G. LeTorneau, who manufactured earth moving machinery, gave ninety percent of his earnings to the work of the Lord and lived comfortably on one tenth. Colgate, Kraft, and J. C. Penny also were men who used their material possessions for the glory of God. They are, however, the exception, rather than the rule. Rich men usually trust in their riches and never find Christ as Lord. "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition" (I Tim. 6:9).

Let not our highest priority be for security and comfort in this temporal world. Let us labor for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life. As God adds material blessings to our lives let us be sure to use them wisely for the furtherance of the kingdom of God. That kingdom is eternal while this world with its economic and political systems must soon pass away. Invest in eternity. Buy salvation bonds! Finally, let us not strive to be rich. Why should we strive for the very thing that is the greatest hindrance to entering and progressing in the kingdom of God. If riches increase, set not thine heart upon them and remember the words of our Lord Jesus, "it is more blessed to give than to receive!"

## THE PARABLE OF THE GREAT SUPPER AND THE MARRIAGE FEAST

Read: Luke 14:1-24; Matthew 22:1-14

*Memory Verse: Come, for all things are now ready. (Luke 14:17)*

### What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *The Gospel message is our invitation to come to the great supper.*
2. *God's call must take priority over all secular activities.*
3. *If we, like the Jewish nation, reject the Gospel invitation, the Lord will find others who will come.*
4. *The necessary wedding garment represents righteousness.*
5. *Those who were first invited and did not come are shut out or destroyed.*

**I -- A SABBATH BREAKFAST:** Jesus went to eat breakfast with a group of the scribes and Pharisees at the house of one of the Pharisees. They were watching Him carefully so they might accuse Him of some wrong. They may have purposely brought the man sick with dropsy right in front of Jesus. Since it was the Sabbath, they probably intended to accuse Jesus of breaking the Sabbath day if He healed the poor man. Jesus asked the lawyers and the Pharisees if it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not. When they did not answer He healed the sick man and remarked that if any of them had an ox or donkey which fell into a well they most certainly would pull him out even though it was the Sabbath day.

The Lord noticed how the guests were trying to get the honorable seats at the feast. His common sense and practical courtesy are to be admired and emulated by every Christian. "When you are bidden to a feast," He advised, "sit not down in the

chief seat." The Lord's reasoning is witty and practical. if you are asked to take a less honorable seat you will be ashamed. It is much more advisable to take a lower seat and then be asked to move up. Here Jesus slipped in a great principle of the kingdom of God. "For every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 14:11).

The Master also instructed the host to invite the poor, the maimed the lame, and the blind to a feast, because they could not reciprocate and he therefore would be rewarded in the resurrection of the just (Luke 14:12-14). One of the guests who heard this practical wisdom said to Jesus, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God" (vs. 15). This remark prompted the parable of the great supper.

**II -- THE GREAT SUPPER:** Jesus told this story at this great breakfast feast at the Pharisee's house. "A certain man made a great supper, and bade many" (vs. 16). The servant was sent at supper time with the invitation, "Come, for all things are now ready" (vs. 17). But they all asked to be excused for various reasons. The excuses were quite thin and the host could readily understand that they really had little regard for him or his supper. Since the "certain man" represents God Almighty, and the great supper the kingdom of God, you can readily understand the wrath of the host.

The excuses were everyday secular and material things of this life. The first had bought some property and just at that time had to go and see it. Quite unusual to go to inspect the property after you buy it, isn't it? What could the host think, but that this fellow really did not want to come. The second chap had purchased five yoke of oxen and by coincidence, just at the same time as the supper, he had to go and test them. A strange way to buy oxen, don't you think; testing them after they have been purchased? The host could only surmise that the great supper was great bore to this fellow who had more interest in oxen than in the host and his supper. The third one had the best excuse of all. He had gotten married and surely that was reason enough to have him excused.

When the servant reported these excuses to his lord, the master of the house was angry and sent the servant out to bring in the poor, the maimed, the lame and the blind. When this was done there was still room and the master sent the servant out to bring in more guests that his house might be full. He was determined that none of those who were first bidden should taste his supper.

**III -- THE GOSPEL CALL:** The Gospel invitation was given first to the Jews. Jesus

Himself taught in the cities and villages of the Jews. He performed many miracles in Jerusalem and Judea. He was sent first to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. The Pharisees and religious leaders rejected Him and refused the invitation to come to the "kingdom feast". Both John the Baptist and Jesus had preached that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. The religious leaders in general rejected the call of God through John and Jesus and derided the common people who heard Jesus gladly. After a period of intense ministry of the Gospel to the Jews, the door was opened to the Gentiles. The Jewish nation was overthrown. They were scattered to the ends of the earth and persecuted. But the Gospel invitation received a ready response from many of the Gentiles. The poor, the maimed, the halt and the blind have come to the kingdom supper and are feasting with their Lord while the religious community of the Jews to whom the first Gospel invitation was given have not tasted of the kingdom supper.

But let us not recognize the error of the Jews as a nation only, but take personal warning that the invitation to "Come, for all things are now ready" must be accepted at once. It could be a very costly mistake to think that you can come to Jesus and find a place in His kingdom any time when you are good and ready. No, indeed. When the invitation comes to you and the Holy Spirit prompts you to respond, you had better come at once with all your heart. No excuses, no matter how valid they may seem at the time, will do. Today, if you hear His voice, harden not your heart, but come. Postponement may shut you out forever.

The master wanted his house full and our Lord will have His kingdom filled. If you do not come when His Spirit draws, someone else may fill your place and you may be shut out forever. God forbid! Come while you may. Does His Spirit even now draw your heart? Then respond at once. "Jesus I come, take me as I am and make me what you want me to be; body, soul, and spirit, no matter what it costs." Take your place at His kingdom table and "eat bread in the kingdom of God."

**IV -- THE MARRIAGE FEAST FOR THE KING'S SON:** Jesus used a very similar parable on another occasion while remonstrating with the scribes and Pharisees. A king made a marriage feast for his son and sent his servants to call those who were invited. But they not only would not come, but joked about it and abused the servants which the king had sent, and even killed some of them. The king was furious and sent his armies to destroy the murderers and to burn their city. The king decided that those who were first invited were not worthy and sent his servants out into the highways and byways

to bring in guests. All kinds were brought in, both bad and good. The feast was supplied with guests.

This parable is directed, more obviously than the other, at the Jewish nation. The servants which the king sent at first represented the Old Testament prophets to be sure. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee" (Luke 13:34). This parable is prophetic also in describing in broad terms the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation. "He sent forth his armies and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city" (Matt. 22:7). The Lord used heathen armies on many occasions to serve Him and in this case it was the Roman army which was sent. Josephus estimates that 900,000 died in the siege of Jerusalem, and in the end despite the Roman general's instructions to spare the city, it was burned with fire exactly as foretold in the parable.

**V -- THE WEDDING GARMENT:** Although the king was anxious that his supper be fully furnished with guests, yet he did not overlook the requirements. We are told that at such feasts the host supplied the guests with special wedding garments. Even so our Lord has provided us with the righteousness of Christ which we may put on by faith. We may be acceptably clothed, not with the filthy rags of self-righteousness, but with pure and white garments that represent the righteousness of Christ and the holiness of His saints. One of the guests apparently thought that his own clothing was good enough for the great feast, but the king thought otherwise. The presumptuous guest was bound and cast out into "outer darkness" there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Let us not be presumptuous and hope that the grace of God will somehow excuse our garments spotted by the flesh, but let us realize that the grace of God has provided the very real wedding garment of righteousness which is ours by faith.

## THE PARABLE OF THE WICKED HUSBANDMEN

Read: Matt. 21:12-13,23-46; Mark 11:15-18,27-33;  
Mark 12:1-12; Luke 19:45-48; Luke 10:1-19

*Memory Verse: Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, the stone which the builders rejected, the same is the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes? (Matthew 21:42)*

### What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *The Lord wants works of obedience, not just talk.*
2. *God had a right to expect results from the nation of Israel because of the opportunity He had given them to have the law of God and the promises to bless them.*
3. *God has a right to expect the fruits of righteousness and service from us because of the even greater promises and power of the Gospel age.*
4. *Just as the nation of Israel was judged for their disobedience and rejection of the rule of God, we, too, will be in danger of severe punishment if we do not render the fruits of holiness and service unto God.*

**I -- CLEANSING THE TEMPLE:** After Jesus rode triumphantly into Jerusalem with palms and hosannas He once again purged the temple of its mercantile exchange. Once before, early in His ministry, Jesus had chased out those who bought and sold (John 2:13-17). Now once more Jesus drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple. He overturned the tables of the money changers and said, "It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves." When the merchants had been chased out, the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple and he healed them. The chief priests and scribes were irate at Jesus' actions. They resented the praise and acclaim of the crowd. Very probably a percentage of



the business in the temple was taken by the Pharisees. It has been thought that Caiaphas, the High Priest, controlled the sale of sheep and oxen for the sacrifices. Naturally, the disruption of business and the loss of revenue would make them angry.

**II -- THE FIG TREE:** In the evening Jesus went to Bethany, no doubt, to the house of Martha, Mary and Lazarus, where He stayed during this last week before His crucifixion. In the morning on the way back to Jerusalem and the temple Jesus noticed a fig tree and went to pick some fruit. He found no figs, but only leaves on the tree. Jesus cursed the tree. The next morning as they passed the tree again the disciples were astonished to see the tree already dead and dried up from the roots.

The fig tree is often used in the Bible as a figure representing Israel. While the Lord used the experience to show the power of believing prayer, there is an unmistakable picture of Israel in the cursing of the fig tree. It suggests as does the parable of the wicked husbandmen, that when no fruit was yielded by the privileged nation of Israel, the nation would be cut off.

**III -- CHALLENGE OF AUTHORITY:** When Jesus returned to the temple after having purged it of its buying and selling, the chief priests and elders of the people came and interrupted Jesus as He was teaching the people. They demanded to know by what authority He presumed to do these things. Jesus turned the tables on them once again. "I also will ask you one thing," He reasoned, "which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things" (Matt. 21:24). Jesus then put them on the spot by asking them whether they regarded the baptism of John as inspired by God or simply the idea of a man. Now they had a perplexing problem. If they said it was of God, they knew Jesus would say, "Why then did ye not believe him?" But if they said it was of men they feared the public reaction for John had become a sacred hero and was revered as a prophet. They finally decided that they could not, or rather dared not answer Jesus' question. Jesus responded in kind by saying, "Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things" (Matt. 21:27).

**IV -- PARABLE OF THE TWO SONS:** But now Jesus did not let these chief priests off the hook so easily. He told a little story to them. A man had two sons whom he asked to go and work in his vineyard (another figure representing Israel) on a certain day. The first said he *would not* go. But afterward he was sorry and repented and went to the vineyard to work. The second son said that he *would* go, but he never did go. Now

Jesus asked the priests and elders which son did the will of his father. They answered that, of course, the first. Then Jesus blasted them, "Verily I say unto you that the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of heaven before you." He pointed out that when John came in the way of righteousness preaching repentance that the publicans and harlots believed him and repented and were baptized, but the priests and elders did not believe him and did not repent. Clearly, the Lord equated the repentance of the publicans and harlots with the son who repented and eventually went to work in the vineyard. The chief priests corresponded to the son who made a profession with his mouth of doing the will of the father, but never carried out that profession.

**V -- PARABLE OF THE WICKED HUSBANDMEN:** Now Jesus warmed to the opportunity. He told another story which was an indictment of the history of the Jewish nation and a prophecy of the judgment which was soon to come. There was a certain householder who planted a vineyard and let it out to husbandmen. The owner then took a journey to another land for a long time. He had provided well for his vineyard. He planted a hedge around it and built a tower in it. When the time of grape harvest came he sent his servants to get the portion of the fruit that was his legal due. The husbandmen would not pay the rent but instead took the servants and beat them up and sent them away empty. The householder sent more servants and the wicked husbandmen (farmers) shamefully treated them. Some were stoned and some were beaten and some were even killed. Finally, the householder decided to send his own son. Surely they would respect him! But those husbandmen were so wicked that when they saw the son of the owner they conspired to kill him thinking that the vineyard would become their's. Jesus asked the chief priests what the householder would do to those husbandmen, and they answered before they realized what their answer meant: "he will miserably destroy those miserable men and will let out the vineyard to other husbandmen which shall render him the fruits in their eason (Matt. 21:41).

**VI -- HE SPAKE OF THEM:** The chief priests and Pharisees realized that Jesus had directed the parables at them. He bluntly explained that "therefore...the kingdom of God shall be taken away from you and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (matt. 21:43). The Pharisees understood well what Jesus meant. The householder was the Lord, the people of Israel were the vineyard, and the religious leaders were the husbandmen. God had sent His servants the prophets to Israel

again and again throughout their history. The fruit of obedience and holiness was not to be found in Israel. The prophets were abused. On another occasion Jesus, somewhat sarcastically, remarked that it was impossible that a prophet should be killed anywhere else than in Jerusalem. Those to whom the responsibility was given to guide Israel in the paths of righteousness, made void the law of God and taught instead the vain traditions of men. They yielded no fruit of righteousness to God. Now the householder had sent his only son. Jesus, of course, is represented by that son. Here the parable takes a prophetic turn and Jesus foretells of their conspiracy and murder of the Son of God. How like the wicked husbandmen's conspiracy were the words of the Pharisees, "What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans will come and take away our place and nation." And the response of Caiaphas the high priest, "Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not" (John 11:47-50).

The chief priests foretold their own doom, for the Lord, like the householder in the story, did "miserably destroy those miserable men and let out the vineyard," that is, the Gospel, to another nation, the true Israel of God which was born on the day of Pentecost.

**VII -- RELEVANT CONCLUSIONS:** Great blessing brings great responsibility. We who have known the Gospel promises all of our lives have a great responsibility to bring forth the fruit of holiness and service for our Lord. If we do not bring forth this fruit despite the added help which we have through the baptism of the Holy Spirit, we will put ourselves under the same condemnation as the scribes and Pharisees. Let us be sure, too, that we never just profess obedience without carrying it out, "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only." May our deeds support our words, and it never need be said of us as it was of a New England pastor of the last century, "What he *does* speaks so loud that I can't hear what he says." Let us not just say, "Lord, Lord;" but let us yield the fruit of holiness and service.

## THE PARABLE OF THE LABORERS AND THE PARABLE OF THE POUNDS

Read: Matthew 19:23-30; Matthew 10:40-42;  
Matthew 20:1-16; Luke 19:11-27

*Memory Verse: 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 an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life. (Matthew 19:29)*

### What we should learn from this Lesson

- 1. Every sacrifice we make for the kingdom of God will bring a rich reward.*
- 2. We ought not to be idle, but hear His call to go, work in His vineyard.*
- 3. The Lord never underpays His workers.*
- 4. Being a believer for many years does not guarantee a big reward.*
- 5. We must use what the Lord has given to us to further His kingdom.*
- 6. If we want to reign with Christ in His kingdom we must allow Him to reign over us now.*

**I -- WHAT SHALL WE HAVE:** Jesus told the rich young ruler that if he wanted to be perfect that he should sell his possessions and give to the poor and then he would have treasure in heaven. This caused the rich young ruler to go away sorrowfully. The heavenly reward was not as highly esteemed as the present possessions. Jesus told His disciples that it was nigh to impossible for the rich to enter the kingdom of God.

Peter immediately began to compare himself and his fellow disciples who did

leave all to follow Jesus, with this rich young ruler who would not. He said to the Lord, "Lo, we have left all and followed thee; what shall we have?" Jesus responded that those who continued with Him, in the regeneration when He would reign upon His throne, would also sit upon thrones judging the tribes of Israel. He further promised that every one who left loved ones or possessions for His sake would be rewarded in this life (however with persecution) and in that to come, with eternal life. "But," he warned, "many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first" (Matt. 19:30).

**II -- GO WORK IN MY VINEYARD:** "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder," Jesus explained, "which went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard" (Matt. 20:1). These workers agreed to work for one penny for the day. The third hour (9:00 a.m.), the householder found more workers standing idle in the marketplace. He sent them to work in the vineyard promising to pay them "whatsoever is right." Again at the sixth and ninth hours (noon and 3:00 p.m.) he did likewise and finally at the eleventh hour (5:00 p.m.), he sent others into his vineyard. He asked them why they stood idle all the day and they explained that no one had hired them. He promised that they would receive whatsoever was right. They trusted him and went to work for the last hour of the twelve hour working day. So when even was come (the six o'clock whistle), the master told his steward to call the workers and pay them their hire. He began with the last, those who had worked only one hour. They were paid one penny. Those who had been hired first, who had labored twelve long hours, of course, expected to receive more even though they had agreed to work for the one penny. When they were given the one penny, they murmured that the master had made them equal to those who had labored only one hour while they had worked through the heat of the entire day. But the master explained that he did them no wrong, for they had bargained for and agreed upon one penny for the day's wages. If he chose to be generous with his pay toward the others, that was his right.

The point of the parable was for Peter first of all, and for all of us who are made of the same stuff as Peter: don't worry about the reward. You can trust the generosity and love of the Heavenly Householder. If you bargain for a stipulated reward you may find out that had you left it to the Master, the reward would have been greater. Another lesson to be learned from this parable is that the seniority system of the kingdom of heaven differs from that of the union contracts of workers in our modern society. Length of time as a believer does not guarantee a big reward.

Many who are first shall be last and the last first. What is important is that we go when He calls us and that we trust Him. He is not a greedy capitalist who exploits His workers, but a generous Father who wants the best for His children.

Jesus did say to his disciples that they who had stuck with Him would in no wise lose their reward. Those who have followed and served our Lord for many years are worthy of honor and surely will receive reward in the resurrection kingdom. However, there is danger in supposing that just because we have been saved fifty or sixty years we will get a greater reward than those who have followed Christ for a shorter time.

**III -- THE PARABLE OF THE POUNDS:** After Jesus had passed through Jericho where he healed blind Bartimaeus, and brought salvation to Zacchaeus and his house, He paused in the journey up the steep road from Jericho to Jerusalem and told a story. Many of the followers of Jesus expected that the kingdom of God should be manifested at once. He intended to teach the people by this story that before that kingdom would be manifested in all its glory and power, there would be a long time for His disciples to work for Him. The story was of a certain nobleman who took a long journey into a far country to receive a kingdom, then to return. He called ten servants before going on his journey and gave to each of them a pound. He told them to trade with the pound while he was gone. His subjects hated him and sent an ambassage after him to tell him that they did not want him to reign over them. When he returned he called for the servants to whom he had entrusted the pounds. One had gained ten pounds and another five. These were rewarded by being given authority over ten and five cities respectively, in the kingdom which the nobleman had received. A third servant brought back the pound and made the excuse that he was afraid to risk using the pound and so had hidden it and now returned it. The nobleman was angry with this foolish servant. At least if it had been in the bank it would have yielded interest.

He commanded that the pound should be taken from the slothful servant and given to the one who had gained ten. The nobleman replied when it was protested that the servant already had ten pounds, "Unto everyone which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him" (Luke 19:26). Finally, the nobleman ordered that those enemies which rejected his rule over them should be brought and put to death before him (vs. 27).

The message of this parable is quite plain. Our nobleman, Christ the Lord,

has taken His journey into a far country (heaven) to receive His kingdom. To His servants He has entrusted the Gospel message. Gifts of the Spirit and promises of God are our's to claim. It is expected of us that we will gain other pounds; that is, we should be fruitful. We must serve Him faithfully. He will return! When he does return He will reward those servants who have faithfully served Him. Slothful and unbelieving servants may lose all reward, and those who rejected His reign will be sentenced to eternal judgment. Let us serve Him faithfully.

**IV -- REWARDS IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD:** Eternal life and the forgiveness of sins are the free gifts of God to all who hear and believe and act upon the Gospel message. Eternal life is not exactly a reward, but a free gift of God to whosoever comes to Him by Christ.

There are, however, rewards spoken of in the word of God. Many scriptures of the New Testament indicate this. The teaching of I Corinthians 15 on the resurrection of the dead clearly teaches that some will have greater glory than others in the resurrection. The parables of the pounds and of the talents also indicate a system of rewards in the kingdom of God. These rewards are given for two reasons. The first is for overcoming temptation and sin and our natural fleshly weakness. The other is dependent on the first, it is for our work for Christ. Not even a cup of water given for Christ's name's sake will lose its reward. But great works and service will go unrecognized and unrewarded if we continue to live in iniquity (see Matthew 7:21-23). To him that overcometh, all kinds of rewards are promised (see Rev. 2:7,11,17,25; 3:5,12,21). So let us go to work with prayer and the word of God and bring forth the fruit of holiness and then let us use the equipment God has given us to bear fruit in His kingdom; good fruit from a good tree that will remain. Leave the rewards to Him. He will always go beyond what we ask or think if we trust Him wholly.

## THE PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS & THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

Read: Matthew 24:1-51; Matthew 25:1-30 Mark 13:1-37; Luke 21:5-36

*Memory Verse: Watch ye therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh, (Matthew 25:13)*

### What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *We should have the right balanced outlook on the Lord's second coming.*
2. *We need a full portion of the Holy Spirit to keep ourselves ready in this world for our Lord's return.*
3. *We should recognize as a vain deception any teaching that tries to fix the day and the hour of the Lord's return.*
4. *The best way to be ready for the Lord's return is to overcome temptation and sin in our lives, and to be occupied with obedient service for Him.*

**I -- THE OLIVET DISCOURSE:** Jesus and His disciples went to Bethany for their lodging each night during that last fateful week before the crucifixion. The days were spent in Jerusalem. As they passed the great buildings of the temple, the disciples pointed out to Jesus some of the huge stones that had gone into Herod's remarkable edifice. Jesus then told the disciples that not one stone would be left upon another. All would be thrown down. This astonished the disciples. Their idea of the kingdom of God was still influenced by the prevalent teaching of the Jews. They were looking for an earthly, political - military reign. This is why they vied for the places on the right hand and on the left in the kingdom (see Matt. 20:20,21). This prophecy of destruction startled them. They asked Jesus when they were alone with Him, when these things



would take place. "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (Matt. 24:3).

Jesus answered both parts of their question. He first explained to them just exactly how they could know when Jerusalem would be destroyed. The greater part of the Olivet discourse (Matt.24) is concerned with the judgment of the Jewish nation and the destruction of their capital city, Jerusalem, and their center of worship, the temple. He told them in words clear and understandable that when the armies of Rome surrounded the area of Jerusalem, they should flee without delay. The "abomination of desolation" spoken of by Daniel, the prophet, was the army of Rome. Early church history reveals that the Christians of Jerusalem did recognize the danger when the Roman army approached, and being warned also by inspired messages they fled and were not caught in the two-year siege of Jerusalem. So Jesus told His disciples exactly what to look for as a sign of the approaching doom of Jerusalem and Israel.

But concerning the second part of the disciples' question, relating to the end of the age, Jesus had a very different warning. "But of *that* day and hour knoweth no man, no not the angels of heaven, but my Father only" (Matt.24:36). Jesus said that there would be no telltale sign of the coming of the end of the age. Just as in the days of Noah, life went on and normal everyday activities continued right up to the moment when Noah and his family entered the ark. Despite the warnings by the preacher of righteousness, they knew nothing until the flood struck and swept them all away. No warning signs were given. In Sodom also, life continued without supernatural signs of any kind until the fire fell and burned them up to a cinder (Luke 17:28,29). Just so shall it be in the end of the age. Business as usual! Life going right on. This warning of Jesus, that there would be no sign of the end of the age is unmistakably clear. Those who point to the nation of Israel as a sign of the end of the age are in error. The rebuilding of the temple (should it ever take place) will also be no indication of the end. Three times Jesus repeated the warning that no one would know the day nor the hour when the Son of man would come (Matt. 24:36, 42; 25:13).

The proper attitude to have concerning the end of the age and the coming of the Son of man is two-fold. First, we should expect Him at any moment. We are to have our lamps trimmed and burning brightly and ourselves be like unto men that wait for our Lord to appear at any moment. Then, we will not become involved in things that are displeasing to our Lord. Second, we must also be prepared for long

delay until our Lord's return. We are to be occupied with works of obedience for our Master. We ought to have a long range plan of service for our Lord. If we keep these two possibilities in mind and prepare for either of them we will not be ashamed before Him at His coming. "In an hour when ye think not... the Son of man cometh." Let us be ready and be prepared.

**II -- THE PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS:** This parable is the only one which Jesus told which had to do exclusively with the future. "*Then* shall the kingdom of heaven be likened..." (Matt.25:1). The story concerns ten virgins who were to go forth to meet the bridegroom. All ten are designated as virgins. They all acted upon the call to meet the bridegroom. Certainly, it is clear that all ten represented believers. Yet five are called wise and the other five foolish. The difference between them was simply that the wise provided for the possibility of delay. They obtained extra oil for the lamps which they carried. The foolish virgins did not prepare for this possibility. So when the bridegroom tarried longer than they had supposed, their supply of oil ran out and their lamps began to go out. They desired the wise virgins who had prepared for just this possibility to share their oil with them. But in the kingdom each must get his own infilling of the oil of the Spirit, and so while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and the wise virgins who were ready went in and the door was shut. Soon the other virgins came. They had indeed obtained additional oil, but alas, too late. The door was shut. The wise were within, but the foolish were shut out.

The significance of this parable concerns the inner life. The wise took extra oil *in* their vessels. Our inner life is to be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. We "are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit dwell in you" (Romans 8:9). This extra oil, the abundant supply of the power of the Holy Spirit, enables us to overcome the weak flesh and live in holiness before the Lord. This is exceedingly important for even our Spirit-inspired work for Christ will bring no reward if we fail to overcome iniquity in our inner life (see Matt. 7:21-23). The daily replenishing of the power of the Spirit in our vessels will enable us to live holy and unblameable before Him. Don't be deceived by the compromising and popular doctrine of the dual nature, that concludes that we cannot overcome and live in holiness because we are still in the body of flesh. God's promise of the power of the Holy Spirit makes it possible for one with the weakest of natures to become strong in the Lord.

**III -- THE TALENTS:** This parable is possibly not another separate parable at all, but

a continuation of the parable of the ten virgins. The words "the kingdom of heaven is" (see vs. 14) are not in the original text, but supplied by the translators. With these words omitted the idea is clear that this is a further explanation of the truth dealt with formerly. The example of the ten virgins is like the head side of a coin; the illustration of the talents, like the tail side of the same coin. Both stories teach us how to be prepared for the coming of the Lord. The story of the ten virgins teaches us the importance of *inward* readiness. The illustration the talents makes clear that we must fulfill *outward* works of obedient service for our Lord.

The talents were distributed, five to one servant, two to another, and one talent to a third. The lord of those servants then took his journey and after a long time returned and reckoned with them. The first two had doubled their quantities and received the commendation, "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" (vss.21,23). The third had buried his talent fearing to risk its use. He was condemned for his sloth. The talent was taken from him and given to the servant who had ten. The slothful and unprofitable servant was bound and cast into outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth (vs. 30).

The message again is clear. If we would be ready for the Lord's return we must be profitably employed in His service. We must occupy till He come, and be about our Father's business.

Too much attention is given to the various mechanics of the second coming of our Lord. The millennium, the rapture, the great tribulation are the subject of too many sermons, while the truly important subjects of inward preparedness and faithful performance of works of obedience to our Lord are neglected. Remember, complete and even orthodox knowledge about *how* the Lord will return, does not make you ready for that return, but inward holiness and faithful service will keep you ready even though you might not know exactly how the Lord will return. Go now and get ready!