

Parable of Lamp on a Stand

When Jesus spoke to the people, he spoke many times in parables. Parables are fictional stories used to portray a truth. Jesus used many parables in his teachings and many of them are familiar to us. Throughout the year, we are going to go on a journey through these parables to discover the meaning and truths behind Jesus' parables.

I think it would be a good idea to ask the question of why Jesus spoke in parables? Why wouldn't he just speak plainly so that everyone could understand? Well it turns out that the disciples were wondering this same question and so they asked Jesus why he spoke to them in parables. Jesus gave this response, "Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them". Jesus then goes on to talk about how the people he is speaking to cannot understand because their hearts have become hard. The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom has been given to those who hear and believe. This conversation comes right after the parable of the sower which we will discuss at a later time. Jesus says that he speaks in parables because they do not believe him so he does not give them truths plainly that they don't want to hear in the first place. Now that we have a better understanding of the reasoning behind parables in general, let's dive in to the first one.

The Lamp on a Stand- Matthew 5:14-16, Mark 4:21-22, Luke 8:16-17; 11:33-36

This parable occurs in all 3 synoptic gospel accounts but it varies in each one slightly. In Matthew's account, the focus is on letting our light shine because we are the light in the world. Our light is our actions, words, and thoughts. When we allow ourselves to shine and to be a light to the darkness that is around us, we are spreading God's kingdom to others. Our good deeds are not to be for our own glory but for the praise of the Father.

Mark and Luke have a slightly different focus. Mark and Luke focus on things that are hidden and concealed. "For whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open" (Mark 4:22). The truth about life and death and Jesus needs to be revealed and brought out into the open. Truth is often closely related with light. Therefore, if the truth is hidden, it needs to be told to all and this is why Jesus tells us that we are the light of the world. We are to bring the truth to those around us, we need to bring the light into the darkness. Luke goes a little bit further and talks about the eyes being good and bad. What Jesus is saying here is that we do not need more light if we are in the darkness. What we need to do is have good eyes in order to let in the light. In other words, change the way we think and perceive the world and allow the light of Christ to enter our mind and spirit.

This parable is so much more than just doing good things and being a light. It's about participating in the spreading of God's kingdom and allowing the light of Christ to change and transform our lives.

Parable of Wise and Foolish Builders

In this article we will discuss the parable of the wise and foolish builders. It is a parable Jesus used to teach on the importance of faith, foundation, and himself. Let's dig in to this parable.

This parable is listed in the gospel accounts according to Matthew and Luke. I will provide Matthew's account below and reference to Luke's account. Here is Matthew's account of this parable:

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash." Matthew 7:24-27

In this parable, we have a comparison between two builders. One builder built his house on the rock, the other built his house on sand. There is a lot of symbolism and meaning in this parable so we will try to dissect it as carefully as possible.

It is safe to assume that we could interpret the builders as being us, people living day to day in the busyness of life. The house could be interpreted as our lives. As we live our life, we are building something and it will be left behind when we are long gone. The builders then build their house on two different foundations, rock and sand. These two foundations can easily be interpreted as the rock being Christ and the sand being basically anything else that is not Christ. Money, fame, lust, selfishness, etc. The rain, flooding, and winds can be interpreted as the temptations and evil that Satan throws at us each and every day and if our foundation is on Christ, we will not fall but if our foundation is on anything else, we will crumble. The important part of this whole parable Jesus mentions at the beginning. If we want to be the wise man, we must hear the words of Jesus and put them into practice. Both accounts of this parable come after important teachings of Jesus like loving our enemies and judging others. This wasn't just a parable about building a good life. It's about hearing and living out the words of Jesus, just as he did. By doing this, we will have laid for ourselves a foundation built on Christ.

The account Luke gives has a little more detail than Matthew's account does. Luke mentions that the wise man "dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock" (Luke 6:48). Luke tells us that the wise man had to dig down deep to lay the foundation on the rock, telling us that more work had to be done in order to build the house. The foolish man built the house, "on the ground without a foundation" (Luke 6:49). The foolish man had no foundation had all and provided little resistance to the weather because he did not take the time to lay the foundation. In the same way, work must be done on our part to dig down and lay the foundation for our lives. We must put the teachings of Jesus into practice. If we do not, Jesus provides us with a warning that our lives will fall and collapse and we will destroy ourselves.

In conclusion, let this parable sink in and meditate on its teaching. We must practice and live the teachings of Jesus and build on the foundation of Christ so we can stand and live.

Parable of Cloth and Wineskins

Jesus' parables about cloth and wineskins can seem insignificant and out of place without the proper context. We're going to look at this parable and why it was so important to the teachings of Jesus and why the people then, and us now, need to hear it.

The context to this parable is everything. When we look at this parable in Matthew's context, for example, the meaning can become much more clear. Here is the parable from Matthew's perspective in Matthew 9:14-17,

Then John's disciples came and asked him, "How is it that we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?" Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast. "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse. Neither do people pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.""

We are introduced to this scene by John's disciples coming to ask Jesus a question. They are wondering why Jesus' disciples do not fast but they and the Pharisees do. Then Jesus gives them an answer about a bridegroom and guests and mourning. What Jesus is telling them is that he is still with his disciples, there is no need for them to fast. But, once he is gone, they will fast and mourn because he is no longer with them. Then Jesus goes into his parable about cloth and wineskins and it is such a crucial part to his ministry.

The parable is this. You cannot put new cloth on an old garment or you will tear the garment and it will be worse than the hole you started with. Likewise, you cannot put new wine in an old wineskin or the skin will burst and everything will be ruined. You must have a new wineskin to hold the new wine. Jesus is making a fundamental claim here about our mindset and his teaching in light of the conversation that just occurred.

Jesus is getting at the heart of much of our problems as humans and that is our mindset. We have a certain way we think, act, and speak depending on culture, religion, ethnicity, etc. Jesus is speaking about our mindset about God here. Jesus' teachings and his ways were new and much different than the traditional way of thinking according to the law of Moses. Jesus is telling John's disciples that they have to have a different mindset to accept his teachings. They can't think the way they used to because it won't make sense to them in their current mindset. It's like trying to sew a new patch on an old garment or like trying to pour new wine into old wineskins, it just won't work. Jesus' ways are different from the old ways and therefore, a new way of thinking must take place.

With John's disciples, Jesus wanted them to really rethink what fasting was all about and why they do it in the first place. He wanted them to have a different mindset to understand not only fasting but their entire lives as well. A change had to take place between thinking in terms of the law and thinking in terms of the gospel. What is it that Jesus wants us to change our mindset about? What is it that we need to rethink and change our mindset about to better understand Christ? The answer is probably different for everyone. Just like a garment and wineskin, we need to be refreshed and made new and the only way to do that is through Jesus Christ.

Parable of Sower

The Parable of the Sower is one of my favorites and it is one of the most important parables in understanding how to receive God's word. As we will see, there are many ways to absorb, throw out, and keep God's word in our hearts. We want to strive to keep and grow God's kingdom, so let us discover how we must do this from the Parable of the Sower.

The parable is held in Matthew 13:3-9. It says,

"Then he told them many things in parables, saying: 'A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. Whoever has ears, let them hear.'"

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

Jesus offers a full and complete explanation of this parable and what each part means. In summary, there are four different ways in which the word of God affects people. Someone does not understand or does not want to hear it- path. Someone who hears the word and is joyful but their faith is shallow and it fades away when trouble comes- rocky ground. Someone who hears the word but worries and wealth get in the way- thorns. Someone who hears and understands the word and shares it with others- good soil. Every person on this earth has been through or is

at one of these events. Obviously, we want to be the good soil, but it is easier said than done. Let's look at each one of these examples to dive deeper.

The seed sown along the path is the saddest out of the three negative grounds. No roots are planted, no understanding or appreciation is developed, the seed (God's word) just sits there and is eventually taken away by Satan. If one does not understand God's word, then one must seek answers and then the answers will be given to them. Matthew 7:7-8 promises that, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened." Jesus promises us that when we seek and ask, we will find. What a beautiful promise.

The rocky ground is the second type of ground we come to and it is an interesting one. This example is one who hears the word and receive it with joy. This person is so happy to hear and understand the message of the kingdom. However, because that is as far as it went and because their faith was shallow (no roots), when trouble came, they fell away. There is something interesting to note here. This is not just ordinary life trouble Jesus is referring to here. This is trouble and persecution because of the word. When we are persecuted because of our faith, often times, we fall away or our faith becomes weak. However, we must be strong in facing trials and persecution. James 1:2-4 says, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything." How can we remain strong when we are persecuted? We know the God says to be strong, but how do we do that? We rejoice. As hard as it is to rejoice when things aren't going right, we must remember where our final destination is, heaven. These earthly sufferings are temporary, but our reward is forever (Romans 8:18).

The thorns are also interesting and applicable to all of us. In Jesus' parable, when God's word fell in the thorns these people heard the word but worries and wealth got in the way and the word became unfruitful. We can say that anything that distracts us away from God represents the thorns. Technology, relationships, money, jobs, possessions. Any of these things can be a "thorn" in our life and choke us by getting in the way and not letting God's word dwell and produce in us. Hebrews 13:5 offers a good piece of advice and helps us understand how not to get distracted. It reads, "Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."" If we are content with what we have, we will not be greedy for more and can focus on God. We need to keep our sole focus on God and his word so we can share the gospel and produce fruit.

The good soil is what we all strive for. This is when someone hears the word and understands it, which is something the other three events did not possess. One might ask though, what is this crop? What is the fruit that is produced because of the good soil? Many will say that it is the sharing of the gospel. Meaning that if you hear the word and understand, share it with others so that they can hear and understand and these people you share it with are the crop. This is nonetheless true. However, if we hear and understand the word of God we produce our own

fruit inside of us, in other words, certain characteristics that come from the Spirit. Galatians 5:22-23a shares these characteristics, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." If we are displaying these characteristics to everyone and trying to show them in every situation, then the word of God has taken root, we have been baptized and the Spirit now dwells in us helping us do these things.

In conclusion, we should all strive to be the good receptive soil that produces a crop for the Lord. There are many ways to twist or reject God's word, but we should clear our minds and focus on Him so that we will not get distracted. If you have not heard God's word or do not understand, be receptive and seek answers and God will reveal them to you.

Parable of Weeds

This next parable we will discuss is part of seven other parables (including the parable of the sower) that have a common theme running through them. These seven parables are all about the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God. Jesus uses these parables to teach and paint a picture of what the kingdom of God is like. In the parable we will discuss today, the parable of the weeds, Jesus tells the parable then gives an interpretation of it. We will look into this explanation to see why and how it is like the kingdom.

This parable takes place in Matthew 13

"Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. "The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?' "An enemy did this," he replied. "The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' "No," he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.'" Matthew 13:24-30

This can seem like a confusing passage and a bunch of questions come to mind when we read this. Thankfully, the disciples asked Jesus to explain the parable, so we do not have to wonder what it means. Here is Jesus explanation:

"The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

"As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where

there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear.”” Matthew 13:37-43

Jesus makes a lot of interesting points in this parable and in the explanation. In the parable, the servants ask if they can go and pull up the weeds which could hurt the growth of the wheat. Interestingly, the owner tells them no because when they pull up the weeds, they will also pull up the wheat as well. Jesus is sort of making a cultural statement here. Remember this whole parable is about what the kingdom of God is like. So the kingdom is like a field which has both good and evil, wheat and weeds. Jesus tells us that the field represents the world which is part of the kingdom of God. The angels will “weed out” of the kingdom all evil and sin so that only goodness will be there and the righteous will shine.

The cultural statement is that the kingdom of God would not be Israel restored to its former state. There will be all sorts of people in the kingdom and some just might surprise us. Perhaps they may look like weeds but in reality, they are wheat. We may judge them and assume there is no way they could be part of the kingdom but God had other plans.

The servants did not have the ability to know the difference between the wheat and weeds and that is why the owner told them to leave them be. He wanted to wait until the harvesters came who would know the difference. Jesus tells us that these harvesters are angels who will get rid of all the evil in the world and the kingdom will be fully restored.

There is a vicious weed called the Bearded Darnel. While growing, this weed can look identical to wheat and you cannot tell the difference. As the plant reaches maturity, there are differences between the two most apparent in their fruit. What Jesus is saying here is that we may not be able to tell the difference between those who produce good or bad fruit until they do so. We may think they have only evil in their hearts until they fully mature and we realize they are actually good for the kingdom of God.

We can learn some valuable lessons from this parable. One is that we are not the ones to judge who is part of God’s kingdom and who is not because we may truly not know the difference. A second lesson we can learn is that even though the devil sows evil among the good, good will always prevail. Jesus wins in the end and those who are with him will stand victorious alongside him.

Parable of Mustard Seed & Yeast

Continuing our journey through the parables of Jesus, we have come to a set of seven parables all about the kingdom of heaven. We have discussed the parable of the sower and the parable of the weeds. We will now discuss two parables that are similar in theme and come right after one another in the gospel according to Matthew and Luke. They are the parable of the mustard seed and the parable of the yeast. Let us begin.

We will start with the parable of the mustard seed. Matthew 13:31-32 says,

“He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.”

Again, Jesus compares a mustard seed to what the kingdom of heaven is like. Jesus says it is like a mustard seed that grows to be the largest of all the plants in the garden and it becomes so big that even birds can come and perch on it. This can seem odd at first but it actually makes perfect sense when put into context.

The mustard seed was the smallest seed known at this point in time in this part of the world. A man takes this tiny seed, plants it, and it becomes the largest plant in the garden. It becomes a tree that birds can sit on its branches. So what does this have to do with the kingdom? Well, what Jesus is saying is that though the kingdom of God seems small right now because it is only starting in and around Jerusalem, it will grow to become the largest kingdom. It will grow so large that people from all nations will be able to find rest in the kingdom. Though it is small now, it will grow.

The following parable of the yeast follows a similar theme. Matthew 13:33 says,

“He told them still another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough.”

Here we have a woman that takes some yeast and mixes it into some flour until it has been thoroughly mixed into all the dough. There is a lot of significance with this parable.

Yeast usually represents evil or uncleanness in the Bible, but here it means something different. In this parable, the yeast represents growth throughout the world just as the last parable described with a seed. It could also be interpreted as growth in a person’s own life. The point of this parable is to show that the kingdom of heaven will grow and it will spread throughout the entire world. The kingdom of God is constantly spreading throughout the world and continuing to work in our lives as well.

These are two beautiful parables about the arrival, growth, and spreading of the kingdom. The kingdom of heaven is here through Jesus and these parables are announcing this proclamation. The kingdom of God does not stand still, it is spreading and it is always growing. Jesus used these parables to help us understand the nature of the kingdom and he will continue to do so in the next couple of parables.

Parable of Hidden Treasure & Pearl

As we move into the last few parables about the kingdom of heaven that Jesus talks about, there are two parables that are very small in length and can seem insignificant. However, the meaning of these two parables can transcend all assumptions of their value. The two parables are about a hidden treasure and a pearl.

Let us remember that these parables are part of a collection of parables about the kingdom of God. Jesus starts out these parables by saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like..." and then tells the parable. Everything we read in these parables should be in the context of the kingdom and how earthly items can be compared to the kingdom. Let's dig in to these parables.

The parable of the hidden treasure appears first in Matthew 13:44, "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field." The parable about the pearl immediately follows, "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it." These two short parables come right after the other and they share a common theme.

In the first parable, Jesus says that the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man happened to find it, which would be us, he went and hid the treasure and then sold everything to buy the field. The treasure hidden in a field is the kingdom of heaven. There are a couple things to notice here. First, the man found the treasure in a field, hid it, then went and bought the field. He did not just take the treasure or buy the treasure, he bought the field where the treasure was. We cannot buy our way into heaven. We cannot do some great deed or somehow "pay" our way into the kingdom. Being part of the kingdom takes sacrifice. The man had to sell everything he had just to buy the field. The man did not buy the field out of wealth he bought it out of poverty because he had nothing. The kingdom will take great sacrifice to receive but it is truly the only we will ever need. Jesus' point was not to get rid of everything we own, but this was a warning that following Jesus comes at a cost. It comes at a cost of reputation, relationships, jobs, and even our lives. Jesus is worth everything, just as the man sold everything to get the treasure.

The second parable of the pearl is much like the first. A merchant was looking for pearls, he found one that was worth a lot, and he again sold everything and bought it. The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for pearls. We are the merchants looking for pearls and the kingdom of God is the most valuable of pearls. Again, it will take much sacrifice, but Christ is worth it.

Many times these two parables are interpreted this way. Something must be sacrificed to get the kingdom. However, there are other ways of looking at these parables. In one sense, the kingdom is free because of the free gift of Jesus (Luke 12:32). In another sense, the kingdom costs everything because it changes us. If we think about the possessions the men sold not as

objects, but as lifestyles and habits and sin that lead to death, they sold all that to become transformed by the kingdom in a new life they now had to live.

The two men were also different in how they found the treasure and pearl. One was surprised to find the treasure in the field, the other was looking for the treasure. It is the same way in life.

Some are looking for something like the kingdom they just could never have imagined how valuable it actually is. In other cases, we are not looking for anything, but we happen to find it and we find that it is more valuable than anything we ever had. The journey to the kingdom is different but the entrance is the same, through Jesus.

What seems like parables about treasure, money and selling is actually about the kingdom, life, and joy. Yes, these parables could be interpreted as being about life in the kingdom taking sacrifice and that is true. But we cannot buy our way into the kingdom. The kingdom is more valuable than anything we will ever know and it doesn't cost anything to find it, but it will cost everything to let it transform us. Jesus is announcing the kingdom with these parables and we must keep that in mind. Jesus' announcement of the kingdom of God coming through him is surprising, but the message he brings is like a hidden treasure or a precious pearl. It is worth everything.

Parable of Net

The last parable in the collection of the kingdom parables is the parable about fish in the net. This parable is a grand finale of the parables to conclude what Jesus has been talking about with the kingdom of heaven. We're going to look at this parable to gain understanding as well as look at how Jesus concludes this teaching. Let's begin.

The last kingdom parable is found in Matthew 13:47-50. Let's read this parable.

“Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Jesus begins this final parable the same way he has others to clarify the context. He begins by saying that the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all different kinds of fish. Then it became full and they pulled it to shore. What Jesus says next is there are good fish and bad fish in the same net. The good fish are kept but the bad fish are thrown out. Jesus then says it will be the same way at the end of the age. The angels will separate the righteous from the wicked and the wicked will be thrown into a place of torment. If we compare the fish to us as people, it makes perfect sense.

What's interesting to note here is that the kingdom of heaven is compared to a net that has both good and bad fish in it. It is not just full of good and no bad at all, it is just the opposite. While on this earth, represented by the water, the kingdom is full of all kinds of people both those who

want to be part of the kingdom and those who don't. This can be compared to the parable of the weeds where both good and bad crops grew in the same field. Here the example is used of good fish and bad fish. While this parable is about the end and what will happen, there is still much application to what it means for us now. One application is that we are all swimming in the same ocean. We share the same resources, the same water, the same food, etc. The kingdom is not about only liking those who are like us but loving everyone, even those against us.

Even as the gospel is being spread at this very moment, it is bringing all types of people to Jesus. The message of the gospel is bringing both sides to Jesus and it won't be until the end where we will see who is really a true believer of Jesus. The kingdom came in the presence of Jesus and it continues with us today through the Holy Spirit. We must decide whether we are going to be a part of the kingdom's advancement or be in the opposition against it and in the end meet our dreaded fate.

Parable of Sheep, Coin, Son

The next three parables we are going to explore I am collectively calling "The Lost Parables". I title these three parables this way because they are all about finding something that is lost. We are going to look at the parable of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost or (prodigal) son. These three parables share a common theme and it is only fair to look at them with the theme they express. Let's first look at the parable of the lost sheep.

The Lost Sheep

This parable occurs in 2 places, Matthew 18 and Luke 15. Matthew's version is much simpler, more straightforward than Luke's version, however, Luke records much detail that is important in understanding God in this parable. Let's read Luke's account in Luke 15:1-7,

"Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." Then Jesus told them this parable: "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent."

In the context of this parable, Luke records these parables as coming after a comment from the Pharisees and teachers of the law about welcoming sinners. Matthew records this parable when Jesus is talking about the "little ones" of Israel. In both parables, Jesus is referring to those who are lost and do not know him.

Jesus decides to make this teaching parable personal to those making accusations against him and puts them in the center of this parable. He tells them that if they had a hundred sheep and they lose one, they would go after the one that is lost and bring it home. This parable is often perceived as God brings those who are lost to him. While that may be true, the depth of this parable is completely lost in such a simple answer. The relationship Jesus is portraying runs much deeper than just searching for something that is lost. Let's dig in.

Jesus was well versed in the Hebrew Scriptures and so this parable might have come from Ezekiel 34, where God talks about bringing his sheep back to Him. It seems to be a direct link to this parable here. God has always wanted his sheep to be found and found in Him. He has never wanted them to wander away and be scattered from Him. Jesus reflects this yearning for His people in this parable.

We must decide who is who in this parable. The shepherd is God and the sheep are us. Sometimes in life, we fall away or we become lost. Then God brings us back to him. Let's look at what happens in this parable. First, the shepherd leaves the 99 others to go find the lost one. This means that God put all effort in going after those who are lost. It is not that God does not love those who are already with Him, but He knows the one who is lost needs Him and so he goes in search. He then finds the sheep and puts it on his shoulders and goes home. He could have just walked it home but instead it goes on his shoulders showing complete support. This is the way God carries us. He puts us on his shoulders and carries us home. He is in complete support as He does the carrying. Then the shepherd rejoices with others in the found sheep. There is an absolute joy in finding the sheep, and there is an absolute joy when God brings us to Him. Jesus then tells us that there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one who repents than all those who do not. It is a powerful image of the meaning we hold in the eyes of God and how precious we are to Him.

In this parable, the Pharisees thought of themselves as the highest valued people in the eyes of God, but Jesus flips that view upside down. Jesus says that those who mean the most to God, are the ones sitting next to him, those who are lost. Though the Pharisees and teachers had their issues, they were the ones who were actually further from God and those eating with Jesus, were the ones he came to save and seek after.

The Lost Coin

The parable of the lost coin is similar in theme to the previous parable. Let's look at Luke 15:8-10,

“Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Doesn't she light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.' In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

In this parable we have a woman, who has ten coins and she loses one. This happened often in homes that fell through the floors of stone. The woman lights a lamp and sweeps the floor until she finds it. Then there is a gathering in celebration of finding the coin. Then Jesus tells us that there is rejoicing in the presence of angels over one sinner who repents.

This parable shows that God is active in His kingdom to save the lost. There was also careful planning on the part of the woman to find the coin. She lit a lamp to provide light and she swept the floor and looked carefully for it. If the woman is to be portrayed as God, then we can say that God looks for us in darkness, which is why she needed the light to look in the darkness. God doesn't always wait for us to come to Him into the light. He brings us into the light. Often times we are lost in the darkness as this coin was. God lights the way and searches for us in the darkness and when He finds us, He brings us into His light. This is a powerful image of how God cares and loves us so much.

The Lost/Prodigal Son

This parable takes place in Luke 15:11-32. Here's a quick summary to understand the context. There was a father and he had two sons. The youngest son set off for another land but lost everything he had and became starved. When he realized what he had done, he went back to his father and pleaded with him to make him like one of his father's servants. But the father embraced him and rejoiced, for his lost son was now found. However, after hearing the special treatment the youngest son had received, the older brother became angry. But the father reminded him that he was always loved by him, but because the youngest was lost and now found, it called for great celebration.

There are many lessons we can learn from this parable. One of the most common lessons we learn is that God always accepts those who turn away and come back to Him. Just a few verses before this story takes, Jesus describes this celebration on a spiritual level in Luke 15:7 which says, "I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent." This verse is saying that when a person repents of their sins and turns back to God, there is more rejoicing over that one person than over, say ninety-nine that don't need to repent. It is not to say that God does not love the ones who need no repentance less, but that because they are already found, there is more rejoicing over one who becomes found. The father in the parable, who represents God, displays this kind of rejoicing. He gives him a robe and sandals and a ring. He kills a fattened calf and has a feast to celebrate his son coming back to him. It is also important to note that when a person is living in sin they are "lost" or "dead" to sin, but when they repent, they become "found" or "alive" in Christ who saved us. Romans 6:11 says, "In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus." When a person repents, or is baptized, there is great rejoicing even in heaven. What a wonderful thing to think about that when one repents, there is a celebration in heaven. What a glorious occasion to imagine.

Another lesson we see in this parable is the humbleness of the youngest son. After experiencing starvation and having lost everything, he realized his mistake. He left his father

and now has nothing. So when he came back he humbled himself admitting his sin and asked for mercy. This is how we should be when we approach God. 1 Peter 5:6 says, "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you,". When we humble ourselves before God, God will exalt us at the right time. That is a promise. Humbleness is another key aspect from this story we can learn.

God's grace and mercy show so prominently in this parable. Hebrews 4:16 tells us, "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." When we draw near to God, we receive his blessings. The youngest son was starving and lost, and when he came to his father, he received grace and mercy from him. Just as the son received grace and mercy in his time of need, God shows us grace and mercy in our time of need. The blessings of God flow from His throne when we draw near to it.

An aspect that might be talked about less often is the point of the older brother in the parable. The older brother becomes angry upon hearing about the "special treatment" his younger brother is receiving from his father and cannot understand why there is such a big celebration. Many compare the older brother to the Pharisees of that day who rejected Jesus and did not understand his teachings. The older brother's pride in himself restricted him from appearing at the celebration. He compared himself to the mistakes his younger brother had made to make himself look better, but he did not understand God's love and compassion. If we are not careful, we too can become prideful and think we are better than others. We must be aware of this warning given to us in this parable.

It is also worth mentioning that in Luke 15:19 it says, "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him". It's almost as if the father was waiting for his son to return, watching and waiting for his appearance in the distance. This idea paints a beautiful picture of how God is always willing and ready to take us back. He is watching and waiting for us to come to our senses and come back to Him and He is waiting for the day of our return, just as we are awaiting Christ's return.

So in conclusion, there are many lessons we can pull from this parable. God's grace, mercy, and love shine through, the compassion of God is immeasurable, and we must be humble and aware of our pride when we approach God. This parable is a beautiful depiction of God's love for us.

Parable of Unmerciful Servant

The next parable we are going to discuss in our series is one that cuts to the core of all human relationships. The parable deals with the idea of forgiveness. This parable comes in response to a question Peter, one of Jesus' disciples, asks about forgiveness. It is a story that we can get frustrated at and judge the characters so easily. Yet, it is one that we often overlook to apply to our lives and thus lose grasp on the true meaning of the parable. We are going to explore the parable of the unmerciful servant and see how we can end up just like this servant without realizing it. Let's begin.

The parable takes place in Matthew 18:21-35. Let's read it in full and then discuss it.

"Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?" 22 Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. 23 "Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. 24 As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. 25 Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

26 "At this the servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' 27 The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

28 "But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded.

29 "His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.'

30 "But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. 31 When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened.

32 "Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. 33 Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' 34 In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

35 "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.'"

At first glance, this parable is one that we can follow easily and even predict what will happen. The servant was shown mercy. He, in turn, did not show mercy and therefore, the master took away his mercy and showed him justice. Jesus then tells us the application of this parable. He

tells us that unless we forgive people from our heart, the Father will treat us in a similar way the master did after he heard about what the servant did. This parable comes in response to a question, and that question lies at the heart of the parable and the lesson.

Peter asks a valuable question to Jesus about forgiveness. Peter's question was this, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times"? Just before this question, Jesus had taught about what to do when someone sins against us. So this question is not all that random given the context Matthew puts it in. Peter wants to know how many times he should forgive someone. How many times is forgiveness necessary before the person crosses a boundary? Then Peter goes as far as to ask, up to 7 times? I don't know about you, but forgiving one person seven times is pretty generous if you ask me. That's a lot of times to forgive just one person, let alone all the other people we could offer forgiveness to. Peter is essentially asking how many times is enough? Jesus' response to this question surprises us and I'm sure surprised Peter and the disciples as well.

Jesus responds by saying, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times". Depending on the translation you have, it could say something a bit different like "seventy times seven" or something like that. Either way, it is a huge number Jesus is referring to and just seems ridiculous to forgive someone that much. Then Jesus starts right into the parable about the unmerciful servant.

Since we've read the parable already, let's discuss it. Jesus describes a master who has servants that are in debt to him and he wants to settle accounts with him. A man is brought to him who owes a huge amount of money and is going to ride out justice to get his money. The servant pleads with him, the master cancels the debt and lets him go. Then the servant finds a man who owes him a measly amount compared to what he owed the master and treats him horribly until he can pay it off. The master hears about this, and tortures the servant until he can pay back his debt.

This parable shows the justice of God but also the love and generous grace of God. The servant owed an amount that could never be paid back. It would have taken 20 years for the servant to pay back the debt! He pleads with the master and the master not only lets him go but he cancels the debt. The master doesn't let him go and say, "Pay me back by working for me for 20 years". He lets him go and completely erases the debt as if it never happened. When we come to know Jesus and are forgiven by His blood, we receive the same type of forgiveness. We have a huge debt of sin that can never be repaid. Instead of God letting us be apart from Him for eternity, he sent Jesus to die for our sins so that our sins could be cancelled and remembered no more in the eyes of God and we can live with God forever. What a beautiful image and illustration of God's love for us. Just as the master cancelled the debt of the servant, God erases our sin because of Jesus. This idea is carried over into the idea of forgiveness. God has forgiven us so many times because of our downfalls and shortcomings and we should do the same for our fellow people.

Parable of Workers in the Vineyard

The next parable we are going to look at has always been one of my favorites. It takes place only in Matthew chapter 20. This parable is about what the kingdom of heaven is like, like most of them. A famous saying actually comes from this parable and we're going to find out what that is and why this parable is so important to understanding God, the kingdom, and what Jesus was all about. Let's begin.

This parable is called the Workers in the Vineyard and it takes place in Matthew 20:1-16. Let's read it all at once and then talk about it.

““For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. **2** He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard. **3** “About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. **4** He told them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ **5** So they went. “He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. **6** About five in the afternoon he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, ‘Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?’ **7** “‘Because no one has hired us,’ they answered. “He said to them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard.’

8 “When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.’

9 “The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. **10** So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. **11** When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. **12** ‘These who were hired last worked only one hour,’ they said, ‘and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.’

13 “But he answered one of them, ‘I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn’t you agree to work for a denarius? **14** Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. **15** Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?’

16 “So the last will be first, and the first will be last.””

So in this parable, we have a landowner, the workers, and the foreman. In this parable, Jesus likens the kingdom to a landowner who hires workers to work in his vineyard. He does not make them his slaves, he desires to pay them and the workers accept the wages and start working. There are 5 different times in the day in which this landowner goes out to hire workers. He goes out, “early in the morning”, 9am, noon, 3pm and 5pm. At all times the workers agree to the same amount of wages and they work until the workday is over. So clearly, some will not work

as much as the others if they all stop working at the same time. They all receive the same wages, but not the same amount of work time.

So when it comes time to pay, the ones who were hired first get paid last, a backwards way of looking at business. Naturally, the ones who worked all day expect to be paid more than the ones who only did an hour of work. However, each of them receives the same. The ones who were hired first start to complain at this backwards and seemingly screwed up system. The landowner reminds them that they agreed to work for this amount of money and so they are getting what they wanted. They are not getting jipped in any way but they feel like they are.

This parable can have many interpretations and I believe they can be right in their own way. One interpretation could be that this parable is about those who receive God's mercy and grace "later" than others, (ex: the poor and outcasts of society). These folks were the lowest in society and it could be interpreted this way because "no one hired" them. In light of the context of this parable, Jesus had just given the parable of the rich young man who could not give to the poor and he had just mentioned those who give everything for Jesus will receive their reward in abundance and was talking about the last being first. This would also mean that the "first hired" could be the Pharisees or teachers of the law who looked down on the low and outcast of society. In light of this interpretation, this means that no matter what our life circumstance is now, we have a reward far beyond our comprehension waiting for us.

Another interpretation could be that the last hired were Gentiles and the first were Jews and Israelites. This would go along with Paul's discussion of Gentiles coming into the branch of Israel later in Romans.

But for a life application interpretation, the main point is this: God's grace and free gift of love is always accessible and always the same. Ephesians 3:12 says, "In whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him." The landowner gave the same amount to each worker. Thus, God gives each of us the same amount of love and grace when we accept the invitation. God gives to each of us equally and each of us receives more than we deserve. So whether we come to know Christ later in life, early in life, or somewhere in between, the kingdom is always waiting, God is always ready, and the love of Christ is always open. Jesus is the way, (John 14:6) and He is always willing and ready for us to come to Him.

Parable of Two Sons

This parable is a more simple parable given by Jesus yet, it is not without significant meaning. The parable of the two sons appears only in Matthew. We're going to look at this parable and provide some application to it. Let's begin.

This parable begins in Matthew 21:28-32,

““What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work today in the vineyard.’ ‘I will not,’ he answered, but later he changed his mind and went. ‘Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, ‘I will, sir,’ but he did not go. ‘Which of the two did what his father wanted?’ ‘The first,’ they answered. Jesus said to them, ‘Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him.’”

The context of this parable is imperative to be able to understand who Jesus is talking to and why he is telling this parable. Throughout this chapter, Jesus has entered Jerusalem as a king in the eyes of the people, he has cursed a fig tree, and caused a scene in the temple courts that makes most of us uncomfortable. Just before this parable is mentioned, starting in verse 23, the chief priests and elders come to Jesus and ask him a question about his authority. Jesus then asks them a question in return that they can't answer and then Jesus tells this parable. So the audience is most likely those who just challenged him and these are the last days of Jesus' ministry as he knows his time is near.

So Jesus gives us a scenario that perhaps all parents can relate to at one time or another. Jesus tells of a father who had two sons. He asked the first one to work and he told his father that he would not work but later he did anyway. Then he went to ask the other son, and he said yes at first, but never actually went. Jesus then asks a simple question of which son actually did what the father had asked. The answer is the first one, which they answered correctly. Although the first son said no at first, he ended up going which is what the father wanted all along. Then Jesus goes into a teaching about tax collectors and prostitutes. This is where the application comes in. Let's look at this closer.

Jesus tells the priests and leaders of the people that the tax collectors and prostitutes, the lowest of society, are entering the kingdom of God ahead of them. What a bold thing to say to leaders of people who hold a high position in society! Jesus refers to John the baptist when he came before Jesus showed up on the scene. John showed them the way but they did not believe him, but the lowest of society did and they accepted the truth. Even after the leaders saw what was happening by the lowest accepting the truth, they still did not believe John and his message. And here lies the application. Even though the tax collectors and prostitutes were not following the way of God at first (the first son), they accepted the message of truth and came to God. The leaders, however, had the appearance of following God but never actually truly followed him (the second son).

Now we can leave this parable in the context of the life of Jesus or we can apply it to our lives. We can say that we can either be the tax collectors and prostitutes or we can be the leaders, and here is what I mean. No matter where we are in life, we can come to Jesus and when we do we will be following God at the heart. We can also go to church every Sunday, read the Bible, and be the leaders who truly never follow Christ. Being a Christian is a matter of the heart, not outside appearances or actions we do to look righteous. The leaders did everything required of them, which looks righteous, but they did it all for selfish intent and self-glory. The tax collectors and prostitutes were truly sorry for their way of life and made a true change, like the first son did.

Our life can either be fruitful or fruitless and God looks at the fruits of our lives. When we have the Spirit within us, we have fruits that show up in our lives. Galatians 5:22-23, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control". If we are showing these attributes, then we are truly loving Jesus and loving others. We are really exhibiting the behavior of the first son by doing what our Father asks.

Parable of Tenants

The parable of the tenants is loaded with the history of Israel, the message of the prophets, and a future prediction. It can also be called the parable of the vineyard. This parable is one of the most important parables for understanding what Jesus was doing at the time and what is happening in the story so far. Let's dig right into this amazing parable.

This parable takes place in all three of the synoptic gospels. It is recorded in Matthew 21:33-45, Mark 12:1-12, and Luke 20:9-19. We are going to look at this parable from the perspective of Matthew's account.

Matthew 21:33-45

"Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and moved to another place. When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit. "The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. Last of all, he sent his son to them. 'They will respect my son,' he said. "But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and take his inheritance.' So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. "Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end," they replied, "and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time." Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures:

"The stone the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;

the Lord has done this,
and it is marvelous in our eyes'?

“Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. Anyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed.” When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus’ parables, they knew he was talking about them. They looked for a way to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that he was a prophet.”

So there is the parable in its entirety. However, there is a major backstory that provides context for this parable. Much like the last parable we looked at with the two sons, Jesus has just entered Jerusalem at the beginning of this chapter. He rides in on a donkey and everyone is praising him as they would a king. Jesus then enters the temple and starts flipping over the money changers tables and tells them what a wicked place they have made the temple from their greed and jealousy. Then Jesus leaves and he curses a fig tree, which is a sign that Jerusalem will fall, and then gives these two parables. With all of this mind, we can go into this parable with an idea of what has just happened.

Here’s a brief breakdown. The landowner is God and the vineyard is Jerusalem. The wicked tenants or farmers, are the leaders of Israel at this time, the chief priests and Pharisees. The servants who go to collect the fruit are the prophets and servants of God. The son is Jesus which he calls the “cornerstone” which that little poem is from Psalm 118. So what does all of this have to do with us now?

Well, what Jesus says in the last part of his teaching here is important. He tells them, speaking to the chief priests and Pharisees, that the kingdom of God will be taken away from them and it will be given to people who can produce the fruit it was meant to. In other words, the way the leaders of Israel are acting, they are not producing good fruit, only bad fruit. This parable can be connected to the song in Isaiah 5 which tells us that the vineyard yielded only bad fruit. So who are the people that the kingdom of God will be given to? That answer is us. The Gentiles. Since most of the Jews rejected Jesus and the gospel, Acts 13:46, a new covenant was made that brought Gentiles salvation and brought them into the kingdom through the blood of Jesus. This is a huge deal. We have been given the kingdom of God, and it is up to us to produce the fruit the kingdom was meant to produce. Jesus said in John 15:5, “I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me.” We cannot produce good fruit unless we are a part of Jesus and have accepted him. We cannot produce fruit if we have rejected him like the leaders did. We have now been given the Holy Spirit, through belief in Christ, and now we can produce the fruit of the kingdom.

This parable also exposes the plan they were making to kill Jesus, the beloved Son. When Jesus asked them what should be done to these tenants for acting so wickedly, little did they know they were answering on their behalf. They were answering to their own demise. Jesus was telling them that they were the wicked tenants, and they will be stripped of the kingdom, because they rejected Jesus.

With this parable, there is a lot to take in. We must be sure we are not making the same mistake the leaders of Israel did in rejecting Christ. We must also realize the responsibility we have in producing fruit for the kingdom. We have been blessed with salvation and because of that, we should produce the fruit of the kingdom of God.

Parable of Wedding Banquet

The parable of the banquet is a parable of obliterating preexisting status measures and revealing what the kingdom of God is really all about. This parable surprised the audience of Jesus and it is meant to surprise us too. The way in which the world works in terms of status haven't changed much since Jesus' time and this parable hasn't changed either. As we dive into this parable, we're going to notice some interesting facts about human nature, how the world works, and how, in some aspects, it never changes. Let's dive in.

The context of this parable speaks volume to the meaning of the parable. In Luke 14, Jesus has been invited to a Pharisee's house on the Sabbath to eat the Sabbath meal. He notices a man, heals him, and sends him away. Then Jesus notices that there are prominent, wealthy people in the places of honor at the table. He gives a teaching about not taking the place of honor when you are invited and when you invite others invite those who are "low status", as they were considered in this day, so that we will be rewarded at the resurrection. Then Jesus gives this parable about a banquet and you can read it [here](#). Once we have read it, we will begin to discover some interesting things about God, the world, and the kingdom.

This parable all circles around the idea of Jesus' announcement of the kingdom and how God's kingdom works differently than the world's social system. The meaning of the parable lies within its context. What we have is an owner of a house who throws a big banquet and invites a lot of people. But the guests all make excuses as to why they can't come so now no one is coming to the banquet. This would be a huge waste to do all the work to prepare for a banquet and have no one to share it with so the owner tells his servants to go into the city and bring in all the "outcasts" of society. Those who are poor, hurting, crippled, and lost. But there was still room, so the servants go outside the city and invite anyone to come and the owner ends with a warning. No one who was originally invited will take part in the banquet. Then the parable ends. What is this all about? How is the kingdom like this banquet? This all makes much more sense when we realize the parable is about what Jesus was doing then.

From the Hebrew prophets to Paul's letters, we know that the kingdom was given to the Jewish nation first. It was offered to the nation that flowed from Abraham's descendents. What we see in the gospel accounts, however, is that the Jewish leaders rejected Jesus (Matthew 21:42). They did not accept the kingdom invitation that Jesus was offering to them during his ministry. If we follow the parable in this light, Jesus is the owner of the house and the guests who made the excuses were the religious leaders. Then, if our interpretation of the parable is right, Jesus should then invite the poor and outcasts of society because that's what happens next in the story. Well, as it turns out, that's exactly what Jesus did. Many times we see Jesus associating and eating with "sinners" that the religious leaders were appalled at (Luke 5:29-32, Luke 15:1-2,

John 4). The religious leaders could never understand why Jesus was doing this all the time and it's because they had already rejected Jesus in their hearts.

Following our parable plotline, the story should then take us outside the city (outside the Jewish nation) to call people to Jesus. This is what the entire story of the book of Acts is all about. The Gentile nation being reached and being brought the Good News of the kingdom of God is able to "fill the room" using the language of the parable and the banquet of the kingdom shall go on.

The meaning of this parable is that the kingdom of God is being brought through Jesus. The leaders of Israel have rejected him and he finds faithful followers to invite to the banquet. Anyone who accepted this offer and did not make an excuse, is accepted. The significance for us is asking ourselves if we are going to accept the offer of the kingdom or are we going to reject it? There is no status in the kingdom and this was a surprising message to an audience saturated in social status. The kingdom humbles the proud and exalts the humble. The question for us is are we going to be humble or be humbled by the offer of the kingdom?

Parable of Ten Virgins

The parable of the ten virgins comes right after a decisive teaching of Jesus in the gospel of Matthew. In the chapter before, Jesus just gave his teaching on the destruction of Jerusalem and his second coming. These parables that follow are all connected to the idea of Christ's return. The parable of the virgins has two great meanings. We will discover both of these meanings as we go along. For now, let's dive in and read this parable.

Matthew 25:1-13

““At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. The wise ones, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!' "Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.' "“No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.' "But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. "Later the others also came. 'Lord, Lord,' they said, 'open the door for us!' "But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, I don't know you.' "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.””

So this is the parable of the ten virgins. Notice at the beginning Jesus says, "at the time the kingdom of heaven will be like...". What is the time Jesus is referring to? In context, Jesus is referring to the time he just finished speaking about in chapter 24, his second coming. So Jesus puts this parable in perspective for us so that we know he is talking about the time of his return. So when Christ comes for a second time, the kingdom of God will be like these ten virgins who

set out to meet the bridegroom. They waited a long time and the foolish ones missed his arrival and the wise virgins met him because they were prepared. Jesus then ends the parable with a warning of being alert because we do not know the time when he will return just as the virgins did not know.

As I stated earlier, this parable is two-fold in meaning the way I see it. First, in light of the warning Jesus gives, we must be prepared for his return. The moral of the story is to be like the wise virgins who were prepared instead of being the unwise virgins who were not prepared and missed their chance. Notice that all ten virgins had the same opportunity to prepare. It was not as if the foolish virgins had no oil to pack, they just decided not to bring it. Perhaps they assumed the time of arrival and thought they wouldn't need extra oil. Likewise, all of us have the same opportunity to prepare. All of us have heard the good news of Jesus and it is up to us to respond. Romans 1:20 proclaims that God's power is clearly visible. The question to consider is, how will you prepare and will you prepare for his arrival?

The question then becomes, how do you prepare for the return of Christ? What could we possibly do to prepare? One way to prepare is to live like you have been saved and have hope. Titus 2:11-13, "For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ". The grace we have received helps us to say "no" to the desires of the flesh so that we can say "yes" to God. We can also encourage one another as 1 Thessalonians 4 discusses. In this way, we can keep each other on track and keep pointing each other to the blessed hope we are waiting for. We can also continue to remind ourselves that Christ is coming back. As we read through Scripture we are reminded that this world is not the end, and the end of Scripture tells us that restoration is coming and that Jesus is coming to bring that restoration. This is our hope and we can be prepared by doing these things.

Being prepared literally is one fold of the meaning of this parable. The other meaning comes from the immediate context of Jesus teaching and ministry at this time. This parable comes in Jesus' final days as he is in Jerusalem. They just walked by the temple, the disciples ask the questions of Jerusalem's downfall and of his return, Jesus teaches them and then continues with this parable. The virgins in this parable can be likened to Israel. There were those in Israel that still followed Yahweh in Jesus' day, but there were also those that did not. The wise virgins will be like those in Israel who follow and wait faithfully for Jesus. The foolish virgins are those who did not heed Jesus' warning and will not enter salvation.

Remember the wedding banquet parable. The wedding banquet, which is mentioned in this parable, is the destination of the virgins. It is the celebration of the kingdom, it is the reward we will receive. The foolish virgins, because they were not prepared, were late to the banquet. They realized too late what they needed to do to get in. Likewise, some at the return will realize they needed to repent long ago. They will realize their fault, but it will be too late. This is why it is so important to hear the words of the gospel and believe.

The parable of the virgins is an eye opening parable as it is meant to be. The words of Jesus must ring in our ears as we wait for his return. "Therefore, keep watch".

Parable of Talents

The parable of the Talents comes right after our previous parable of the ten virgins. The context of the parable remains the same. Jesus has just described the fall of Jerusalem and of his second coming. These two parables follow directly after this teaching and there is much to learn from them. The parable of the talents can be confusing as it has many parts. We're going to break down this parable and gain it's wisdom and understanding. Let's dig in.

This parable can be found in [Matthew 25:14-30](#). A similar parable can be found in Luke 19:11-27 but some details are different. After you have read the parable in its entirety, we will then discuss its components and significance.

Now that you have read the parable, let's do a preview. Jesus has just taught about his second coming specifically, and he has given a parable about ten virgins and this parable about bags of gold. Jesus is describing the time when he will return and he uses these parables to explain what the kingdom of heaven will be like at that time (v.1).

For this parable, we have some characters to sort out. We have the man who is wealthy and he goes on a journey and entrusts his wealth to his servants. He has three servants that he trusts his wealth with. To the first he gives 5 bags of gold, to the second he gives 2, and the third he gives 1. The servants who received the 5 and 2 bags doubled their bags while the master was gone and made a profit. The other servant, however, did not make a profit but instead put it in the ground and then dug it back up when the master returned. The master commended the servants who doubled the wealth. But to the one who did nothing, the master took his bag, gave it to the first servant, and threw the servant into utter darkness and despair. What a crazy parable, but it has its significance.

First, we should decide the original meaning of the parable based on the context. Remember, at this time, Jesus is in Jerusalem in his final days before his execution. Jesus has been announcing woes and judgments on Israel and its leaders from the time he entered the city and this is all part of the plan. This is another wake-up call to the leaders in Israel who have not heeded the words of the prophets long ago and Jesus' words presently. The leaders of Israel are like the servant who took the money and put it in a hole. While in the hole it produced nothing and the servant did nothing with it. The same can be applied to the way the leaders treated the words of Jesus and the kingdom of God. The leaders of Israel gained nothing from the gospel and instead of using it to further the kingdom, they buried it and did not believe. The leaders of Israel have had their chance to lead the people towards God, but they have done just the opposite. This parable is another warning. If they don't accept the gospel, Jerusalem will be destroyed and them along with it as Jesus just taught about. The gospel is to be used, spread, and gained. It is not to be squandered and used for nothing.

As far as this parables significance for us today, we can start to see some main points being brought out. Obviously, we should strive to be like the first two servants who were ready when their master came back and used what was given to them for good. The master went away and came back. This is simply Christ's return. Before he left, he gave them his wealth, which I think

can just as easily be applied to the giving of the Spirit we see later. We should use the gifts we have been given to further God's kingdom, which is what this parable is all about. We are called to be fruitful and use our gifts. 1 Peter 4:10 says, "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace". Romans 12:6 tells us that we have different gifts according to the grace that was given to us. Likewise, in the parable, the master gave the talents to his servants "each according to his ability". They received different bags of gold as we received our gifts. We have two choices when we receive our gifts. We can either use them or not use them. And like the servant in the parable, if we don't use them, we will lose them.

The significance of the parable is to use the gifts given to us so that when Christ comes, we will be rewarded. The kingdom of heaven when Christ returns will be a time of justice, grace, and honor. The choice is in front of us now. Will we be like the first two servants, or will we decide to be like third servant whose fate is darkness? We must make the decision today before the master returns.

Parable of Growing Seed

The parable of the growing seed is only recorded in the gospel according to Mark. It is a short little parable that has a powerful message hidden within the words of the parable. We are going to look at this parable's meaning and significance to help us develop the best understanding for this parable. Let's dig in.

This parable is found in Mark 4:26-29. "He also said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like a man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.”"

Since this parable is only found in Mark, context is imperative to understanding the meaning and significance. This parable comes in a set of teaching from Jesus that contains the parable of the sower, a lamp on a stand, and the parable of the mustard seed. Three of these parables are about seeds with the middle one holding the meaning. The lamp on a stand is about things that are being revealed. What is being revealed at this time? These parables are about Jesus announcing the arrival of God's kingdom through Him and what the kingdom of God is like. Jesus is revealing through parables what he is doing at this moment in time. This particular parable about a growing seed, fits into this category of announcing the kingdom of God. How does it fit into this category? What about this parable makes it about the arrival of the kingdom?

This parable has many similarities to the parable of the sower just a few passages before. A man scatters seed, the seed grows, and it is harvested. These features all reflect features of other parables that are also about God's kingdom. The powerful message of this parable lies not in the man or the scattering of seed, but rather in the seed itself.

The mysterious growing the seed undergoes is not known to the man who scatters it. He just sees the growth of the seed. Therefore, we can imply that the seed has the power within itself to grow. It is the seed itself that grows and has the power to grow. Since the kingdom of God is compared to this growing, producing, and harvesting nature of the seed, we can see the seed reflects the word of God or the gospel message that Christ was announcing (Mark 4:14). The kingdom of God is like this man sowing seed because we often don't see the results of our work. We don't see or understand all the inner workings of the way the word spreads and grows. We trust in God who allows the hearts of people to grow.

The meaning of this parable is that Jesus is announcing the kingdom of God and the good news about himself. His announcement and nature of the kingdom is like a man who sows seed but he does not know how it grows. The kingdom of God grows in ways we may not understand. The significance for us today is being aware that we may not understand, but trusting that God's kingdom is growing and we should be a part of the process as we spread the good news of Jesus to the world.

Parable of Two Debtors

The parable of the two debtors is one of my favorite parables as it alludes to the kingdom of God in an extraordinary way. This parable takes place in Luke chapter 7. The parable itself only takes up two verses, but the effects of the parable last an eternity. Let's dive into the parable of two debtors.

For context of this story, this parable actually came out of an event that happened in real time. Jesus had been invited to a Pharisee's house to have dinner. Now there was a woman who lived in the same town as the Pharisee that heard that Jesus was eating at this Pharisee's house. When she heard this, she brought a jar of perfume and started crying at Jesus' feet. Then she wiped his feet with her hair, kissed his feet, and poured the perfume she brought on his feet. Then the Pharisee thinks to himself, "If Jesus was a real prophet, he would know that this woman is a sinner". Then Jesus turns to Simon and tells this parable. Luke tells us that this woman was a sinner. We don't know what she has done, but we do know the forgiveness is worth all that she is doing. Let's look at this parable now that we have the context.

Luke 7:41-43 says, "Two people owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?"

Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven."

"You have judged correctly," Jesus said."

The parable is very short and powerful in nature. Two people owed a man money. One owed him a lot, the other owed a little. When the man cancels both debts, which would love him more? The answer, as Simon answered correctly, is the one who owed him more money. Why? Because now he doesn't have to worry about such a huge debt. One denarius is about a day's pay. So the one person owed 50 days worth. That's a lot of days and a lot of pay but not as much compared to 500 days worth of pay! That seems almost impossible to pay back and that's

the whole point. The debt was way too much to pay back and therefore that person loved the lender more for canceling the debt than one who didn't have as high of a debt.

Jesus then turns to the woman but still talking to Simon, tells about all this woman has done that he has not done. No one washed Jesus' feet, or greeted him with a kiss, or poured oil on his head as was the custom for welcoming a guest in those days. No one did that, yet this woman has done all of this and hasn't stopped since Jesus walked in. Jesus then tells the woman that her sins are forgiven, her faith has saved her, and she goes in peace.

This parable is all about the weird and different system that the kingdom of God offers that Jesus has been announcing. Jesus' ministry has been about proclaiming the good news and tending to those of low status to be exalted. This woman was a sinner, an outcast of society. Yet Jesus turns her into this example of such great faith and forgives her sins. He had so much debt, so much sin, and Jesus right there in the moment, cancels it all. He takes away all that was burdening her and weighing her down and she could really go in peace because her sins had been forgiven, her enormous debt had been canceled. Jesus' whole announcement is that those who need forgiveness, those who are considered the "farthest" from God, they're first in line to forgiveness and it is offered to them just as much as anyone else.

Jesus then ties in this idea of love corresponding to forgiveness. He says that those who have been forgiven of a lot, love a lot. But those who have been forgiven of a little, only love a little. The Pharisee and perhaps others who were there thought that they didn't need much forgiveness because they live in such a high standard of religious attributes. Yet it is when we don't think we need to be forgiven that we don't ask for forgiveness and are not forgiven. Therefore, they did not love the woman like Jesus did because they had not been forgiven as the woman had and thought they didn't need to be.

This parable, when compared with Romans 3:23 is powerful. Romans 3:23 tells us that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God". Not a single one of us has the right to point fingers and say "how dare you" without taking a hard look at ourselves and seeing the reality of our lives. We all have sinned, we all have fallen short. We all need Jesus. It is tempting to categorize and say "well at least I haven't done..." or "at least I didn't do...". We all need Jesus and we all need forgiveness.

This parable was a powerful message at the time about how the kingdom of God is offered and what is offered through it. Exalting the low, humbling the mighty, and offering forgiveness to all is what is offered through the kingdom that is just the opposite from this world's view. In the world the view is, "don't forgive those who don't deserve it", "be number 1", "let others fend for themselves, you're most important". This is the message the world is sending. Yet the kingdom of God offers forgiveness, exaltation, and humbleness. It was the announcement then, and it is the good news now. Jesus offers forgiveness and Jesus offers salvation.

Parable of Good Samaritan

When it comes to famous and popular parables, there may be none that makes the top of the list more than the parable of the Good Samaritan. This parable has been the basis of many sermons, articles, and bible studies and it never disappoints. This parable is rich with applicable significance for us today but it contains so much more. Let's dive into this parable.

The parable of the good Samaritan lies in Luke chapter 10. Although this parable has application for us today, it is also seeping with historical and cultural backgrounds that we might miss at first glance. Let's read the parable in its entirety, then we can discuss the meaning and significance of this amazing parable.

You can read the entire story [here](#). Now that we have read the story, let's observe a few things:

1. This parable came from a question asked by an expert of the law of how to have eternal life.
2. This question was a test.

Since we know these two things, and we read the response of the man as love God and love others, which Jesus tells us is correct, we can have a better understanding of the next question posed by the expert. The next question is "Who is my neighbor?". In other words, who should I love, who counts and who doesn't? The parable then is an answer to this question.

The parable holds a lot of details and I will list them in order they appear:

1. A man was going from Jerusalem to Jericho
2. The man was attacked by robbers
3. A priest passed by and did not help
4. A Levite passed by and did not help
5. A Samaritan came and helped the man
6. The Samaritan took him to an inn and paid the innkeeper to look after him.

First, the meaning of this parable. This parable holds much meaning when it comes to historical and cultural context. The two most religious men in society did not bother to help the innocent and the helpless. They were not obeying the most important command in all the Torah which was to love your neighbor. The one who helped the man was a Samaritan. Samaritans were enemies of those in Jerusalem so the irony sticks out like a sore thumb to Jesus' audience. Israel's leaders had a choice to make about Jesus and the kingdom. Were they going to keep walking by and rejecting the kingdom or were they going to be like the Samaritan and accept? This parable's meaning is about Jesus confronting Israel's corrupt leaders as not obeying the

Torah. They were not loving their neighbor as themselves which makes sense why the expert would even ask a question of who his neighbor is.

The significance of this parable holds much of the same weight as it did for Israel's leaders. Are we loving our neighbor and do we truly love all people? I would like to think all of us would say no to that question and that should make us really think and take action about how we treat people. This kind of teaching can go all the way back to Jesus' teaching about loving our enemies in Matthew 5. Loving those around us is not easy, especially when they persecute us or harm us in some way. The command of the Torah, fulfilled through Jesus, is to love God and love others in the same way.

The parable of the good Samaritan held so much meaning then and it holds so much significance for us today. Being a good neighbor, loving those around us is not a feeling or a thought, it's an act. Loving others is an act that is so hard to do sometimes but so necessary. We must ask ourselves: how am I loving others?

Parable of The Rich Fool

The parable of the rich fool is one of the many parables Jesus taught about the idea of money. Money is one of the most mentioned subjects Jesus teaches on and it is interesting to think about why this is. This parable describes a man who thinks just like we do and it is a very personal parable to apply. Let's read and be inspired by this parable.

This parable takes place in Luke 12:13-21. You can read the parable [here](#) and then come back when you have read the parable.

Now that we have read the parable, let's construct a general idea about some context to better understand how this parable plays into the story. Jesus is teaching a large crowd of people, "many thousands" according to v.1 of chapter 12. While Jesus is teaching, someone in the crowd says, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." (v.13). You can see how this would play out. Jesus is a well-respected teacher in the eyes of many who are following him and he may be thought of as an "authority figure". Two brothers are arguing over an inheritance and the one wants to keep it all for himself. The other brother, being jealous, goes to Jesus so that he can come back and tell his brother, "See, even Jesus says I should have a share in the inheritance". Of course, this is all speculation but it is a plausible scenario. This happens in our day all the time except we call it being in "court". This man wants part of the inheritance and he wants Jesus' approval that he is right and his brother is wrong.

Jesus' response to the man is basically, I am not your judge. Then Jesus warns and tells them that they should be on guard against greed and that life is not about inheritances or possessions or wealth. The parable that Jesus then tells is about a rich man who had good crops. He then realizes that he has no place to store the good crop that has been produced. So what does he do? He does what anyone who had the means would do, he builds bigger storehouses. If there's not enough room, build bigger housing spaces so you do have the room. He will build

even larger storage units and this way, he won't have to work. He will take life easy, because he has so much food and it will be a splendid life.

At this point in the parable, the listeners are thinking, "Yeah, this guy has a pretty good life." Then Jesus says, "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?'" Why would God say and do this? Why would he call him a fool and demand his life from him? The answer lies in the warning Jesus had just given, the warning of greed. Jesus says that "this is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God." (v.21).

Greed is what gets in our way of becoming fully devoted followers of Jesus. Greed is what made the man in the crowd tell Jesus about his brother and greed is what made the rich man build bigger barns. You may be asking, does this mean we can't have anything nice? Does this mean we can't have anything? Of course not. The man in the parable already had food and we know this because he didn't have the room to store the crop in the ground. Instead of giving all his extra crop to the poor and those who were hungry, he decided to keep it all to himself, thus increasing his selfishness. Our world tells us that life in wealth and possessions, but God's kingdom has an upside-down way of looking at things. God's kingdom is not about what you do for yourself, but what you do for others and ultimately, God.

Greed is what stops us from wanting to help others or using our wealth for God's glory. Greed is a trap that looks safe and secure but it leads to destruction and despair in the end. 1 Timothy 6:9 says that greed brings "ruin and destruction". Proverbs 11:24 I think really sheds light on what happens when we give and what happens when we are greedy and hold on. "One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want." (Proverbs 11:24). When we give, God will give abundantly. Yet, when we hold on to what we have and don't give and are greedy, we fall into this trap of only wanting more. It is the same trap that this rich man fell into in our parable. It's the same trap the brother fell into who spoke to Jesus and it is the same trap we fall into. Greed is this downward spiral that grips tighter and tighter as we fall.

Our ultimate escape from greed is giving. If we want to free ourselves of always wanting more, we have to break the habit of gaining and start the habit of giving. Jesus said that we cannot have two masters (Matthew 6:24). We cannot love God and want money and wealth more and more. We have to choose. The money and wealth is tempting. It's here, it's attainable and we can see it. But it is ultimately a trap that tightens its grip with every thought. Choosing Jesus is an escape, it's the freedom we need to break our greed and start the generous kingdom-act of giving.

Parable of Waiting Servant

The parable of the absent householder or the waiting servants is a short parable in Mark 13. This parable comes at the end of a teaching about the destruction of Jerusalem. The context in which this parable lies is imperative to understanding its original meaning and intent. Let's dig in to discover this parable.

In Mark 13, Jesus is giving answers to two questions the disciples had asked Jesus. Jesus had told them that not one stone of the temple would be left standing. In other words, the temple would be overthrown and destroyed. The disciples then asked Jesus two natural and important questions, "when will it happen and what will be the sign that it is about to happen?". The disciples want to know when the temple will be destroyed and how they will know it is truly happening. Jesus then spends the rest of the chapter explaining to them the signs that the temple will be destroyed. In verses 32 and 33, Jesus also answers the question of "when". His answer, "no one knows" (Mark 13:32). Jesus comes right out and tells them that He does not know, the angels don't know, but only the Father knows. Because of this fact, Jesus tells them to "watch!" and be ready for that day because it will come when they least expect it. Therefore, Jesus gives them a little parable to explain what this is like.

Mark 13:34-37 contains the parable. It says:

"It's like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with their assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch.

"Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone: 'Watch!'"

Jesus says it is like a man who goes away and puts his servants in charge. The one at the door needs to keep watch because the owner would not want to come back all of a sudden and find the servants sleeping. They need to be ready when he comes back instead of sleeping which would mean they are not ready for his return.

For the historical context of this parable and its meaning, we need to look no further than the leaders of Israel. If we think of Israel as God's house, (which was where the temple was which Jesus had just finished speaking about) and the leaders of Israel as the servants, we have a good picture of what's going on here. Jesus has been announcing his arrival and kingdom and the leaders of Israel have rejected him. The owner has come back, and he has found his servants sleeping. They were not ready for his arrival and they were taken back when he did arrive at a time they did not expect. The leaders of Israel have failed at their duty. They were supposed to be keeping watch, awaiting for the owner to come back but instead, the owner came and they were sleeping.

The significance this parable has for us today can be taken different ways but the command that Jesus gives is beneficial to all. Jesus says to "Watch!". Although Jesus is talking about the

destruction of the temple within the parameters of this parable, it can still be applied to us today. We can still watch for Jesus' arrival and His second coming. Christ is coming a second time (John 14:3, Hebrews 9:28, 2 Thessalonians 2) and we should be ready and awaiting Him when He does come. Christ will return, but will he find us ready or not?

Parable of Watch/Faithful Servant

The parables of the watchful and faithful servants are often seen as separate parables to many people. Although they have a different story line and they don't include the exact same characters, there are many striking similarities between them. Not only that, but Jesus connects these two parables because of a question asked by Peter and therefore, we should connect them also. We are going to look at these two parables and gain a better understanding of what's happening in the context of the parables. Let's begin.

These two parables take place in Luke 12:35-40 (watchful servants) and Luke 12:42-48 (faithful servant). Notice that I did not include verse 41 in those passages. This is because verse 41 is the hinge verse between these two parables. This verse holds the question that Peter asks that forms a bridge and reveals a deeper understanding for these parables. Before we get into that verse, let's review the parables in context.

The parable of the watchful and faithful servants can be found [here](#).

For the context of these parables, Jesus has been teaching on a variety of subjects up to this point. Being on guard against hypocrisy, money, worrying, and now watchfulness. The first parable is about being prepared for the return of the master and watching for his return. The warning is to keep watch for the return of the master because no one knows when he will return. The other parable is about a servant who was left with big responsibilities and the best result is for the master to come back and find that servant doing what he is supposed to be doing. The worst result would be to assume the master will not return, at least for a while, and mistreat the other servants horribly and make terrible decisions. Then the master would return, and let's just say it would not end well for the servant. Then Jesus ends the teaching with a bite of truth: He says that the servant who knows his master's will and does not prepare or do it, will be severely punished. The servant who does not know the master's will and yet still does not do right, will not be punished as severely. So what is Jesus talking about? What's with the confusing statements of servants being unprepared and beaten but then others are not beaten? What does it all mean? Let's break this down.

The meaning of the parable in its original context can be seen as to be about Israel, it's leaders, and it's people. Jesus started off talking about the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and we can see, especially in verses 47-48, the behavior of the religious leaders in the parable. The religious leaders should be waiting and watching for the return of God to Jerusalem. This is what they have been waiting for, what was promised in the prophets so long ago. The point is, Jesus the master has come, yet they do not see it. They have also not been faithful servants of Yahweh. They have taken advantage of the poor and made themselves exalted amongst the people

(beating the servants from the parable). Jesus warns that the master will come and it will not end well for the servants who have not done the master's will. This is a warning of the judgement that is coming upon Jerusalem. Judgement is coming to Jerusalem because of the unfaithfulness of His servants. The warning is to watch and be faithful, neither of which the leaders of Israel have done up to this point which will lead to their destruction.

Now about the many and few blows for the different servants in verses 47 and 48. It would make sense that the one who knew better would be punished worse than the one who did not. Staying within the context of the parables, the religious leaders of Israel know better. They know what the will of God is, yet they refuse to listen. Therefore, their punishment will be more severe. On the flip side, those who do not know, perhaps Gentiles or foreigners, or those who simply have not been taught, still are not doing the will of God. They are still doing wrong, though they do not know it. Therefore, their punishment will not be as severe because they did not know. On the contrary, we know that those who do the will of God will be rewarded richly as the parable describes (v.44). Everyone must be held accountable and held to the same standard, but it comes down to our choices and decisions that define our end result.

This parable can still have significance for us today. Christ will come again, only this time to bring salvation (Hebrews 9:28). We need to be prepared for his coming and at the same time we need to make sure we are remaining faithful to Jesus and the covenant. We can stray off the path just like the religious leaders did. We need to pray, fast, study, and let the Spirit guide us towards bringing us closer to Him. Being prepared and being faithful are two traits for followers of Jesus that will never cease to be needed.

Parable of Barren Fig Tree

The parable of the barren fig tree has an immense amount of cultural influence and perspective in its content. This parable, though it is short, contains the biblical story wrapped up in a few words. The biblical story can be seen through this parable and the nation of Jerusalem is at the epicenter of all the action. Let's dive into this parable to see the meaning and significance it holds.

This parable cannot be interpreted correctly unless we look and discover the context of Jesus' words. This parable takes place in Luke 13:6-9. The context can be found starting with the beginning of the chapter. Here is a link to the parable and then we will discuss it: [Luke 13:1-9](#).

Now that we have looked at the parable in its context, let's go over why Jesus gives this parable and what led up to it. As far as we know from the story Luke gives us, Jesus is still with the crowd he has been with since chapter 12. Some brought up a story about some Galileans who had suffered at the hands of Pilate. Jesus then corrects these folks and tells them that these Galileans were no worse sinners than anyone else. Then Jesus references an event about the tower of Siloam and says that these were no more guilty than anyone else in Jerusalem. Jesus then gives the crowd a warning: "But unless you repent, you too will all perish." Jesus warns

them that they will meet the same fate as these others who suffered for their sins. Then he gives the parable.

The parable is quite simple in nature. There is a man who had a vineyard and he planted a fig tree in it. He goes to look for figs on the tree but finds nothing. He then tells his caretaker of the vineyard that he is tired of coming to this tree and finding no fruit on it and that he should cut it down because it is wasting good soil. The caretaker pleads with the man to leave it alone for one more year. The caretaker will fertilize it and take extra care of it. If it gives fruit, it stays. If not, then it could be cut down. The moral of the story is one more chance. The tree has one more chance. The question now is, "What does the fig tree represent?"

The fig tree most prominently represents Jerusalem and the Jewish nation. Jesus has already given them the sign of Jonah, to be on guard against the Pharisees, to be watchful, and to notice the times that are approaching and interpret them. Jesus even references Jerusalem when describing the events of the tower in Siloam (v.4). We cannot speak about this fig tree parable without referencing the other fig tree incident described in Mark 11. Mark 11:12-26 describes Jesus coming into Jerusalem, leaving Jerusalem, and then cursing a fig tree with no leaves on it. Sound familiar? The fig tree withers and Jesus says to have faith in God so that they could say to "this" mountain to be thrown into the sea. The "mountain" in this case is Jerusalem, as Jerusalem sits on a mountain. Jerusalem has been compared to a fig tree even in the Hebrew prophets (Hosea 9:10, Amos 8:2). Jerusalem is like a fig tree that is bearing no fruit. Therefore, it must be cut down as Jesus describes in Matthew 24. Judgment is coming to Jerusalem, but they have been given one more chance to repent and that chance is Jesus.

Jerusalem needed to repent as we need to repent. Jesus is our answer. Jesus is the only answer as he is "the way and the truth and the life" (John 14:6). We were lost in sin but now we have been given the chance of new life through the Messiah. The question is, "Will you take the offer given to you?". Jesus was offering the kingdom to the crowd and he is offering the kingdom to us now. Acts 4:12 declares that "salvation is found in no one else." Jesus is our answer and to accept salvation we must accept Jesus.

Parable of Friend at Midnight

The parable of the friend at midnight is a parable clearly about prayer. Some may argue that this is a parable about persistence of prayer or that prayer must be done in a certain way at a certain time. These theories, however, have legitimacy issues when we look at other biblical text and implication of this parable. We are going to look at this parable and offer a valid interpretation based on the context and teachings of Jesus.

This parable takes place in Luke 11:5-8. The actual parable itself is quite short but the context and teachings of Jesus surrounding this parable offer insight into a plausible interpretation. Let's read this parable,

“Suppose you have a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have no food to offer him.’ And suppose the one inside answers, ‘Don’t bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can’t get up and give you anything.’ I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your shameless audacity he will surely get up and give you as much as you need.”

Even though this section contains the actual parable, what comes before and after is imperative to understanding the parable. Before this parable, Jesus prays. After he finished praying, his disciples asked him to teach them how to pray. Jesus says what is commonly known as the Lord’s Prayer and then goes into the parable. After the parable, Jesus teaches about asking and knocking. Then Jesus says that since we know how to give good gifts to our children, how much more would God give to us. Before we talk about these teachings, let’s discuss the parable.

So Jesus puts the disciples into the parable as he says “suppose you have a friend”. He goes to his friend and asks for bread to feed another friend of his that is visiting him. The friend answers him in a way that most of us would if someone came to us at midnight. It is late, everything is locked up, and he can’t give him anything. There would also probably be no bread ready at midnight so baking the bread would be a whole process that wasn’t suitable at such a time in the night. However, the man gets and gives him what he needs. Jesus tells us that it wasn’t because of the friendship that the man got up, but it was because of the man’s “shameless audacity” or “boldness” that he got up and helped his friend.

This is a parable about big prayers. There is no assumption that the man was persistently knocking or asking over and over again for bread. The man only asks once. The reason the man helped was not because he kept asking over and over again, but it was because it was such a huge favor to ask he could not turn away. It was a big deal to break bread and it was a big deal to the man asking that he had food for his traveling friend. The issue is not about persistence but about what is being asked and the boldness to pray big prayers.

Jesus provides commentary on this by providing us with a teaching. Luke 11:9-10 says, “So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.” Jesus is opening up the limitless possibilities of prayer here. Jesus is telling us to ask in prayer and we will receive. He is asking us to knock and God will open the door. None of this can be done though, without prayer. That is not to say God will not give us something unless we ask for it, that is not what is meant. What is meant is that we can receive what we need and find what we are looking for if we just ask. The man in the parable made a bold move, he had a big request. It would not have been done without the boldness to ask.

One of the greatest gifts we can receive is the Holy Spirit. Jesus mentions this in verse 13 when he says, “If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” We can give

good gifts to our kids and family that they appreciate. If we can do this, and we don't always have the best intentions, how much more is God able to give the Spirit to those who ask? Again, it all comes back to asking.

Jesus has taught his disciples what to pray for, the importance of prayer, and the power of asking through prayer. This teaching of Jesus will later come to fulfillment when he is in the garden, asking God to take away what is about to happen. As we know, Jesus knew that the events of the Crucifixion had to take place, yet he still asked. Jesus still asked if it was possible to take away the wrath he was about to engulf himself in (Matthew 26:39), though he knew he had to go through it. Praise be to God that he did.

As we can see, prayer is a powerful tool. We can ask for anything in prayer and with God, it will be given. This parable teaches us that even though we have big prayers or big requests, we should still ask. This was all part of the amazing kingdom of God that Jesus was offering and is still offering. Paul said it best when he wrote, "let your requests be made known to God" (Philippians 4:6).

Parable of Shrewd Manager

The parable of the shrewd manager is an interesting parable to say the least. It seems like a parable we can follow but then it has a surprising ending with the type of language we are not used to hearing from Jesus. This parable has many levels of interpretation that all point to one common interest. What is that interest? Let's discover it by unpacking the meaning and significance of the parable.

[Here](#) is the parable in its entirety in Luke 16 and then we can unpack once we have read through it.

Now that we have read through the parable, what is the meaning of this parable? Why did Jesus tell this parable in the first place. Well, there are many things to note in this parable and we will highlight the main points that lead us to the whole point. The manager was essentially fired in the beginning of the parable. The manager was accused of wasting the master's possessions but we're not really sure what led up to the firing except this accusation. Whatever the case may be, the manager was fired. He lost his job, his income, his way of living. All of a sudden, the manager was left with a decision to make. What was he going to do next? He was faced with a major decision that could impact positively or negatively the life that he was going to live. He was faced with a decision to make and he had to act fast.

The decision he made can be put under scrutiny depending on who you ask. Was he wrong for minimizing the debts owed to his former master or was he right in making sure he had good relations after he was fired? Did it all depend on the situation he found himself in? These questions can be answered by looking at the context of the parable and realizing the big picture of Jesus' parable.

The decision the manager made could have ended really negatively for him. The master could have become extremely angry at what the manager did and thus ruined his chances of ever gaining a life for himself. What we see however, is that the master commended the manager because he had acted so shrewdly. Jesus also calls him the “dishonest” manager so we know that what he did was not honest, but it is the “why” that matters here.

Jesus then says to “use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings” (v.9). What Jesus is saying here is that we must realize people are more important than money. The manager knew that relationships would matter more than money if he was going to make a life for himself. So he used the opportunity to value relationships over money.

This is how people of the kingdom of God act towards one another. We have been given money as a blessing from God. Instead of valuing it over people, we should use it for the benefit of others. It is a way of being part of the kingdom, by giving to others. Jesus reminds us that the money will be gone someday, but we will continue on and it will matter then what we valued more now.

The ultimate conversation Jesus has leads to the idea of money. Jesus goes into a teaching of trust and blessing. If we can be trusted to share wealth, we will be given wealth. If we cannot handle worldly wealth, we won't be able to handle the true riches of the kingdom and thus not be able to share in those riches. Money can be a master over us. We must decide who the master will be, God or money? (Hebrews 13:5, 1 Timothy 6:10)

BibleProject has some interesting insight that we can look at in light of this parable:

“In Jesus' mind, relationships are more important than money and should be served by money rather than the other way around. This is why the master praises the manager—not because he stole his money, but because the manager didn't allow money to distract him from the greater goal of relationships. This is how Jesus views money and calls his followers to view it. This parable forces the listener to decide what it is they trust.

Tim points out that the rich man forces a choice. Whether we live for Jesus and his Kingdom forces a moment of decision on us. Will we trust that Jesus is more trustworthy than all the economic structures around us? If those who don't know Jesus cheat one another because they know the value of relationships over money, then how much more should we use the money God has freely given us by God for the benefit of others?”

The parable of the shrewd manager is one of intrigue, decision, and wealth. We need to take a deep look at ourselves and discover the true desires of our hearts. Do we value relationships over money? The answer will determine where our heart is and the parable will guide us in the direction we need to go.

Parable of Persistent Widow

The parable of the widow is a great parable on the power of prayer and courage. It is a parable that encourages followers of Jesus to keep going even when things seem tough. We will look at this parable in its context and apply its meaning and significance for us. Let's begin.

This parable takes place in Luke 18:1-8. Let's read the parable in entirety and then we will discuss some highlights and important features to note.

Luke 18 :1-8

“Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said: “In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’

“For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care what people think, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually come and attack me!’”

And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”

This parable is one of those two character parables. There is a widow and a judge. The widow wants justice and she repeatedly begs the judge for this justice. The judge has no care of people or of God, but because the widow was annoying him so much, he would grant her justice. Not only was this widow annoying him, but he feared for his life that this woman would eventually attack him if he did not do something. He granted justice, not because he cared for the woman, but because he wanted to protect the only thing he did care about, himself.

Jesus then goes on to compare God to this judge but in a much more positive fashion than the judge was portrayed as. Jesus says that God will bring justice for those who cry out and much faster than the judge did. We do not have to beg God for justice to be served, because in his time justice will be served. We see a picture of this in Isaiah 61:8, “For I the Lord love justice; I hate robbery and wrong; I will faithfully give them their recompense”. If the judge eventually gave justice, God will certainly give justice.

Jesus asks a question to end this parable. He asks the question, “when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”. Jesus refers to himself as the Son of Man so we know that Jesus is speaking of himself here. Will Jesus find faith on the earth when he comes? What does this have to do with the parable? It has everything to do with its context.

The context of this parable lies in the middle of a speech given by Jesus about the coming of the kingdom. This started in Luke 17:20 and this parable is part of that speech. In 18:1, Luke gives us the reason the parable was included, “to show them that they should always pray and not give up”. This reasoning coincides with the events surrounding the coming judgment Jesus just described. In essence, this parable does not have to do with justice and prayer but more so with praying *and* not giving up as the world changes and we await the fulfillment of the kingdom. In context, the destruction of Jerusalem was not far off, so would Jesus find faith when he came in judgment? Or would he find rejection and disobedience as has been evident through the leaders of Israel? This was the question for them but there is still a question for us.

The meaning of this parable is that God’s ultimate vindication and justice will be served one day as it was on Jerusalem. The significance for us is that we will continue to pray and not give in when the world says otherwise. We can also apply Jesus’ question to us. When Jesus comes back, will he find faithful followers who are waiting for him, or will he find a people that has forgotten and rejected the Messiah?

Parable of Pharisee and Tax Collector

The parable of the Pharisee and tax collector is one of my personal favorites of the parables. It’s simple nature allows the listeners of Jesus day and readers of today to put themselves in the context of the parable to find meaning and significance. As we discover the message of the parable, we’ll see how the larger picture of the kingdom fits the paradigm of this parable. Let’s begin.

This parable takes place right after the parable we just discussed of the widow and the judge. There is this contrast being made here between the oppressed and oppressors, the poor and the wealthy. Social statuses of injustice are being brought out here but more so is the fact of how God sees people and His kingdom. This parable in Luke 18 can hit at the core of any society and any individual life. Let’s read this parable.

Luke 18:9-14,

“To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’

“But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’

“I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.””

What we have here is a two character parable with contrasting views of the characters. We have a self-righteous religious leader who thinks very highly of himself because of his position and what he does according to the Law. Then we have this other character who is portrayed as this ashamed and sorrowful scoundrel seeking mercy from God. Jesus then tells the crowd that the ashamed tax collector was justified before God and not the Pharisee. Luke makes sure to mention at the beginning that the crowd to which Jesus is speaking is prideful and thinks highly of themselves. This parable would be shocking to this crowd as most of them would assume that Pharisee is in the right, not the sinful tax collector. This is where Jesus' idea of the kingdom comes in.

As Jesus is announcing God's kingdom, He makes people aware of the nature of God's kingdom. We have mentioned this in other parables and it is the same with this parable. The kingdom does not work in the same way as the world does. In God's kingdom, those who humble themselves will be exalted by God, but those who exalt themselves will be humbled. The Pharisee was exalting himself, claiming he was better than the man beside him. Jesus' shocking announcement to a prideful crowd was that the Pharisee, one who thinks highly of himself, is actually least in the kingdom. This parable is about the surprising, upside-down nature of the kingdom Jesus is proclaiming.

The tax collector knew his sins, his wrongs, and his shortcomings. He knew that he had probably not been honest when asking people for taxes countless times. He had cheated, robbed, and took advantage of so many people, and he was truly sorry. He came before God, not even approaching the Pharisee and stood far away. He might have felt too ashamed to even go into the temple. He didn't even have the courage to look up and just poured his heart out in sorrow, begging for mercy. The Pharisee had no problem going into the temple, praying to God, and thanking Him that he was not like other sinners. This is where we can learn a lesson.

Romans 3:23 claims that everyone has sinned. Not just some or a few, all have sinned. We are all sinners and we are all in need of a Savior. The Pharisee didn't recognize his own hard heart and his own sins. The tax collector knew his sins and begged for mercy. When we realize that everyone is on the same playing field so to speak, it takes the hierarchy that we create in our minds of who's better and who's worse away. We can see each other as equal and all in need of Jesus. The kingdom of God is not for only those who never sin, in which case no one would ever take part in it. The kingdom is for everyone who realizes their sin, comes to Jesus, and allows the Spirit to work in and through them. The kingdom does not work in the same way the world does and that means that we can't think the same way the world does. Jesus provides a way for us to humble ourselves and only through Him can we then be exalted one day.

Parable of Ten Minas

The parable of the ten minas is a very similar parable to one we have already discussed in the parable of the talents. In Luke 19, where the ten minas parable takes place, some context is given that is not as clear as in Matthew 25 and thus it is worth looking over. These parables are not identical but their similarities and differences help us understand the big picture of what is going on. Let's dive into this parable.

The parable of the ten minas comes right before Jesus' entry into Jerusalem in Luke 19. The next is saturated with this idea and looking at it in any other way would be missing the point of why Luke puts it here. You can read the parable and come back here for discussion and implication.

Luke gives us the reason why Jesus gave this parable which is crucial for its interpretation. In Luke 19:11 it says, "While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once." The incident before this statement was that of Zaccheus and how Jesus is claiming he came to seek and save the lost. After this, Jesus gave them a parable because people thought the kingdom of God was coming soon, within days even. Jesus is approaching Jerusalem and the people have this idea that God's kingdom is coming to obliterate Rome's rule of the Jewish people and reign victoriously over the Earth. That is what the people are thinking and so Jesus uses a parable to adjust their thinking of the kingdom. So he tells the parable of the ten minas.

Now a mina was a unit of currency and one mina was worth about three months' wages. So the fact that this king gave his servants ten minas means that this king had money trust in his servants to do what he asks. The parable is set up like this. A man who is set to be king, goes to a distant country (not the one he is living in) to set himself up as king over this distant land and then come home. So he gives his servants ten minas so they can make more while he's gone and he leaves. Then we see that the subjects of this distant country don't want this man to be king over them, but he is made their king regardless and he returns home. Upon arrival, he summons his servants to find out what he had gained with it. The story follows a similar pattern as the talents parable as the first two gained money and the last servant hid the money and gained nothing. Then the king wants those who did not want him to be king to be brought to him and killed. Then after the parable, Jesus goes up to Jerusalem.

To gain an understanding of significance for us, we have to pay attention to context. Jesus is announcing God's kingdom, the people think the kingdom is coming in the way they expect and Jesus is going to turn their thinking around once he enters Jerusalem. He tells this parable because they think a certain way and so the point of the parable is to change their thinking of the kingdom. Israel's leaders of that day had already rejected Jesus as anyone worth paying attention to, let alone to view him as the king of Israel. Israel's leaders are the ones who rejected him in the parable and the faithful servants are his followers and the unfaithful servant is those who still do not understand. The king has come in Jesus and there are those who have rejected him and those who follow him. What is interesting about the ending of the parable is that there is

a reversal as to what actually happens in the course of the events in Jerusalem. In the parable, the rebels are killed in front of the king. In reality, Jesus the king, is the one killed in front of the rebels, taking their place. This twist brings an awakening to those who expect the coming of God's kingdom in the way they expect it.

The meaning or application of this parable for us today is usually applied in some way that discusses how we use what we are given. Although this is a way to think about those things, it does not keep the context of the story of Jesus. Jesus is offering the kingdom and the people he is speaking to are left with a choice. Do they ignore Jesus and await the kingdom in the way they want it to? Or do they listen to Jesus's words as he goes to Jerusalem and understand the true values of God's kingdom? We as readers of this parable are left with the same choice today. We all have to make the choice about the kingdom of God. The question is will we ignore it or will we hear the words of Jesus and respond like the faithful servants?

Parable of Builder and King

The two small parables of the builder and the king is considered being a part of the category of the cost of discipleship and what it costs to follow Jesus. Although there is some legitimacy to these claims, if we only look at the parables this way, we miss a colossal point of Jesus' central message. This parable is an offering of the kingdom and the decision we have to make about following Jesus by his invitation. Let's dive into this parable more as we look at what this parable is all about.

These parables in Luke come right after the parable of the banquet and they take place in Luke 14:25-35. The pattern that Jesus follows in this section is one that a good teacher would have. He introduces the section (vv.26-27), tells two examples (vv.28-32), and concludes with teaching (vv.33-35). Most scholars and commentators will focus on the cost of being a disciple of Jesus and while there is some thought to this argument, it is not the main case.

Jesus tells two parables. The first is of a builder who should plan out the cost to build a tower because it would be a shame to start building and run out of money and have a half-completed job. The second is of a king who is waging war against another king and needs to make sure he has the resources to fight. Otherwise, he needs to make peace with the king to avoid destruction. Jesus then ends the parables with a warning that anyone who does not give up everything can't be his disciple. However, a question arises from this point. The parables weren't about sacrificing everything, they were about planning and having wisdom. So why put this type of warning here?

We must focus on the true point of this parable which is the decision one must make when we are invited into the kingdom of God. Let's think about this parable in context. In the parable of the great banquet just before this, those who had been invited were not prepared to come and made excuses. This lack of planning had caused them to reject the invitation of the kingdom. Similarly, those who do plan, like the ones in this parable, are considered wise and they will not be shamed for not being prepared. These three parables are connected. To follow Jesus and accept the invitation of the kingdom, we must be prepared to know what that really means.

We must make sure we know what it means to accept Jesus and the effect it will have on our lives.

The two parables follow a similar literary pattern but are not the same. Think of the implications of each parable. The man who doesn't build the tower brings shame to himself. The king who unwisely prepares for battle will bring devastation and destruction to countless lives, the consequence is much greater. At first glance, the warning Jesus leaves seems peculiar but in light of the parables and context it makes perfect sense.

The builder and the king had to plan to make the wisest decision. Likewise, being a disciple of Jesus will take some thinking and reflection. There is a cost of being a disciple and Jesus says it will cost "everything". This means that our lives will be changed after receiving Jesus as our lives will be for Him and not ourselves. Just as these two parable characters would not make a foolish decision, we must not make a foolish decision also to reject Jesus and not reflect on the invitation.

Rich Man and Lazarus

The passage in Luke about the rich man and Lazarus has been an epicenter of debate for years. The biggest questions surrounding this passage have to do with its validity on the afterlife and if it was an actual event. Is this a parable or not? Does this tell us what heaven and hell is like? We will try to answer these questions the best we can by looking at the context and patterns already set before us in Scripture. Let's begin.

This story takes place in Luke 16:19-31. In my opinion, I think there is more evidence than not to say that this is indeed a parable and not some real life encounter. I say that for two reasons. First, its unifying themes fit in with the rest of the parables that surround its context. This story is about a poor man and rich man and we have just looked at parables that deal with issues of status, poverty/riches, and being lost (ch.14-16). This story carries the same themes. The second point to consider is that this parable starts out exactly the same way as the previous parable Jesus had just told about the shrewd manager. To me, this fits the realm of parable characteristics, however, we must learn from this story instead of debating a technicality.

The next question on the table has to do with the afterlife and if this parable gives us insight into heaven and hell or paradise and hades, etc. If we just focus on whether this passage deals with the afterlife, I believe we have missed the point of the entire story. Let's focus on the context of this story.

This story deals with a poor man and a rich man. The poor man, Lazarus, suffers terribly in his earthly life. The rich man has a very extravagant life and enjoys an abundance. However, after they both died, the roles seemed to be reversed. Now Lazarus is in comfort while the rich man is suffering. Let's review the parable of the banquet just a few sections before all this. A great banquet was thrown and the original guests declined so the master invited "the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame" (14:21). The man invited the guests that were the lowest of

society and they were invited in and enjoyed the banquet. In the same way, Lazarus was now being invited in to live in a way that he had never before and it was offered to him by God.

I think this parable fits two perspectives of parable interpretations and meaning. This parable describes how Jesus is offering a kingdom that is totally opposite to the way in which today's current society runs. The poor and low of society are exalted in God's kingdom and the proud are humbled (Matthew 23:12, Proverbs 29:23). The other area it can fit into is the decision we will make when we are offered Jesus and the kingdom. Will we reject Jesus like the rich man and his family? Or will we be like Lazarus and accept, although we may suffer here, but realize our reward? It is a decision we have to make when offered the kingdom.

The significance for us can be taken in two ways. First, we can always make sure that we are supplying justice in this world and that we are uplifting and honoring those the world does not. Second, we can make sure we are accepting Jesus when the world says otherwise. This parable may give us insight into the afterlife, but more importantly it is giving us a picture of how to live in God's kingdom now.