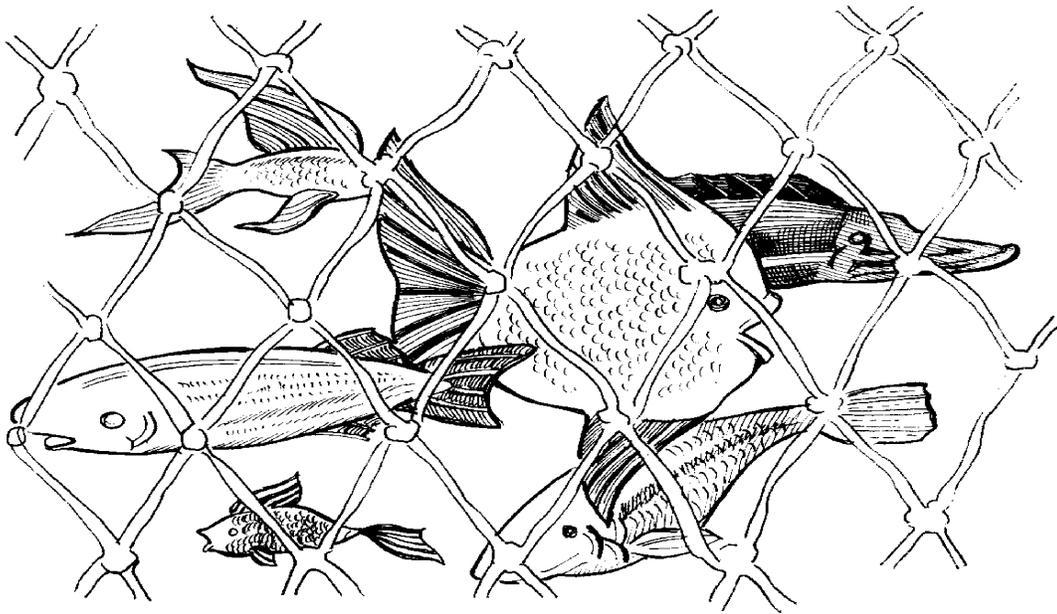


Parables of Jesus

*A Thirteen Lesson
Bible Class Study*



*a study of the parables of
Jesus, our Teacher*

*by
J.S. Smith*

Introduction

The parables of Jesus are among the greatest and most picturesque lessons in all his ministry. One must remember that the intent of the parables is always just beneath the surface of the story and not be overwhelmed with what is on the surface.

The parables were used to hide deeper knowledge from those unprepared for it. While they became lost in the surface of the teaching, true disciples could delve deeper and learn better how to walk with Christ.

Syllabus

- | | |
|------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Lesson 1 | The Nature of Parables
<i>Introduction to the subject</i> |
| Lesson 2 | The Gospel Seed
<i>Sower of Seeds, Mustard Seed, Growing Seed</i> |
| Lesson 3 | The Worth of the Kingdom
<i>Hidden Treasure, Pearl of Great Price, Lost Coin</i> |
| Lesson 4 | What About Others?
<i>Salt, Lamp Under A Basket, Leaven, Lost Sheep, Good Samaritan</i> |
| Lesson 5 | Blessed Are The Merciful
<i>Unforgiving Servant, Creditor and Debtors, Barren Fig Tree</i> |
| Lesson 6 | Count The Cost
<i>Friend In Need, Building A Tower and Making War, Persistent Widow</i> |
| Lesson 7 | Humility
<i>Prodigal Son, Pharisee and Tax Collector</i> |
| Lesson 8 | A New Name
<i>New Wineskins, Wicked Vine Dressers, Great Supper</i> |
| Lesson 9 | Sure Foundation
<i>Building a House, Workers in the Vineyard, Two Sons</i> |
| Lesson 10 | Preparation
<i>Fig Tree, Wise and Foolish Virgins, Absent Householder, Rich Fool, Faithful and Evil Servants</i> |
| Lesson 11 | Separation
<i>Tares, Dragnet, Wedding Feast</i> |
| Lesson 12 | Stewardship
<i>Ten Talents, Faithful and Wise Steward, Unjust Steward, Unprofitable Servants, Minas</i> |
| Lesson 13 | Review |

Lesson 1: *The Nature of Parables*

The Bible, like any piece of literature, employs a number of figures of speech, including allegories and metaphors. But, the most striking figure used is the parable, for it teaches such deep and timeless lessons.

A parable is not a fable, like those made famous by Aesop (e.g. Androcles and the Lion). The fable is primarily an earthy lesson while the parable seeks to teach a heavenly and spiritual truth. Nor is a parable a myth like the Greek stories touching the unexplained. A parable occupies a loftier realm than these.

The Greek word for our parable is “paraballo” (), a compound of two very vivid words. The first part is “para-” which means beside or alongside. The second part is *-ballo*, which means to throw. So, to teach by parable is literally to throw a lesson alongside the true object of the doctrine. The teacher illustrates *this* by describing *that*.

In his great work, “Notes on the Parables of Our Lord,” R.C. Trench says, “Each one of the parables is like a casket, itself of exquisite workmanship, but in which jewels richer than itself are laid up; or like fruit, which however lovely to look upon, is yet more delectable in its inner sweetness” (page 15). The disciple that sits at the feet of Jesus, then or now, is curious and hungry to open that casket or peel that fruit to reveal the rich and sweet treasure somewhat hidden within.

Of course, that brings up an important question as well. Why did Jesus use parables in the first place? Why not just reveal everything plainly and without hyperbole?

Thankfully, the Lord answers our query himself. Matthew 13 is a chapter filled with parables and in the midst of them, he explains their worth (verses 10-13):

And the disciples came and said to Him, “Why do you speak to them in parables?”. He answered and said to them, “Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

Certain people had already rejected Jesus without considering the evidence from their hearts. As he goes on to say, they were the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy concerning a dull-hearted people whose spiritual lethargy had rendered them unable to learn and unconcerned about ignorance. Because of this malaise, people like the scribes and Pharisees could not see Jesus nor ever understand his truths.

The central focus of most parables was the kingdom that the Messiah was establishing. He wanted his disciples to know what it would be like. Most misunderstood the nature of the coming kingdom, thinking it to be a physical realm headquartered in Jerusalem with the Messiah on its golden throne.

In fact, Jesus was talking about a spiritual kingdom, not of this world, one composed of all races and not just one. His kingdom was established on the first Pentecost after his resurrection and he was seated upon its throne in heaven (Acts 2:29-33). That kingdom is the church. Most of the parables have to do with the church that Jesus said he would build after Peter’s confession in Matthew 16:18.

In studying the parables, one must remember to look deeper than the surface for the true lesson. For instance, the parable of laborers in the vineyard is not about wage equity but God’s mercy. But, one must also remember that not every detail in a parable will be significant; some will be incidental.

1. What is the difference between a fable and a parable?
2. What is the Greek word for parable and what does it mean?
3. How is a parable like a beautiful casket or a tantalizing piece of fruit?
4. What should this teach us about studying parables?
5. From what kind of hearts was Jesus obscuring his teaching in parables?
6. What is the central focus of most of Jesus's parables?
7. What was the general misunderstanding about this focused thing?
8. Was Jesus able to establish this objective before he was crucified or did he fail?
9. In the study of parables, which is most important: the surface story on earthly matters or the hidden lesson on spiritual concerns?
10. Is the parable of the prodigal son about a farmer raising two boys out in the country or something deeper? If something deeper, what is it?
11. Who does the father in that parable represent? Who does the prodigal son represent?

Lesson 2: *The Gospel Seed*

Bible Texts For This Lesson

- Sower of Seeds Matthew 13:3-23, Mark 4:2-20, Luke 8:4-15
- Mustard Seed Matthew 13:31-32, Mark 4:30-32
- The Growing Seed Mark 4:26-29

An agrarian economy prevailed in the world from its creation until the industrial revolution in the nineteenth century. It was a very simple thing for Jesus to do to look from his “pulpit” out to the fields around him and notice a farmer here and a vineyard tender there. The farmer and his seed provided the Lord with an exceptional teaching illustration regarding the growth of his kingdom.

His apostles continued the familiar refrain throughout their New Testament epistles. In dealing with the budding sectarianism at Corinth, Paul compared the work of men and God to laboring in the field: “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. Now he who plants and he who waters are one...” (1 Cor. 3:6-8). The apostle was not trying to steal any credit for himself nor cause the brethren to heap commendation upon any other man. Rather, it was God who provided for the bounty in the barn. Man must sow the seed and nurture it in the soil, but ultimately he can do nothing to force it to grow.

Christians are to broadcast the gospel seed, spreading it right and left and straight ahead as they traverse the land in their everyday lives. They themselves are to receive “the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.” Saints should think of the gospel as seed like they would buy at the store to prepare a vegetable or flower garden. Seed does no good while still in the package, but maintains its potential indefinitely. Seed, taken from the packet and scattered on the soil can bring forth fruit.

The apostle Peter further identifies the gospel message as life-giving seed, adding that Christians are “... born again, not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, through the word of God while lives and abides forever, because ‘All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, And its flower falls away, But the word of the Lord endures forever.’ Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you” (1 Peter 1:23-25). A tomato seed will lead to a beautiful green vine which will blossom and give its red fruit. Later, it will wither and die. Not so, the gospel seed. It grows lush, flowers and bears fruit forever. Someone sowed the seed in your heart; now share the blessing, Peter reminds us.

That great gospel seed maintains its sway in the hearts of the devoted, for John writes, “Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God” (1 John 3:9).

In the parable of the **sower of seeds**, Jesus defines four types of hearts and their receptiveness to the gospel seed, as compared to soil types. Ours is to sow the seed and let it fall where it will, for God will give the increase when it falls on good soil. Sadly, three of the four types do not allow the seed to germinate fully.

Next in the parable of the **mustard seed**, the Lord puts the tiniest little seed between his thumb and forefinger for us to examine and ponder. The kingdom of heaven comes without perception and occupies no physical realm and yet grows greater than all the kingdoms of earth that pass away one by one.

Finally, Christ appeals to the natural mystery of agriculture. Man puts the seed beneath the ground where he is unable to observe its germination. So the kingdom starts slowly, grows gradually until it is ready to return to its Master.

Although few of us make our livings by farming these days, Jesus’s seed parables are still abundantly instructive, for we all plant something some time. It is good to plant seeds with the little ones and teach them about their growth.

1. When discussing the growth of the kingdom, Matthew 13:3 must never be overlooked. What is necessary for the kingdom to expand? Compare this to Romans 10:14-15.

2. Complete the following chart on the **sower of seeds**.

SEED FELL AMONG...

RESULT

SPIRITUAL EXPLANATION

- a. wayside
- b. stony places
- c. thorns
- d. good ground

3. Does the unlikelihood of locating good soil mean that we should give up and not sow at all?

4. If a man had never seen a **mustard seed**, he would certainly be unimpressed. The mustard seed is even less appealing than most seeds. In the lowly mustard seed, we see a reflection of our Savior's choice of entry into the world. Read Micah 5:2: what is said of his birthplace?

5. What was Jesus's secular occupation? His relative wealth and earthly honor? According to Isaiah 53:1-3, is he a proper comparison to the mustard seed physically?

6. What becomes of the little planted mustard seed? What becomes of the resurrected Christ?

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

8. Compare this thought to the Lord's words in Luke 7:36-47: what habit of Jesus's shocked the Pharisees and even confounded his own disciples?

9. According to this parable, is conversion an immediate lightning strike to the heart or a gradual persuasion from logic and faith?

10. The gradual progression of the seed (blade, head, full grain) is a comparable doctrine to the apostle's in 1 John 2:12-14. What three stages of a man's spiritual growth are taught there?

Lesson 3: *The Worth of the Kingdom*

Bible Texts For This Lesson

- The Hidden Treasure Matthew 13:44
- The Pearl of Great Price Matthew 13:45-46
- The Lost Coin Luke 15:8-10

Jesus asked this question: “For what shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matt. 8:36-37).

When one goes to the store, he is forced to make value judgments. Is this book worth what the merchant is asking? Is the price of this automobile reasonable?

The Lord demands that we make value judgments in spiritual matters as well. The Lord’s question is more of a riddle for there is no reasonable answer to it. There is absolutely nothing in the world that can equate to the value of a single human spirit. It cannot be measured in dollars and cents or any other currency. If it could, God might have bought mankind back from sin with cash; instead, only the blood of his dear Son would carry the cost.

At the heart of the value of the kingdom is its purchase price, that “Jesus bore our sins in his own body on the tree” (1 Peter 1:24). As Christians, we are citizens in that divine kingdom, having been conveyed into it by our obedience to the gospel (Col. 1:13). Just as Jesus promised, we are in his church: “I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 16:18-19). The Lord shows us the kingdom and the church are synonymous: he built the city and gave its keys to the apostles.

We understand further the worth of the kingdom from Luke’s history in Acts 20:28: Paul told the Ephesian pastors to shepherd the congregation among them because it belonged to God and was purchased with his own blood.

Many modern preachers and religionists have cast votes of displeasure on the subject of the kingdom or the church, encouraging the preaching of Christ instead of the church. But to separate the two is a mortal spiritual decapitation. “And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all” (Eph. 1:22-23). The Lord is the head of the church, mandating his will and its obedience. As the arms and legs must obey the impulses of the mind in a healthy organism, so the body of Christ, the church, must obey the commands of its Head, Christ to be healthy. The kingdom of Christ is so valuable that it must heed its lone lawgiver, the Lord (James 4:12).

In the parable of **hidden treasure**, Christ teaches us, his disciples, that no sacrifice is too great to attain citizenship in the kingdom. Elsewhere, he indeed teaches that sacrifice will be necessary to meet the King’s approval.

In the parable of the **pearl of great price**, Jesus repeats the same lesson by different images. Here, he reminds us that the kingdom is of singular value and number. In the Lord’s day, the pearl was held in the highest regard. But a pearl of yellow tinge, or that was rough or not round quickly sank in value. That rare pearl that was round, smooth and perfectly white was of unique value.

In the parable of **the lost coin**, Jesus brings the value of the kingdom down to a human level and equates it with the haven of redeemed spirits. Like a woman who finds a coin she lost and then desperately sought, so is the exasperation and joy at finding God’s mercy after dismissing it in sin.

Every one of us has had the experience of losing something we valued and finding it only after a frantic search. Our conversion to Christ should be counted in even higher esteem, for the most valuable possession we have was lost and is now found.

Collectors of all sorts share the sentiment of finding that precious and rare piece and breaking the bank to add it their collections. In this way is a human spirit added to the kingdom of Christ: a valuable collection of incalculably precious wealth.

1. What is something valuable that you once lost and then found? How did you feel when you rediscovered it?

2. For what do people sometimes exchange their souls in this life?

3. How often do we have to make judgments about relative value?

4. Of how much value is a single human soul? Of your soul? Why?

5. At what price was the kingdom of God purchased?

6. Who are its citizens? What are the terms of admission?

7. What happens if we preach only Christ and not the church?

8. How much was the hidden treasure worth to the man who found it?

9. What did Saul of Tarsus have to sacrifice to enter the kingdom (Phil. 3:4-11)?

10. To what kind of person might we liken the merchant who was seeking pearls?

11. When that pearl is located, what should we do about it (Prov.23:23)? What does this mean?

12. What things might one have to sacrifice in life to become a Christian?

13. How much work went into finding one lost coin separated from nine firmly in hand? Why?

14. Why did the angels rejoice?

Lesson 4: *What About Others?*

Bible Texts For This Lesson

- Salt Matthew 5:13
- Lamp Under a Basket Matthew 5:14-16, Mark 4:21-22, Luke 8:16-17
- Leaven Matthew 13:33, Luke 13:20-21
- The Lost Sheep Matthew 18:12-14, Luke 15:3-7
- The Good Samaritan Luke 10:30-37

On one occasion, Jesus was asked which commandment was the greatest of all. He replied that to revere God was the first commandment and to love one's neighbor as himself was the second. "There is no commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:29-31). His questioner replied that to love a neighbor was "more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." To this statement, the Lord replied to the scribe, "You are not far from the kingdom of God."

Human reasoning tells us that "no man is an island to himself," but that phrase is reinforced by Bible admonition. Paul told the Romans that "none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself" (14:7). It is impossible for a servant of God to isolate himself like a hermit and live free of influence regarding others. Attempts to shut away the pious in monasteries and abbeys are ill-fated and ill-conceived, having "the appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion" (Col. 2:23), but in clear opposition to the mission of Christians in the world.

Perhaps the greatest and most succinct doctrine ever uttered concerning others is found in the sermon given on the mount by Jesus. In Matthew 7:12, Jesus taught us the "golden rule": "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets."

This golden rule is taught strongly and frequently to our children and yet it is so often ignored by adults. If the golden rule were universally observed, there would be slander or gossip. There would be no murder, theft or violence. If this rule were only observed in the church, how much more peaceful local congregations could be.

When we think of others, we can categorize them in different ways. Others include are relatives (parents, children, etc.), our classmates or co-workers, our neighbors, our brethren in Christ and even strangers. Our goal toward every one of them should be their uplifting. "Therefore, putting away lying, 'Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,' for we are members of one another," (Eph. 4:25) Paul wrote. He continues, "let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers" (verse 30).

Our goal toward all those outside of the body of Christ ought to be to influence them regarding the blessings we have found in Christ Jesus (Eph. 1:3). We sing that we are the world's only Bible sometimes•the only reflection of Jehovah that many will ever witness. We should bear the fruits of the Spirit of righteousness (Gal. 5:22-25) and leave the works of the flesh to the fleshly. To this end, Jesus uttered these four parables.

In the parables of the **salt** and the **lamp under a basket**, Christ deals with the subject of Christian influence: our responsibility to walk in the light as He is in the light and shine grace into the catacombs of heathen misery and desperation.

In the parable of the **leaven**, Jesus reminds us that a little leaven can leaven a whole lump of dough. Influence for good is quiet and gradual, but wonderful.

In the parable of the **lost sheep**, Jesus points out the value of one soul, how it makes all else pale by comparison. Jesus would do anything to rescue one precious soul and we should hold men's fates in equally high regard.

The best known of these parables is that of the **Good Samaritan**. Jesus answers the question about who is one's neighbor. Everyone is our neighbor and due our concern and Christianity.

1. Besides loving God, what must one do to come close to the kingdom of Christ?
2. Why would monasteries and abbeys impede the cause of Christ?
3. How is the golden rule usually recited? What should it eliminate among men?
4. What should be our goal toward all others?
5. Why did Jesus call his disciples the “salt of the earth”?
6. What is the seasoning value of a Christian who does not exhibit the fruits of godliness?
7. To what end should Christians allow others to witness their good works?
8. How can this be reconciled with the command given in Matthew 6:1-4?
9. What does leaven cause a lump of dough to do? How should a Christian leaven the world around him?
10. When a shepherd leaves 99 sheep in security to search for one lost wanderer, what does that prove about that one misplaced sheep?
11. What occurs when one precious soul is brought home to his Chief Shepherd, Jesus?
12. According to psalm 23, what can we sheep expect in that fold?
13. What question prompted the parable of the good Samaritan? What was the answer?
14. What is the ultimate lesson of this parable and the others in this study (Gal. 6:10)?

Lesson 5: *Blessed Are The Merciful*

Bible Texts For This Lesson

- Unforgiving Servant Matthew 18:23-35
- Creditor and Debtors Luke 7:36-50
- Barren Fig Tree Luke 13:6-9

In the final few years of his life, the apostle Paul often sought to describe the seminal event in his existence and the wonderful results. Perhaps he understood that the conversion of the most dedicated anti-Christian in the Jewish world would be a great sign of the faith's authenticity.

On one occasion, Paul wrote his protegee Timothy, "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief" (1 Tim. 1:12-13). Paul always remembered the debt that he owed God and how mercy had been shown to him by the Lord. Because of his gratitude, Paul was led to live a faithful life and to share the gospel with thousands of other people.

Our salvation, like his, is not wrought by "works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5). The grace of God is truly amazing and he calls us likewise to show mercy to our fellow man.

To put it succinctly, "Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy" (Matt. 5:7). One can never seriously understand the grace of God unless he is willing to extend mercy to men who ask it of him. We can neither dismiss mercy as too noble an end to attempt nor thrust it aside as too insignificant to trifle with. Such misunderstanding leaves one in danger of missing the thrust of God's mercy altogether.

Paul tells us that God is rich in mercy (Eph. 2:4) and that Christian fellowship depends in part upon human mercy (Phil. 2:1). Since God was able to forgive us so much—the debt of guilt deserving spiritual death (Rom. 3:23, 6:23)—at such a great cost as the blood of his own son, surely we should be able to extend mercy to a man who wrongs us in any way or degree at all. This is possible if we "esteem others better" than ourselves and look out for interests of others. Then, and only then, can we have the mind of Christ Jesus in us.

In the parable of the **unforgiving servant**, the Lord spins a long tale of justice and injustice to answer Peter's question, "How often shall I forgive a brother who sins against me?". Christ's reply indicates that human mercy is a bottomless cup so long as the repentance is always sincere. This is true because our Father stands ever ready to welcome back a wandering soul who truly desires mercy. But we must remember that God will judge us according to how we have judged others.

On another occasion, Jesus was invited to dine with a Pharisee named Simon. While at his house, a sinful woman came and worshiped Jesus. The Pharisee was indignant and implied that if Jesus were really prescient, he would send away such a person. Jesus answered his rudeness in the parable of the **two debtors**. The one with more sins required more mercy and so showed more gratitude than a self-righteous sinner like Simon.

But there is also a time when God's mercy will expire. With the Jews Jesus labored three years for God and too few had been converted. He taught the parable of the **barren fig tree** to warn them that soon their system of religion would be cut down. Only if they bore fruit individually could they be preserved individually.

These parables cut to the heart of human relations and true discipleship. How do we respond to a person who requests our forgiveness. Do we forgive the sin and wipe it away as if it had never happened? Or do we hold on to it for future reference? Is our mercy hard to obtain? While man may wrong us for a moment, our refusal to extend grace may injure our souls forever. We can only accept the grace of God so far as we are willing to extend our own.

1. How could a blasphemer, persecutor and an insolent man ever enter the ministry?
2. Are we saved by our own merit or a litany of good works accomplished aside from all else?
3. What was God able to forgive in us?
4. What vital lesson must this teach us about relating to others?
5. How many times should I be willing to forgive a brother who trespasses against me?
6. What was to be the servant's fate who could not pay the king what he owed?
7. What did the servant say in his plea (verse 26)? What on the king's part saved him?
8. How much of a lesson on mercy and gratitude did that servant learn then? What happened?
9. What did the second debtor plead (verse 29)?
10. In your own words, what is the lesson of this parable (verse 35)?
11. What did the sinful woman do when she heard Jesus was at Simon's house?
12. How did Simon reply?
13. Who had taught the better lesson: the self-righteous, smug lawyer or the humble, repentant sinner?
14. How long had the man been seeking figs from his tree? What had he found so far?
15. How much longer did the fig tree have to begin producing?
16. Is there an end to God's patience with mankind and the earth (2 Peter 3:9)?

Lesson 6: *Count the Cost*

Bible Texts For This Lesson

- Friend In Need Luke 11:5-13
- Building A Tower and Making War Luke 14:25-35
- Persistent Widow Luke 18:1-8

Is it worth it? That is the question which Jesus compels potential disciples to ask themselves before committing to following him.

One must weigh the benefits of faith against the hardships inevitably incurred and decide if he is willing to devote his life to the cause of righteousness and deny the sinful pleasures of the flesh.

What is the cost of discipleship? It is great, no doubt. Paul told Timothy that “all those who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12). The only way to avoid paying the price of persecution is to reject Jesus or become a Christian hypocrite. Either way, one’s soul is as good as lost.

Paul claimed that paying this price was quite little in comparison with his hope. “Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen” (2 Cor. 4:16-17).

Paul counted the cost of discipleship and measured it by relative time. Paying the price on earth for a little while was worth reaping the benefit in heaven forever.

Another cost of discipleship is paid in self-denial: “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age” (Titus 2:11-12). The lure of ungodliness and its pleasures is great but the genuine disciple must be able to deny their influence and deny himself their indulgence. Christians forfeit the license to fornicate, drink and swear that others exploit. Is the hope of salvation worth paying this price?

Paul told the Corinthian saints to flee sexual immorality, “For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Cor. 6:20). Whenever we are counting the cost, it is good to remember that God redeemed our own souls from damnation with his own precious blood (Acts 20:28, Rom. 6:23).

In the parables of **building a tower and making war**, Jesus spells out this requirement in plain language. Beginning with the need to put faith ahead of all else, including family, life and convenience, he illustrates his proposition on devotion. To build one’s own faith on the messianic foundation requires a life-long diligence and sacrifice. To declare war on the devil’s tactics necessitates a commitment to fight and to win by devoting all one’s resources to the battle. Unless you make faith the top priority, you cannot be his disciple.

In the parable of the **persistent widow**, Jesus teaches on faithful prayer that trusts God can deliver to the one who continually hungers and thirsts after righteousness. God will avenge his elect that cry out to him and do not give up before reaching life’s finish line.

In the parable of the **friend in need**, Christ reminds us of the delicacy of true, saving faith. It is only attained by the heart hungry for God’s mercy. We are reminded of his sermon on the mount and its beatitudes: “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled” (Matt. 5:6). Too many people are filled far short of the goal and stop. They play at religion without letting it completely convert their hearts. Indeed, we should never be through starving for grace and knowledge until we take our final breaths on earth and expire.

These four parables expose the importance of beginning a search for truth and carrying it through until the end, lest we be disqualified along the course by immorality or complacency. We must first count the cost of discipleship, rather than starting something we have no stomach for finishing.

1. What question does Jesus compel his followers to ask before they become disciples?

2. What price of discipleship did Paul reveal to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:12?
3. How did Paul justify paying this price in his own life?
4. What is a second cost of discipleship, according to Titus 2:11-12?
5. What things might fall into these categories?
6. At what price were we redeemed from slavery to sin and death?
7. What things does Jesus say we must hate (love less) than him?
8. What does it mean to bear one's own cross?
9. What should a man do before building a tower? How does this apply to becoming a disciple?
10. What does a king do before declaring war? How does this apply?
11. What is true of the follower who is not willing to forsake all he has if necessary?
12. How did the widow convince the judge to avenge her? How often must believers cry out to God?
13. Why did the neighbor finally arise to help his friend in need that night?
14. What three actions are required to receive good from God (Luke 11:9-10)? What one word would you use to describe this pursuit (answers may vary)?

Lesson 7: *Humility*

Bible Texts For This Lesson

- Prodigal Son Luke 15:11-32
- Pharisee and Tax Collector Luke 18:9-14

Peter and Paul both quote the proverb that says “God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble” (3:34). This same sentiment was expressed by suffering, patient Job (22:29) and the one hundred thirty-eighth psalm.

If there is any obstacle that will prevent us from coming to the Lord, surely it is our own foolish, human pride. Hubris, or excessive pride, was commonly the downfall of many great heroes of ancient literature of this era, perhaps inspired by these sacred texts.

What is pride? Thayer defines the Greek word “huperephania” () as “...the characteristic of one who , with a swollen estimate of his own powers or merits, looks down on others and even treats them with insolence and contempt.” Pride is often described as looking down one’s nose at another. Romans 3:23 ought to defeat every speck of pride any man has.

Why should pride prevent us from coming to God for salvation? Because salvation requires submitting one’s will to that of another, namely Jehovah. People impressed with their own merit and power are unlikely to crucify their own desires to suit those of anyone else, even the creator of the universe. Paul reminds us that “Every knee shall bow to [God] and every tongue shall confess to God” (Rom. 14:11). A proud person finds it hard to admit that he is inferior to another, even God, and so he refuses to submit himself to the Lord.

All sorts of things can become sources of human pride. The list would include money, power, appearance, education, connections, heredity, prospects and accomplishment. Trust in any one of these things and a million more will render us proud before God because in trusting them, we cannot offer ourselves to him without reservation.

The simplicity of the gospel message is a root of bitterness to people proud of their intellect. In the first century, the gospel caused the Jews to stumble because they demanded signs more than true teaching. It caused Greeks to stumble because they loved the polemics and poetry of philosophy rather than simply stated aphorisms and commands (1 Cor. 1:22).

Humility on the other hand takes every source of pride and puts it in a proper category. Money perishes with the using, power is nothing compared to God’s authority, appearance is meaningless when Jesus came into an uncomely body, education is futile compared to the wisdom from above, connections are faulty unless made first with heaven, heredity is eclipsed by adoption into God’s house, the only prospect that matters is a heavenly hope and only Christ’s accomplishment is powerful enough to save.

The two parables in this lesson are among the best known and truly both teach many more lessons than just humility. But that trait will be the focus of this particular study.

In the parable of the **prodigal son**, Jesus teaches us about returning to our Father after departing in search of sinful fulfillment. All we who sin recognize ourselves in his wallowing in the pig slop of iniquity. We rejoice to watch him walk back to his father with repentance in his heart and are encouraged when his father meets him and accepts his apology. God calls the prodigal in all of us to come without delay and be redeemed. But the proud man would never come back and beg mercy; we must be humble.

In the parable of the **Pharisee and tax collector**, we eavesdrop as two men pray to God. Jesus was specifically addressing “some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.” Telling God all you have done well is vain, for he can see and judge and even understand the sins we wish to hide. But telling God all you have done wrong is humble, for it pleads with him to forgive and to strengthen. The humble man went down to his house justified because he repented of his sin, while the proud man did not, because he kept his sin hidden and it stayed with him.

1. Who bears the blame for God's resistance of the proud?
2. In your own words, what is pride?
3. What one verse ought to destroy every notion of human pride and self-sufficiency?
4. Why does pride make it impossible for one to come to Jesus and be saved?
5. What can become a source of human pride?
6. Is it wrong to possess any of these things? What makes them dangerous then?
7. Whom is represented by the prodigal son? Whom by his father?
8. What became of the prodigal son after he left home?
9. What realization finally struck him when he hit bottom? What did he decide to do then?
10. Does the older brother react to his sibling's conversion from pride or humility?
11. What two men went up to pray? Describe the stereotypical view of their professions then.
12. What was the general tone of the first man's prayer?
13. What was the general tone of the second man's prayer?
14. Why did the latter go home justified while the former was not?

Lesson 8: A New Name

Bible Texts For This Lesson

- New Wineskins Matthew 9:16-17, Mark 2:21-22, Luke 5:36-38
- Wicked Vine Dressers Matthew 21:33-45, Mark 12:1-12, Luke 20:9-19
- Great Supper Luke 14:16-24

It is either denied or mishandled by Premillennialists and Jews alike—that the Messiah was to come into the world only to be rejected by his own countrymen and die. That humble submission to physical death was the last step to the throne of the kingdom of God.

Jesus himself was a Jew, of course. And when he came to the earth and began his ministry, he went first to those who should have recognized him from their prophecies. The few Gentiles with whom he had contact demanded his help by their persistence and pitiable state. Then the crumbs fell from the table of revelation to them, dogs as the Jews called them.

The fifty-second and fifty-third chapters of Isaiah's prophecy makes his earthly fate clear:

ISAIAH'S PROPHECY

FULFILLMENT

- he will be exalted (52:13) Philippians 2:9
- he will be disfigured by suffering (52:14, 53:2) Mark 15:17, 19
- he will make a blood atonement (52:15) 1 Peter 1:2
- he will be widely rejected (53:1-3) John 12:37-38
- he will bear our sins and sorrows (53:4-5) Romans 4:25, 1 Peter 2:24-25
- he will be our substitute (53:6-8) 2 Corinthians 5:21
- he will accept our guilt voluntarily (53:7-8) John 10:11, 19:30
- he will be buried in a rich man's tomb (53:9) John 19:38-42
- he will save the faithful (53:10-11) John 3:16, Acts 6:31
- he will die on behalf of transgressors (53:12) Mark 15:27, Luke 22:37

Long after Jesus had been humbled, then resurrected to his throne, Peter quoted Psalm 118:22 concerning him: "The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone." By prophecy, God foretold that the Messiah he would send into the world would not satisfy the Jews. That Messiah would be rejected and killed and thereby take his throne over a spiritual kingdom open to all races.

Isaiah also foretold that the Gentiles would see God's righteousness and enter as God gives his people a new name (62:2). In his death on the cross, Jesus reconciled man to God and also Jew to Gentile. Though "aliens to the commonwealth of Israel" and without hope before now Gentiles too are brought near to Jehovah by his son's blood. Christ "has made both [Jew and Gentile] one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation ... so as to create in himself one new man from the two" (Eph. 2:14-15).

Instead of judging the world by race, God judges it by a higher standard: "Whoever fears God and works righteousness is accepted by Him" (Acts 20:35). That faithful person is called a Christian, meaning like Christ. "Christian" first appears in Acts 11:26, where the Greek word for "called" indicates a divine mandate. Agrippa recognized this new band of people as Christians and the apostle Peter encouraged them to suffer patiently in that noble calling. No longer Jew or Gentile and never any sectarian name, but only Christian.

In the parable of **newwineskins**, Jesus teaches regarding the uncomfortable transition from Mosaic Judaism to New Testament Christianity. He foresees that some will try to insert the new liberty of the gospel into the old rituals and customs of the decalogue.

The same psalmist is quoted by the Lord himself in the interpretation of the parable of the **wicked vine dressers**. The execution of God's son is prophesied by the victim himself.

In the parable of the **great supper**, Jesus defines the guests in the kingdom of God as the less likely after the more likely decline his invitation to come in.

1. Was the Jews' rejection of Jesus's claim to be their messiah a surprise to God?
2. What sort of picture does Isaiah paint of the Messiah's visit to earth?
3. What are the implications and fulfillment of Psalm 118:22?
4. What did Jesus's death accomplish for racial harmony in the world?
5. If God does not judge by heredity, how does he view each man?
6. What is represented by the old wineskins? What is represented by the new wineskins?
7. The Judaizing teachers in the first century church were the most likely to seek to bind facets of the Mosaic law on new converts. According to Galatians 5:1-6, what becomes of one who attempts to be justified by that law after obeying the gospel? Consult also Galatians 4:8-11.
8. What lesson has this for us today?
9. Whom did the chief priests and Pharisees perceive Jesus was condemning as the wicked vine dressers? Were they right? Who is the son then?
10. To whom was the kingdom of God given after the builders rejected its keystone?
11. What group of people in the world were invited first to come into the kingdom? What did they begin to make (verse 18)?
12. Whom are invited to come into the empty places then?

Lesson 9: *Sure Foundation*

Bible Texts For This Lesson

- Building a House Matthew 7:24-27, Luke 6:47-49
- Workers in the Vineyard Matthew 20:1-16
- Two Sons Matthew 21:28-32

One of my earliest memories dates to when I was only three years old or so. My family lived in a house on a hillside in West Virginia. But our house desperately wanted to be in the valley. It began to slip and slide toward the river, just a few inches at a time, but enough to convince us to leave it behind. The house was torn down and nothing has ever been built on its former site.

Our house's foundation was insecure and so everything we built upon it was destined to shift and eventually fall. The Lord Jesus teaches us a similar lesson, in that we must build our spiritual home upon a certain foundation.

The apostle Paul called the saints in Corinth "God's building." "According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:10-11).

Before a contractor can even think about assembling bricks or erecting walls, he must lay the foundation and wait for it to set. A foundation that is cracked or unsettled will be devastating over time.

In the salvation of souls, there is only one foundation upon which faith can be built safely. That foundation is Jesus Christ. Many have constructed their beliefs after family, uncontrollable emotion or ignorance, but only the Lord is a safe starting point for saving faith.

The church, or the called out, is simply the collection of these redeemed spirits. Each one becomes a member of household of God, "having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone" (Eph. 2:20). That foundation is still in effect; the saved are still built upon a foundation of the prophet's revelations about Jesus and his kingdom and the apostles' use of the keys of that kingdom. In Jesus, the whole building is fitted together to become a holy temple in the Lord.

As Paul intimated, each builder must take care to work with honorable materials (1 Cor. 3:12), because profane and idle babblings will only increase ungodliness. Messages like this lead to condemnable structures and spread like cancer, overthrowing the faith of some. "Nevertheless, the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: 'The Lord knows those who are His,' and, 'Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity'" (2 Tim. 2:19).

In the parable of **building a house**, Jesus introduces us to two men who were building houses. One built on rock and the other built on sand. He likens them to those who both equally hear the gospel, but react differently to it. One man obeys it while the other does nothing. The obedient man builds his spirit's house on a firm foundation while the the disobedient is in peril upon shifting sand. His house will fall easily while the other will stand.

In the parable of the **workers in the vineyard**, we see that those who arrive later in life to the work will by no means be punished, if they are truly faithful. The Gentiles were entitled to salvation just like the Jews in Christ's house. The old are entitled to redemption just like the young in that blessed place.

In the parable of the **twosons**, the importance of ultimate obedience is magnified. Even those who sin much in life can be saved if they will but submit to Jesus and be converted. No matter how many sins have been committed, the grace of God is powerful enough to forgive them of the penitent. However, those who promise to be devoted to God and then fall away will not be dealt with lightly.

1. According to Paul, what is the material that makes up God's building?
2. According to Ephesians 2, what is the foundation and the chief cornerstone of faith?
3. What things will lead to an unsound foundation and an insecure building?
4. Two mottoes adorn the foundation of God. What are they?
5. The parable given in Matthew 7 is preceded by a discussion on false religionists. What is the true test of discipleship given in verse 21?
6. Which of the two builders in the parable would this describe?
7. Did both hear? Did both face trial? What was the difference in them, then?
8. What was the landowner's agreement with the first group of hires? What did those hired a the last hour also receive?
9. Why could the landowner do this if he wanted? If the landowner be God, what does this teach us?
10. What was the attitude of the first group? What was the attitude of the Jews when they heard that Gentiles could also have God's grace?
11. Before Christ died, all God's human creation could basically be divided into two races. What were they? Which had always been God's people? Was the other still God's creatures?
12. Which is represented by the first son who refused and then relented and obeyed? Which is represented by the second son who agreed and then did not?
13. Which of the two did the will of his father? What is Jesus's lesson?

Lesson 10: *Preparation*

Bible Texts For This Lesson

- Fig Tree Matt. 24:32-44, Mark 13:28-32, Luke 21:29-33
- Wise and Foolish Virgins Matthew 25:1-13
- Absent Householder Mark 13:33-37
- Rich Fool Luke 12:16-21
- Faithful and Evil Servants Luke 12:35-40

The motto of the Boy Scouts of America is “Be prepared.” To this end, they meticulously plan every camping trip and carry every tool and supply that might come in handy for whatever eventuality they face.

Jesus taught his disciples to always be prepared to face the judgment day. Every man should live as if today is his last day on earth, because it just might be.

People die unexpectedly every day. As a matter of fact, very few people get any kind of warning at all as to when they will expire. Most perish with only a few moments or days to contemplate the end. “And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment...” (Heb. 9:27). We ought to live our lives so that whether death calls or the last trumpet sounds at any moment, we will be ready to meet our maker.

In Matthew 24, Jesus had been telling his disciples about the impending destruction of the city of Jerusalem, its Hebrew temple and Mosaic worship. Of this end, there would be many warning signs, including famines, earthquakes and wars. Jesus gave them this solemn warning so that they might spare themselves from the Roman emperor’s sword. By heeding his warning, they could know when to flee the city for safety.

Now, in the parable of the **fig tree**, Christ cements this teaching by admonishing them to pay close attention to the signs and not to dismiss them lightly. Indeed, that generation yet lived when Titus sacked the City of David in 70 A.D. Hebrew historian Josephus reports that no Christians were killed in the invasion, surely because they all heeded their Lord’s warnings and the signs of the coming disaster.

In verse 36 of that chapter, his answer shifts to the second part of their query, concerning the end of the world. In Matthew 25, he teaches the parable of the **wise and foolish virgins** to compel their preparedness for that great day. Much time would elapse while the bridegroom was away but he would return when they least expected it. Only those prepared for his arrival could join him; the rest would be left out forever. And when he does arrive, it will simply be too late to prepare then. “Watch, therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.”

In the parable of the **absent householder**, Jesus compares himself to a man who goes away, leaving his servants to their labors. We are admonished to always be ready to receive him back, for he may come at any time of the day at all. He will find some of his servants idle and they will be lost. “Watch.”

In the parable of the **rich fool**, the Lord instructs his hearers on the dangers of complacency and growing idle. For those Christians who think that they purchased an irrevocable ticket to heaven at baptism, we are reminded that heavenly rest is not for the idle but the laborer. Richness toward God is extolled above serving self in this life.

Finally, in the parable of the **faithful and evil servants**, Jesus blesses those servants who are always ready for him to return, “for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

The two things that rob a Christian of his preparation most often are sin and idleness. Because we esteem the patience of God to be a sign he will not act any time soon, we allow ourselves to drift into iniquity. Or, because we feel assured of living all our 80 years or more on this earth, we leave to tomorrow what should be done today. Will the Lord truly find faith on the earth when he returns?

1. How should we live every day of our lives? What are some things this should make us do?

2. Does the Bible permit the idea of reincarnation, wherein each failed spirit gets another chance at another life? What scripture disproves this idea?

3. Would various signs precede the destruction of the city of Jerusalem? How would the second coming be?

4. What did people know when they saw a tender fig tree, putting forth leaves? What would they know when they saw famines, pestilences and earthquakes in their time?

5. How many virgins wanted to meet the bridegroom? What separated the wise from the foolish?

6. What is the lesson in the shutting of the door?

7. What does verse 13 entail?

8. After the example of the householder, when might Jesus return for us? In what sad state might he find us? What does this mean?

9. What three things does he advise in Mark 13:33?

10. According to Luke 12:21, what was the error of the rich man?

11. How can we be rich toward God?

12. According to Luke 12:37, which servants will be blessed by the master?

13. What two states can we fall into that compromise our vigilance and preparation?

Lesson 11: *Separation*

Bible Texts For This Lesson

- Tares Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43
- Dragnet Matthew 13:47-50
- Wedding Feast Matthew 22:1-14

Preparation and separation are two closely related concepts, for without the former, one is doomed to the latter.

It is sin that separates a man from fellowship with his God: “Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden his face from you so that He will not hear” (Isa. 59:1-2).

If fellowship is the bridge between God and man, then sin is the raging river that wipes it out and the blood of Jesus is the grace that rebuilds it. Jesus died, “that he might reconcile them both [Jew and Gentile] to God in one body [the church] through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father” (Eph. 2:16-17).

The washout of sin is repaired only by the grace of God and man’s willingness to accept and obey that gospel message. By grace through faith are we able to be reconciled to God as our trespasses are not imputed to us. “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:20).

Without the offering of Jesus and his resurrection, the bridge of fellowship cannot be rebuilt. “And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!” (1 Cor. 15:17). The breach cannot be repaired outside of the grace of God and a working faith (Gal. 5:4).

It is, of course, death that results from sin in the life of every person. And death is the great separator. It separates the living from their loved ones which causes them great dismay. More importantly, physical death separates the eternal spirit from the mortal body (James 2:26). The body returns to dust, but the spirit survives the transformation and still must answer for the deeds done in the body (2 Cor. 5:10). The only distinction God promises to make in the day of judgment is between the justified and the unjustified. While the wicked will be punished in the flaming fire of divine vengeance, the righteous will be rewarded with heavenly rest. The punishment of the unjust is described by Paul as eternal separation from God (2 Thess. 1:9).

In these three parables, the Lord teaches his disciples to beware that eternal separation that is condemnation. In the parable of the **tares**, Jesus describes a farmer whose enemy sowed weeds amid his field of wheat. He interprets the parable himself, showing that the good and evil must be allowed to grow together in the world while he will separate them in the end.

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a **dragnet**,” he says. Like the seeker of good pearls and treasure, the man casting the net into the sea is looking for items of intrinsic value. Christ likens him to the events of the end of time, when divine and final judgment will separate the gold from the pyrite. “There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 13:50).

Finally, in the parable of the **wedding feast**, he likens the gospel invitation to a wedding feast. God invites the likely attendees—the Jews—who refuse the call and even murder the messengers. Then God issues the same invitation to the less likely—the Gentiles—who filled the hall. Still, one managed to masquerade as a Christian who truly had not lived like it. This false brother is dismissed to join those who openly rejected the invitation. “For many are called but few are chosen” (Matt. 22:14).

The pain of being separated from loved ones who die should pale in comparison to the horror of facing eternity separated from God. Indeed, every time we fall into sin, we should recognize that instant as a small, bitter taste of what hell is. It is eternal separation from the God who loved us enough to die for us.

1. What is it that first separates a man from his God? What does Isaiah say is an additional result of falling into this state?
2. What does Ephesians 2 argue is the result of Jesus's death for the faithful?
3. What does James call the body without the spirit?
4. Does the Bible really teach that some people will be punished in the day of judgment?
5. What corresponds to the farmer's field—the world or the church?
6. Who are the wheat? Who are the tares? Who is the enemy?
7. What will happen at the harvest?
8. What bearing does this passage have on church discipline (cf. question #5 and I Cor. 5:9-10).
9. How does the parable of the dragnet compare to Jesus's message in Matthew 7:21-23?
10. How does Jesus describe the furnace where the wicked will be cast?
11. Who is represented by the king and the son?
12. Who are represented by the likely attendees, invited first? Why?
13. How did they respond?
14. Who correspond to the second group of guests?
15. What type of Christian is exemplified in the man without a wedding garment?

Lesson 12: *Stewardship*

Bible Texts For This Lesson

- Ten Talents Matthew 25:14-30
- Faithful and Wise Steward Luke 12:42-48
- Unjust Steward Luke 16:1-13
- Unprofitable Servant Luke 17:7-10
- Minas Luke 19:11-27

“Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful” (1 Cor. 4:1-2).

So wrote the apostle Paul, following a long dissertation on the relatively smaller role played by men in the salvation of others. We are merely servants, not masters, he argued, as the Corinthians attempted to denominationalize their young church after artificial followings. And as stewards, he recognized that Christians are merely working with borrowed tools when they spread the gospel. The grace belongs to God who gives it and we must be faithful in the way we administer the truth of Christ.

The best example of a steward we have is in the book of Genesis. Joseph went from slavery to the oversight of the house of Potiphar in just a short time, bringing blessing to the Egyptian captain's home. Even when his master's wife attempted to seduce him, Joseph was a faithful steward, in that he refused her advances completely. Potiphar sided with his wife, though, when he found out and landed Joseph in prison. But even there, he became the trustee of the facility and the Lord prospered him as he remained faithful to honor and duty. In time, his advice freed him from his cell and he became Pharaoh's governor in Egypt and the nation was blessed with prosperity amid great famine all around. Joseph was always a faithful servant and blessing seemed to follow him wherever he went.

In the parable of the **ten talents**, Jesus instructs his disciples on the matter of stewardship. Although the Lord has traveled to a far country, he will one day return and call his servants into account for how they have handled the blessings come from God. To those who made the most out of their stewardship, he will reward them as good and faithful servants by admitting them into the joy of their lord. He who bears no fruit, however, can only anticipate a conviction of laziness and wickedness and a punishment in outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing teeth.

In the parable of the **faithful and wise stewards**, Jesus contrasts two stewards with different attitudes toward their master's absence. While the one recognizes it as only temporary and due to end without warning, the other sees it as opportunity to do evil without his knowing. But Jesus will return when the faithless steward does not expect him and punish his failure as a steward with many stripes. Christians beware: “For everyone to whom much is given, from him much is required.”

The **unjust steward** makes an appearance next, teaching us the true value of physical resources in this life, sharing them to bless those less fortunate. Indeed, every physical blessing we have is from God (James 1:17 and Matt. 6:25-34). If we are faithful in our stewardship of temporal blessings that perish with the using, we can prove ourselves fit to steward eternal blessings.

Answering his disciples' plea to increase their faith, Christ mentions the **unprofitable servant** who understands that full obedience to God's commands is merely his duty and no labor about which he should boast. “We have done what was our duty to do.”

The parable of the **minas** is much like the parable of the ten talents. This one is intended to disabuse them of false ideas about the kingdom's appearance and nature. The end of it has special warning to all who do not know Christ or who do not obey his gospel (2 Thess. 1:8).

We are stewards every one of the riches of the knowledge of Christ and must share with all.

1. What does Paul say is a requirement of a steward? What did he mean concerning his own stewardship? What were the Corinthians trying to do with Apollos, Peter and Paul?
2. Who is the great Old Testament steward? What made him so trustworthy and prosperous?
3. What did each of the stewards do with the talents his master gave him before leaving?
4. Was the effort of the third man sufficient? What excuse did he give (Matt. 25:25)?
5. What became of the first two servants?
6. What was the servant's reason for beating the others and getting drunk (Luke 12:45)?
7. How does this passage compare to 2 Peter 3:9-11?
8. What is the standard, given in Luke 12:48?
9. How can handling "unrighteous mammon" help lead us to an "everlasting home"?
10. What does Luke 16:14 say about the Pharisees' reaction to this parable? Is this idolatrous affection still alive today (Col. 3:5)?
11. According to the parable given in Luke 17:7-10, can a Christian ever do so much for God that the Lord actually owes him? What should the Christian be diligent to do?
12. Is salvation then a debt God owes us, or a gift of grace we receive when we accept and obey Him?
13. What did the citizens of the parable in Luke 19 think of nobleman? What becomes of them?

Lesson 13: *Comprehensive Review*

1. *From lesson one:* How is a parable like a beautiful casket or a tantalizing piece of fruit?
2. *From lesson one:* In the study of parables, which is most important: the surface story on earthly matters or the hidden lesson on spiritual concerns?
3. *From lesson two:* When discussing the growth of the kingdom, Matthew 13:3 must never be overlooked. What is necessary for the kingdom to expand? Compare this to Romans 10:14-15.
4. *From lesson three:* When that pearl of great price is located, what should we do about it (Prov. 23:23)? What things might one have to sacrifice in life to become a Christian?
5. *From lesson four:* Why did Jesus call his disciples the “salt of the earth”?
6. *From lesson five:* How many times should I be willing to forgive a brother who trespasses against me?
7. *From lesson six:* What should a man do before building a tower? How does this apply to becoming a disciple?

8. *From lesson seven:* What realization finally struck the prodigal son when he hit bottom? What did he decide to do then?

9. *From lesson eight:* What is represented by the old wineskins? What is represented by the new wineskins?

10. *From lesson nine:* The parable given in Matthew 7 is preceded by a discussion on false religionists. What is the true test of discipleship given in verse 21?

11. *From lesson ten:* How should we live every day of our lives? What are some things this should make us do?

12. *From lesson eleven:* Does the Bible really teach that some people will be punished in the day of judgment?

13. *From lesson twelve:* What became of the first two servants who stewarded their talents well?

Other Class Material By This Author

A Passage Through the Old Testament

OT1 In The Beginning
OT2 From Egypt to Canaan
OT3 Taming Canaan
OT4 The Throne of David

OT5 Israel and Judah
OT6 The Major Prophets
OT7 The Minor Prophets
OT8 Wisdom Lit./Post-Exile

A Passage Through the New Testament

NT01 Harmonized Gospels
NT02 Acts of the Apostles
NT03 Early Epistles
NT04 Liberty Epistles
NT05 First Corinthians
NT06 Second Corinthians

NT07 Prison Epistles
NT08 Preacher Epistles
NT09 Hebrew Epistle
NT10 Minor Epistles
NT11 Revelation to John

Topical Studies

Biblical Typology
Brotherly Love
Characters of The Acts
Characters of The Old Testament
Great Themes of Isaiah
New Testament Churches
Parables of Jesus
Proverbs: The Beginning of Knowledge

Sermon on the Mount
Special Studies
The 10 Commandments Today
The Church of Christ
The Life and Times of Jesus
The Spirit World
Works of Flesh-Fruits of Spirit



J.S. Smith
Fort Worth, Texas
Electronic Mail: jeffssmith@mac.com
Internet: www.electronicgospel.org
© 1997 All Rights Reserved

Reproductions may be freely made and used, provided proper credit is given to the author and no charge is ever made in association with this material without the express written consent of the author.