

Exploring Parables in Luke:
Seeing the Beauty of Jesus Christ
and His Redemptive Work

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PREFACE

There are about 30 parables in the book of Luke. A Parable is a short allegorical story or a sentence of comparison or analogy. Jesus' parables contain beautiful pictures of himself and his redemptive work. They are usually hidden in the parables and require us to ponder and meditate on the scriptures, asking the Holy Spirit to enlighten us. Jesus came from heaven to show us the way to God. He came to sacrifice himself on the cross to bear the punishment of our sins as our substitute, so that by believing and putting our faith in him, we may have a new life in him. In him, we are forgiven, justified, and sanctified. In him, we inherit the riches of heaven. All the parables point to the redemptive work of Jesus on the cross for his people.

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Lesson 1 – Jesus Liberates Us from the Enslaving Power of Sin and Rule-Keeping Belief Systems

A rule-keeping belief system teaches that we deserve to be rewarded if we obey the rules, and we deserve to be punished if we disobey the rules. The Bible teaches us a different kind of belief system: a grace-based belief system in which we are rewarded simply because of God's grace that we do not deserve. God's grace for us includes his forgiveness and saving us from our own sins.

Have you ever forgiven someone who wrong you? Does your forgiveness cost you any loss? How does your forgiveness affect you emotionally? How does it affect the person you have forgiven?

Read Luke 5:33-39 – The Bridegroom and the Wedding Guests; The New Garment and the Old Garment; The New Wine and the New Wineskins

As Jesus was teaching people, some asked him why his disciples did not fast, while the disciples of John and of the Pharisees (the religious leaders of the community) did. Fasting is an abstinence or reduction from some food, drink, or both. The biblical purpose of fasting is to spend more time with God in prayer, humbling ourselves before him, expressing our dependence on him, seeking his guidance, and worshipping him. However, Pharisees were known to be *legalistic* in their practice of religion. It means acting according to religious rules for the sake of obeying those rules, or to make oneself look good before others, without any motives to please God.

Jesus came from heaven to teach us about a personal and loving relationship with God that brings joy to our lives. He came to free us from rule-keeping-based belief systems. Practicing fasting or any other religious observances and being legalistic do not please God. In fact, observing religious rules without any motives to please God is completely sinful. Observing religious rules in order to make oneself look good is a manifestation of spiritual pride. Spiritual pride blinds and enslaves us. Rule-keeping-based belief systems are enslaving, but a personal and loving relationship with Jesus is liberating.

What was Jesus' answer to those who asked him why his disciples did not fast (v.34)?

What did Jesus say about the bridegroom? Who do you think the bridegroom is (v.35)?

People go to a wedding to celebrate and eat good food. When Jesus came to this world, his disciples celebrated their every day of life with Jesus as if it was a wedding. Jesus was speaking of himself as the bridegroom and his disciples as the wedding guests. If they were at a wedding, they could not fast. They would fast when their joyful life was paused for a moment, because Jesus would be taken away from them. He would be crucified and killed on the cross. However, he would rise from death to life and return to his disciples.

What is the first parable that Jesus told the people (v.36)?

Clothes were simple garments at that time and not as stylish as we have now. If an old garment had a hole and needed to be patched, it would be foolish to tear a new garment to patch the old garment. It would destroy the new garment. Besides, the new garment did not match the old one.

Why do we wear clothes?

In this parable, Jesus teaches us that he is “the new garment” for us spiritually speaking. We are sinners, unclean, and dirty before God. Our “clothes” are old, filthy, and smelly because of our sins. Jesus came from heaven to die on the cross for the punishment of our sins as our substitute, so that by believing in him and trusting our lives to him, we can receive God’s forgiveness and Jesus’ righteousness. Jesus’ righteousness is our “new garment.” God gives us his Son’s righteousness to cover our uncleanness and shame, restore our honor, make us look good, and give us a new identity.

Does the concept of *the covering of our uncleanness and shame* make sense to you?

What is the second parable that Jesus told them (v.37-39)?

There was no glass bottle at that time, and people used animal skin to store their wine. New wine would be put into new wineskin and not old wineskin. The wineskin, after being used for some time, would get worn-off. In this parable, Jesus added a comment that no one after drinking old wine would want new wine. “The old is good” means those who like the old wine do not want to drink new wine.

Are there any similarities between the first parable and the second one?

In this parable, Jesus teaches us that he is “the new wine” for us spiritually speaking. Jesus came from heaven, so that we can have a new life—a life of personal and loving relationship with God through him—and a new purpose for living. Each day of our lives with Jesus is a celebration. It is like a wedding. We are “the new wineskin.” We are the recipients of Jesus’ grace—his forgiveness, righteousness, and other spiritual blessings.

Jesus came to liberate us and to give us a new and joyful life with him. Sadly, many people prefer their rule-keeping-based religious systems—*the old garment* and *the old wine*. They like to earn God’s blessing by self-achievement or self-effort—by obeying religious rules. The motive to obey is self-centered—to get something for oneself in return. When Jesus taught that people could only be accepted by God through believing in him and his redemptive work on the cross, many rejected him. They said, “The old is good.”

So far, do you understand the fundamental difference between rule-keeping-based, work-based, or self-effort-based belief systems and a grace-based belief system—that we are saved because of what Jesus has done for us and not by what we do for ourselves?

Lesson 2 – Jesus is the True Foundation of Our Lives

Read Luke 6:46-49 – The House and the Foundation

“Lord” refers to someone who has authority, such as a leader or a master. During Jesus’ time in Israel, he was well known as a religious teacher. Many people would call Jesus *Lord*. To call someone *Lord* is to obey the person. However, not all of them who called Jesus *Lord* would obey him. They followed and learned from him, but they did not do what he taught.

What question did Jesus ask them? What were some possible reactions they might have after hearing this question (v.46)?

Jesus challenged them to think about their true reason for following him and calling him *Lord*. Why would they follow Jesus? Was it to get something in return for their own benefits? Did they really love Jesus or simply love the things they could get from him?

How does Jesus describe a person who hears his words and obeys him (v.47-48)?

What would happen to a house built on the rock when a flood came and hit it? Why (v.48)?

How does Jesus describe a person who hears his words but does not obey him (v.49)?

What would happen to a house built without a foundation when a flood came and hit it? Why (v.49)?

The two houses represent our lives. The foundation on which we build our lives upon is the one that holds and sustains us. There are many foundations that people try to build their lives upon. Some try to build their source of security or happiness on money or power.

From what other sources do people try to find happiness or security? How will suddenly losing those things affect them?

The flood represents a sudden hardship that comes to our lives. It can be a natural disaster. It can also be a sudden tragedy or crisis, such as an accident or a severe illness. Jesus points to himself as “the rock foundation” that we should have—not one of the foundations, but the only foundation for our lives. Jesus was teaching, “If you have me as your Lord and as the rock foundation of your life, you will never collapse. Trust your life in my hands, and I will hold and sustain your life. Follow and obey me.”

Jesus is our Maker. He is eternal and omnipotent. He is the only one who can hold our lives permanently and sustain us when hardship, tragedy, or crisis comes to us. He is inviting each of us to have a personal and loving relationship with him, because he wants to give us true joy and security for our lives.

Read Luke 7:36-49 – The Moneylender and the Debtors

Pharisees were the religious teachers in the Jewish community. They often times looked down on people whom they considered as sinners or religious law-breakers. Simon, a Pharisee, invited Jesus to eat at his house.

Who came to the house and what did she do once she was inside (v.37-38)?

An alabaster flask is a container made of translucent stone for costly perfume. By pouring perfume on Jesus' feet, it would have cost her much.

What did Simon say to himself (v.39)?

Did Jesus know what Simon was thinking? What parable did Jesus tell him (v.40-42)?

A denarius—denarii, plural—is an ancient Roman silver coin. It was a fair wage for a full day of work. The moneylender cancelled the debt of both people by grace—undeserved favor. He forgave both people equally regardless the amount they owed him. By forgiving his debtors, whatever loss the moneylender had, he would have to bear it himself.

What was Jesus' question to Simon and what was his answer (v.42-43)?

What did Jesus say to Simon to teach how the woman was different from him (v.44-46)?

Jesus told Simon that the woman, whom Simon considered as a sinner, did all the things that Simon as a host failed to do for Jesus, and even did these exceedingly. Thus, Jesus revealed Simon of his pride and self-righteousness. Simon would identify himself with the debtor who owed less to the moneylender in the parable—who sinned less to God. Unlike him, the woman understood and repented of her many sins. She trusted her life to Jesus.

What did Jesus tell Simon about the woman (v.47)?

What did Jesus say to the woman and what did the other guests think about it (v.48-50)?

By forgiving her sins, Jesus claimed to be God himself, because no one can forgive sin other than God. Many people could not believe what they just heard from Jesus. No man had ever said that before. Simon was blinded by his sins and self-righteousness. He did not repent of his sins. The woman, having repented from her sin, turning her heart to Jesus, and putting her faith in him, received forgiveness from Jesus for all her sins. She went in peace, because her sins were forgiven. She had peace with God and had a new life in Jesus. Jesus became the new foundation of her life. However, her sins would not go unpunished. Jesus himself would bear the punishment for her sins on the cross as her substitute. Like the woman, we can experience a new life by repenting from our sin, turning our hearts to God, and putting our faith in Jesus, trusting and surrendering our lives to him.

Lesson 3 – Inspecting Our Hearts

Read Luke 8:1-15 – The Sower, the Seeds, and the Soils

Jesus came from heaven to bring *the good news of the kingdom of God*—the gospel (v.1). He taught the crowd about a parable of a sower who sowed his seed. There are four different soils where the seed fell: (1) the soil along the path, (2) the rocky soil, (3) the thorny soil, and (4) the good soil.

What happens to the seed on each different soil (v.4-8)?

What did Jesus say to his disciples when they asked about the parable (v.9-10)?

The purpose of Jesus teaching in parables is to reveal the secrets of the kingdom of God to his disciples and to hide the secrets or the truth to those who do not believe in him. In other words, only those who are Jesus' true disciples can understand the truth about him, the gospel, and the kingdom of God. Those who are not Jesus' true disciples will never understand and can never understand. We cannot understand the truth of God on our own. Unless God helps us, our inclination will always be to reject his truth, because we are sinful and self-centered people. We do not want a personal relationship with God. We want only the good things that he can give to us for our benefits.

What is the seed in the parable (v.11)?

What does the seed that fell along the path represent (v.12)?

All four types of soils represent the human heart. The condition of soil along the path or walking road is dry and hard like pavement. The word of God—the seed—that falls on this type of heart does not grow. The person does not have an interest for the truth of God. His heart rejects it, and the devil takes it away.

What does the seed that fell on the rocky soil represent (v.13)?

Why do they have no root? What does “in time of testing” mean?

The soil on the rock is not deep and has no moisture. The word of God that falls on this type of heart will grow quickly but without root. The person seems to follow Jesus with joy in the beginning but has never had any root of faith in Jesus or love for him. He has never repented from his sins and trust his life to Jesus completely. He follows Jesus temporarily for his own benefit. When temptations come to his life, he will forget Jesus.

What does the seed that fell on the thorny soil represent (v.14)?

What are some examples of “the cares and riches and pleasures of life”?

The thorns are worldly affections—the cares, riches, and pleasures of life that are evil in God’s eyes. These things can choke our loves for Jesus. A person with this type of heart does not make Jesus the priority of his life.

What does the seed that fell on the good soil represent (v.15)?

A person with this type of heart, after hearing the word of God and the truth of Jesus, repents from his sins and puts his faith in Jesus, trusting and surrendering his life to him with a true commitment from *an honest and good heart*. Jesus becomes the center of his life. His love for Jesus takes root, grows, and bears fruit. He bears fruit for God’s kingdom with patience, enduring temptations that come to attack his faith and love for Jesus.

What do you think the type of soil is your heart like? Why?

Most of us will not say that our hearts are like the good soil. We also do not want to acknowledge that our hearts are like the bad soils. Many people say, “I am not perfect, but I am not a bad person either.” The truth is that none of us have a good-soil heart because we are sinful people. The Bible teaches us that each of us has a bad-soil heart. Unless God gives us a new heart that is free from corruption, we will never have a good-soil heart. When we put our faith and trust our lives to Jesus, God makes us a new person, and gives us a new heart (a good-soil heart). With a new heart given by God’s grace, our faith in Jesus will take root deeply, grow, and keep bearing fruit for the kingdom of God.

Read Luke 8:16-18 – The Lamp that Gives Light

What parable did Jesus teach his disciple (v.16)?

This world, including every person in it, is corrupted and is in spiritual darkness. Jesus came to this world to bring light, spiritually speaking. Jesus says, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12). Just as a lamp is to give light to the room, Jesus wants his followers to be his *lamps* that give light to this dark world, by bringing the gospel to others and by doing good works.

What else did Jesus say to his disciples? What do you think those words mean (v.17-18)?

The *secrets of the kingdom of God* would not be hidden forever. Jesus came from heaven to reveal it. He asks his followers to do the same—to help other people understand the kingdom of God. Jesus wants his followers to be faithful and to continue producing fruit so that “more will be given” by God. Those who are not true followers do not have fruit, “even what he thinks that he has will be taken away”—devoured by birds or choked by thorns. Jesus wants us to pay a closer attention to our lives. How do we take care the word of God that we have heard and learned? Do our hearts continue to be good-soil hearts? Do our lives continue producing fruit and being *the lamps* of Jesus in this dark world?

Lesson 4 – Jesus Came to Rescue Us

Read Luke 10:25-29

What did the lawyer—an expert of the Jewish law—ask Jesus (v.25)?

“To inherit eternal life” means to live in God’s heaven eternally. The lawyer asked how he could get what he wanted from God. He wanted God’s heaven but not God himself—a personal and close relationship with God. This is quite common among many people.

What was Jesus’ answer to his question (v.26)?

What was the lawyer’s answer to Jesus’ question (v.27)?

“The Law” particularly points to a set of moral laws that God has given to guide the life of his people. The lawyer’s answer is the summary of all God’s moral laws which is written in Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18.

What did Jesus say about his answer (v.28)?

Will anyone be able to love God and other people perfectly? Why?

The Bible teaches us that every person is born with a sinful nature. Because of our sinful nature, we are not able to love God and other people with all our hearts. We daily sin against God in our thoughts, words, and actions. We are selfish people.

What did the lawyer ask Jesus? Why (v.29)?

The lawyer knew he could not love God with all his heart. He could not even love other people like he loved himself. He felt guilty and tried to justify himself. The lawyer asked Jesus, “Who is my neighbor?” He wanted to know, “Who is *not* my neighbor?” or “Whom do I not need to love?” Jesus gave an answer by telling a parable.

Read Luke 10:30-37 – The Good Samaritan and the Dying Man

Have you ever helped a stranger?

In this parable, Jesus told a story of a man going down from Jerusalem to Jericho. Jerusalem is a higher place about 17 miles from Jericho. The man was robbed and beaten by robbers and was left half dead on the road.

Who was the first person who saw the man and what did the person do (v.31)?

Who was the second person who saw the man and what did the person do (v.32)?

A priest was a religious leader of the community. A Levite was a religious person who helped the work of priests in the temple of God. The priest and the Levite did not help the man for several possible reasons. Perhaps they were afraid to help a stranger, or had a lot of work to do, or did not want to be involved in any kind of troubles. They also had a religious law that would declare them *unclean* (spiritually dirty) if they touched a dead person, and they would be required to do specific religious rituals to make themselves *clean* again. For them, this could make them unable to do their work in the temple.

Who was the third person who saw the man and what did the person do (v.33-35)?

The Samaritans were mixed raced people who lived in the northern part of Israel. They were Jews who had intermarried with foreigners. They were a minority group in the Jewish land. The Samaritans and the Jews hated each other. The Jewish religious leaders made a law that if a Jew touched a Samaritan, he would become religiously *unclean*.

The man who was dying on the road was saved by someone, whom he did not deserve to receive mercy from—not from his own people. When he recovered, he would be very thankful to the good Samaritan, because he owed him his life. He would never forget him.

What do you think about the Samaritan?

What did Jesus ask the lawyer (v.36)?

What was his answer? Why did he not directly say “the Samaritan” (v.37)?

What did Jesus say to him? Do you think he could do it (v.37)?

Jesus taught him that knowing what God wanted him to do—to love God and to love other people—was not sufficient. He must do what he knew to do. To love God means to desire for a personal and loving relationship with him, and not just desiring the things he can give. To love other people means to show mercy to everyone, including strangers, minorities, and foreigners. The Bible teaches us that only if we love God and have a loving relationship with him, could we truly love other people and have a good relationship with them.

Jesus identifies himself as *the Good Samaritan* in the story, and we are the person who is dying on the road. We need God to show his mercy to us by saving us from our sins. We daily sins against God and deserve his judgment and punishment. We are dead in our sins. Jesus came from heaven to rescue us with his own life. He sacrificed himself to die on the cross for the punishment of our sins as our substitute, so that by believing in him and trusting our lives to him, God may forgive our sins, save us from his judgment, and give us a new life—a life of a personal and loving relationship with God—with a new heart that enables us to truly love God and other people. Jesus came to save us because he loves us. Without him, we are left dead in our sins. We owe him our lives.

Lesson 5 – A Personal, Close, and Loving Relationship with God

Read Luke 11:1-13 – The Friend at Midnight; the Father and His Son

We can learn about God with our mind, but we can only experience God with our hearts through developing a personal, close, and loving relationship with him.

How does Jesus teach us to pray (v.2-4)?

Jesus teaches us to call God our “Father” because all his followers are God’s children. “Hallowed be your name” means God’s name is holy and should be honored and praised by all people. “Your kingdom come” means God’s sovereign will and rule be established on earth and in our lives as it is in heaven. “Give us our daily bread” means asking God for our daily provision, recognizing him as the provider and sustainer of our daily lives. “Forgive us our sins for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us” means we need to be aware of our own daily sins, confess them before God, and ask for his forgiveness. With a humble heart before God, we will be able to see more of our weaknesses, and God will help us to forgive others who wrong us as he forgives us. “Lead us not into temptation” means asking God not to let us into a circumstance where the Devil can tempt us and make us sin against God.

Describe the parable that Jesus gives to teach about prayer. What do you think is the main point of the parable (v.5-8)?

What else does Jesus say to teach about prayer? What is his point (v.9-10)?

What comparison did Jesus give between our earthly fathers and our heavenly Father? What is the point of this comparison (v.11-13)?

Jesus teaches us that God, as our heavenly Father, knows what is best for us. He will give us what we need according to his wisdom and kindness. If God has not given us what we ask, it does not mean that his answer is “no.” It is perhaps that he wants us to keep praying and asking him persistently, because persistent prayer grows our dependence upon God and our personal relationship with him.

The best gift that God has given us is his own son, Jesus Christ, who came to sacrifice himself and to die for the punishment of our sins on the cross as our substitute. So that when we believe and put our faith in Jesus, trusting our lives to him, our sins are forgiven, and God adopts us as his children. Jesus came from heaven, so that we may call God as our heavenly Father.

God also gives us his Holy Spirit to dwell in us when we become his children. The Holy Spirit works in us and makes us spiritually mature. He guides our lives and gives us strength to face life difficulties. Jesus teaches us that God loves us, and he will not withhold anything good from us according to his perfect and wise will.

Read Luke 12:13-21 – The Rich Fool and His Possessions

What did a man in the crowd ask Jesus to do (v.13)?

The man asked Jesus to tell his brother to properly divide the inheritance. Perhaps this man was a younger brother and did not get enough of his portion or did not get any at all.

What was Jesus' answer to him (v.14)?

Jesus wanted him to bring his case to the appropriate authorities.

What sin does Jesus warn us against (v.15)?

To covet is to desire wrongfully. Covetousness is a sinful and self-centered desire.

What does "one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" mean (v.15)?

What kind of person is the man in the parable? What situation did the man have (v.16-17)?

How would he solve his situation and what would he say to himself (v.18-19)?

What did God say to him (v.20)?

What is Jesus' conclusion of the parable and what does it mean (v.21)?

Jesus teaches us that we do not know when we will die and face God. We do not have control over our lives, only God does. We will stand before the judgment of God and give account of all we have done in our lives. Getting rich is not evil in God's eyes, but how we use what we have is what matters. All our possessions are God's gifts for us. Jesus teaches us that we need to be "rich toward God." This is what matters the most. It means being rich in the things of God—such as using what God has given us to help others out of love for God. At the essence, being "rich toward God" means having a heart that loves him—having a personal, close, and loving relationship with him. Yet, only by believing and trusting our lives to Jesus, can we have such a heart, given by God's grace.

Jesus came from heaven and gave up his heavenly richness. He was born as a poor man. He sacrificed himself to die on the cross for the punishment of our sins as our substitute, so that by believing in him and trusting our lives to him, we may be saved from our sins and be given a new life and a new heart—a life of a personal, close, and loving relationship with God and a heart that loves Jesus who has sacrificed himself for us. Jesus came from heaven and became poor for us, so that we can become rich in him.

2 Corinthians 8:9, "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich."

Lesson 6 – God Makes Us Righteous by Crediting Jesus’ Righteousness to Us

Read Luke 12:35-40 – The Master and the Servants

Jesus taught his disciples about faithfulness and watchfulness. Jesus wants his followers to be faithful and watchful servants of God’s kingdom. He gave two illustrations about this.

What are the two illustrations (v.35)?

“Stay dressed for action” means to dress in a way you can work and move effectively, such as the way an athlete or a restaurant waiter dress for their work. “Keep your lamps burning” means keep enough oil for the lamp, and do not let the light go out. Jesus told a parable to teach more about faithfulness and watchfulness.

What were the servants in the parable doing? Were they sleeping (v.36)?

What did Jesus say about the servants and what would their master do for them (v.37)?

A master who would serve his servants is never heard of. In Jesus’ parable, the master would do what his servants should do for him. The master would dress himself with servant’s clothes, have the servants to recline at table, and serve them. This is a reversal of roles. Jesus often challenged his listeners to think differently than they used to.

According to your culture, would a master reverse his role and serve his servants?

At that time, the Jews divided their night into three watches. The first watch was from six o’clock to nine o’clock, the second watch was from nine o’clock to midnight, and the third watch was from midnight to three o’clock. The servants who were *blessed* were those who kept awake throughout the night and were ready to serve their master when he returned from a wedding feast (v.38).

Jesus spoke of himself as *the good master*. Unlike all other masters in this world, Jesus would reverse his role to be a servant. He was *the true Master* who created this world. Jesus came from heaven to this world not to be served by us but to serve us. He came to sacrifice himself to die for the punishment of our sins as our substitute, so that we can be made clean and righteous before God. Jesus has washed away all our sins (our spiritual dirtiness). When we believe and put our faith in Jesus, trusting and surrendering our lives to him, God forgives all our sins and makes us holy and righteous by crediting the holiness and righteousness of Jesus to us.

Jesus changed the story of a master and his servants to an illustration about a house owner and a thief to teach his disciples more about watchfulness or readiness (v.39).

How did Jesus teach them about watchfulness and readiness through this illustration?

How did Jesus relate this to his disciples concerning his second coming (v.40)?

“The Son of Man” is a title that Jesus liked to use for himself to emphasize his humanity. Jesus says that he will return to this world at the time when people do not expect.

Read Luke 12:41-48 – The Master and the Faithful Wise Manager

If you were hired as a manager of a large company, how would you do your job? Would you be a good manager?

Peter asked Jesus if he was speaking particularly about his core group of twelve disciples, whom Jesus prepared for a special ministry, or about all people who were listening to his teaching. Jesus did not answer Peter but gave him another parable (v.41).

How did Jesus describe a faithful and wise manager of a master’s household (v.42-43)?

What reward would the master give to his house manager (v.44)?

What would the master do to him if he acted cruelly to the other servants under his supervision (v.45-46)?

“Cut him in pieces” is a horrible image for severe punishment. At that time, a powerful master—such as a king—could punish a servant with such a severe punishment or with severe beating (v.47). A servant who did not know his master’s will and acted irresponsibly would receive a lighter punishment than a servant who knew his master’s will but did not act accordingly. Irresponsibility deserves punishment, whether it is done purposefully or ignorantly. A servant who is entrusted with more responsibilities will be expected to do more by his master than those who are entrusted with fewer responsibilities (v.48).

Here Jesus indirectly describes the condition of all people. God has given us our daily lives, including our time, skills, talents, money, and other possessions. God requires us to use all that he has given us for the good of others out of love for him. But none of us can do this perfectly, because we are selfish people and consumed by our own self-centeredness. We daily sin against God in our thoughts, words, and actions either purposefully or ignorantly. Therefore, each of us deserves to be punished by God and literally be “cut into pieces,” because we sin against the God of the universe.

None of us are faithful and obedient servants of God. However, there is one who is faithful. Jesus came from heaven to this world to be a servant. He lived a life of perfect faithfulness and obedience to God for us to the end of his life. He sacrificed himself and died for us. He was “cut into pieces” on the cross bearing the punishment of our sins as our substitute, so that we can be saved by believing in him. When we trust our lives to Jesus, God forgives our sins and credits the faithfulness, obedience, and righteousness of Jesus to us. As a result, when God sees us, he sees us as faithful, obedient, and righteous servants. Jesus covers us. He takes away our shame and restores our honor as faithful servants. In Jesus, we are faithful, obedient, and righteous servants of God.

Lesson 7 – Jesus is the Door to God’s Kingdom

Read Luke 13:1-5

Pilate was the Roman governor in the province of Judea. Pilate killed some Jewish Galileans—residents of Galilee in northern Israel—who went to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices to God. Perhaps they were killed because they were criminals or were considered as threats to the Roman government (v.2). There was also an incident, the falling of the Tower of Siloam in Jerusalem, that killed 18 people (v.4).

Why do you think bad things can happen to “good” people?

Did Jesus say that the people who died in the two incidents were worse sinners than the rest of the people in their cities? What did Jesus say about repentance (v.3, 5)?

Jesus teaches that all people are equally bad. We were born as sinners with sinful nature. We daily sin and rebel against God in our thoughts, words, and actions. God says that the consequence of our sins is our death. That is why Jesus says that unless we repent, we will all perish—being separated from God and all his goodness for eternity. Jesus uses a parable to teach us about this.

Read Luke 13:6-9 – The Barren Fig Tree

In the parable, what did the owner try to find in his vineyard? Did he find it (v.6)?

What did the owner ask his vinedresser (gardener) to do? Why (v.7)?

What was the vinedresser’s request (v.8-9)?

The fig tree in the parable represents us. Our lives do not produce fruit, because we are spiritually dead in our sins. When we repent from our sins and turn our hearts to God, he will give us a new life, and we will produce fruit of repentance. True followers of Jesus will have fruit or evidence of their faith in Jesus in their new lives.

The giving of another year of life for the fig tree indicates that God is now giving people opportunities to repent from their sins and to turn their hearts to him. The cutting down of the tree indicates the opportunity is over, and the judgment of God will fall upon all those who refuse to repent. They will receive the consequence of their sins. They will perish.

Read Luke 13:18-21 – The Mustard Seed in the Garden; The Leaven in the Flour

Jesus taught his listeners about the kingdom of God with two parables in this passage.

What is the first parable and what do you think it may mean (v.19)?

A mustard seed is a very small seed. This means that the kingdom of God begins very small through Jesus and his few disciples, but it will grow big throughout the world. The good news of the gospel—the message of salvation in Jesus Christ—will continue to be proclaimed, and Jesus will gather many people from different nations to himself.

What is the second parable and what do you think it may mean (v.20)?

Leaven or yeast is added to flour to make it ferment and rise. The kingdom of God is rather unseen or undetectable, but it is powerful to transform people's lives. How God works in our hearts, drawing us to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ is unseen and powerful.

Read Luke 13:22-30 – The Narrow Door to the Kingdom of God

What question did someone ask Jesus? What was Jesus' answer and what do you think it may mean (v.23-24)?

Jesus gave a parable and told that the door to Heaven or the Kingdom of God was narrow, and many people would not be able to enter it.

What would the master of the house tell those who knocked at his door (v.25)?

How did they try to convince him to open the door and how did he answer them (v.26-27)?

Jesus said that many people thought they would enter Heaven, but God would reject them and even called them "workers of evil." Many people think that they do things for God, but they actually do things for their own benefits. Their motives are self-centered. That is why God says that they are "workers of evil." God has a place to cast out all workers of evil.

What will in that place be (v.28)?

All workers of evil will be cast out to Hell—a place for those who reject God and do not want to have a personal and loving relationship with him. They will weep and gnash their teeth—being angry to God. Their true character and evil hearts will be exposed.

Where will people who enter the kingdom of God come from (v.29)?

Jesus came to this world to bring the gospel and the kingdom of God to us. Many non-Jewish people will be the first ones to enter the kingdom of God, and many Jews will be the last ones, although they received the gospel first. Jesus is preparing a banquet for his followers—a gathering of people from all nations with great joy at his kingdom (v.29-30).

In this parable, Jesus speaks of himself as the master of the house. He opens the door only to those whom he has a personal, close, and loving relationship with. He is also *the narrow door* (the only door) to God's kingdom. There is no other way to enter the kingdom of God, but through Jesus. He shows the door to us. Many reject him, but many believe in him.

Lesson 8 – The Great Banquet for People from All Nations in the Kingdom of God

Read Luke 14:1-11 – The Place of Honor in the Wedding Feast

God told the Jews to keep the Sabbath as a holy day—a day of worship and rest from work. However, the Jewish religious leaders added many more rules that prohibited the Jews from doing certain things on the Sabbath, such as healing sick people—unless there was danger to their lives. Lawyers and Pharisees were the religious leaders. A ruler of the Pharisees invited Jesus and several guests to dine at his house. Jesus saw a man who had dropsy—a disease that causes soft tissues to swell due to excessive fluid.

What did Jesus ask the lawyers and Pharisees and what was their answer (v.3-4)?

What did Jesus do to the man who had dropsy (v.4)?

What did Jesus ask the lawyers and Pharisees and what was their answer (v.5-6)?

By healing a sick man on the Sabbath, Jesus broke the Jewish religious laws. At the same time, he was challenging the religious leaders to think about the truth of his statements: “Is it all right to break religious laws to help others who need help? Jesus also revealed that he had power to heal. They did not know that Jesus was God.

Jesus noticed that the guests were scrambling to sit in places of honor. The Jewish people had a custom to arrange dining seats from the middle one that had the highest honor to ones that had less honor as they were further away from the middle one. Jesus saw their pride. He told them a parable to teach about humility.

Why did Jesus recommend people to sit in the lowest place (v.8-10)?

In your culture, are there any customs regarding sitting or eating in a dining room? Are there any things in the custom related to honor and shame?

What is Jesus’ main teaching in the parable, and what do you think it may mean (v.11)?

How does this parable point to the redemptive work of Jesus? Jesus came from heaven, which is the highest place of honor, to die bearing the punishment of our sins on the cross as our substitute. The cross of Jesus was the lowest and most shameful place of all. Because he humbled himself to the lowest and most shameful place, he is now exalted in the highest place of honor in heaven. Our sins bring shame to us. Jesus came to take away our shame and to deliver us from the enslaving power of sin. By repenting from our sins with humbleness, believing and trusting our lives to Jesus, he will set us free from the enslaving power of sin, and restore our honor before God. One day, when Jesus returns, he will bring his people to his home—the highest place of honor. We will be exalted by him.

Read Luke 14:12-24 – The Master, the Servant, and the Guests in the Great Banquet

What did Jesus say to the host of the house, and what do you think it may mean (v.12-14)?

If we invite only those who can invite us back, that is not a true hospitality. True hospitality is given without any expectations in return. This is what Jesus means by inviting the poor and those who are disabled. Jesus wants us to practice genuine hospitality.

What did one of the guests say to Jesus (v.15)?

This man had the right knowledge that those who will be in heaven (the kingdom of God) are blessed. Indeed, Jesus will have a banquet for all his people in his kingdom. There will be great joy for all his followers in heaven. Jesus told a parable of a great banquet.

What excuses did some guests make for not going to the banquet, and do these excuses make sense to you (v.18-20)?

What did the master of the house ask his servant to do (v.21)?

What else did the master of the house ask his servant to do to fill his house with guests (v.22-23)?

What did the master say in the conclusion of the parable, and why do you think he said that (v.24)?

What is the meaning of this parable? The master of the house is Jesus or the Triune God. Jesus is inviting people to come to his banquet in his kingdom. The guests who refused to come represent those who prefer work-based, self-effort, or rule-keeping belief systems—such as the Pharisees—and those who prefer the things of this world than the things of God. The master of the house invited the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame, and brought them into his house to enjoy his banquet. This group of people was despised in the Jewish community. They were disabled people and were not able to keep the religious laws of ritual purity. Because of their physical disability, they would not be able to come to a banquet unless they were somehow helped to get in. The master of the house also invited those living near the highways and hedges to come to his house. This group of people represents foreigners living outside the city.

Spiritually speaking, we are the poor and the disabled and despised people. We are not worthy to be invited to Jesus' banquet in heaven. However, Jesus sends his messengers to bring the gospel to all nations and to bring many people to his kingdom. He himself has come from heaven to our world. He came to heal us spiritually and to save us from our misery. He sacrificed himself to die bearing the punishment of our sins as our substitute, so that our sins can be forgiven by believing in and trusting our lives to him. Jesus makes his home become our home, so that we can be with him forever. He is preparing a banquet for us now. He will one day return to this world to bring us into his kingdom—our new home.

Lesson 9 – A Covenant Relationship with Jesus

Read Luke 14:25-35 – The Cost to Build a Tower; The King Going to War

What did Jesus tell the crowd they must do if they wanted to be his disciples (v.25-26)?

This is one of the difficult passages in the Bible. At another time Jesus said to the people, “Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me” (Matthew 10:37). This is easier to understand because Jesus asked people to love their family members less than him. In Luke, Jesus uses the word “hate”—a hyperbole expression to emphasize his point, which he would explain in the next few verses.

What else did he say to the crowd if they wanted to be his disciples (v.27)?

At that time, when someone was bearing a cross, it meant that the person was on the way to be crucified on the cross. It was a form of Roman’s punishment. When Jesus asks us to bear our cross, he is asking us to crucify our sins—to put to death our sinful lifestyle. It also means that we need to bear the burden of following Jesus. We should not be ashamed or afraid if other people, including our families and friends, do not like us. Jesus gave three parables to further teach the crowd about being his disciples.

Why should a man who wants to build a tower—it could be a watchtower or a farm building—calculate the cost of building it carefully (v.28-30)?

Why should a king, who is going to a war against another king, think carefully if he can defeat the other king, whose army is larger than his (v.31-32)?

What did Jesus say about being his disciples (v.33)?

“To renounce all that he has” means to give up all one has. In other words, Jesus says that if we want to be his disciples, we need to be able to give up all things for him and to give or sacrifice all we have to him. It means we need to love Jesus more than anything.

What do people do to salt that has lost its saltiness in the third parable, and what do you think it may mean in the context of being Jesus’ disciples (v.34-35)?

To be a disciple of Jesus is a life-time commitment. Jesus wants us to count the cost of following him. Jesus does not want us to follow him halfway and then turn back. He wants us to follow him to the end of our lives. He wants us to have a covenant relationship with him—a binding agreement with the promise of faithfulness. Jesus loves us and has given his life for us. He wants us to do the same to him. Jesus is asking us, “Are you willing to give up everything for me, as I have given up everything for you? Will you be faithful to me and love me with all your heart, as I am faithful to you and love you with all my heart?”

Read Luke 15:1-10 – The Shepherd and the Lost Sheep; The Woman and the Lost Coin

Tax collectors were Jewish people who worked for the Roman government to collect taxes from their own people. They often cheated people when they collected taxes. They took more money by force and would keep the extra money for themselves. Tax collectors, along with other sinners (religious law breakers), were hated by the Pharisees and the scribes—the religious leaders of the community. The Pharisees and the scribes often looked down on them with spiritual pride. They did not befriend these sinners. However, Jesus reached out to these sinners, and they came to him. Jesus ate, talked, and laughed with them. The Pharisees and the scribes criticized Jesus for reaching out to the sinners (v.1-2). To explain why he reached out to sinners, Jesus told them some parables.

In the first parable, what did the shepherd do when he lost one of his sheep (v.3-4)?

What did the shepherd do to the lost sheep when he found it? What was his feeling (v.5)?

What did he do when he returned home (v.6)?

What did Jesus say to the Pharisees and the scribes, and what do you think it means (v.7)?

In the second parable, what did the woman do when she lost one of her coins (v.8)?

What did she do after she found it? What was her feeling (v.9)?

What did Jesus say to the Pharisees and the scribes (v.10)?

What messages do you think that Jesus was trying to tell the Pharisees and the scribes?

It was clear that Jesus explained the difference between him as a religious teacher and the Pharisees and the scribes. The shepherd and the woman in the parables point to Jesus. Jesus came from heaven to look for his lost people, so they could be brought back to their home (heaven or God's kingdom). The Pharisees and the scribes believed that they must find their own way to heaven. They believed if they tried hard to obey their religious rules, they would gradually earn credits to enter God's heaven. However, Jesus explains that we cannot go to heaven, unless he himself brings us there.

We are the lost sheep and the lost coin. We are lost and are separated from God because of our sins. Jesus left heaven and came to our world to look for us. He teaches us about the consequence of our sins and our need of repentance. He shows us that he is the way to heaven. He shows his love for us by sacrificing himself on the cross for the punishment of our sins as our substitute. He wants to give us a new life and a new identity in him, by trusting our lives to him, by being his disciples, and by having a covenant relationship with him. He wants to bring us home and to restore our honor as God's children.

Lesson 10 – The Prodigal Love of Jesus for Us

Read Luke 15:11-24 – The Father, the Younger Son, and the Older Son

The Pharisees and the scribes criticized Jesus for reaching out and spending time with tax collectors and sinners. In response, Jesus told them some parables.

What did the younger son ask of his father in this parable? What does this request mean? Is this a polite request? What did the father do (v.12)?

The younger son asked his father for an inheritance (a share of property) before his father died. In the culture at that time, an older son received two thirds of his father's inheritance, and a younger son received one third of it. To give the younger son an inheritance, the father needed to sell one-third of his land and give the money to him.

Where did the younger son go and what did he do there (v.13)? What kind of person do you think he wanted to be? Can money truly give us happiness and a sense of identity?

What happened to him later on, and what did he do then (v.14-15)?

Do you think he wanted that job? What happened to him there (v.16)?

What does "he came to himself" mean? What was he thinking he would do (v.17-19)?

Was there a change in his attitude? Why do some people change only after encountering difficult situations in their lives?

This younger son was a run-away son. He brought shame to his family and the neighborhood community. He knew when he returned home people would say to him, "Shame on you!" He lost his identity and social status. He knew there was no guarantee that his family and others in the community would forgive him. He would be satisfied if his family would just accept him as a *hired servant*—a *nobody* or a foreigner who needed a job while living in the community. Regardless of these troubling thoughts that could prevent him from going home, he decided to go home anyway, because he knew his father.

What can we guess about his father's character (v.17)?

What did the father do when he saw his younger son at a distance? What do you think about the father's act (v.20)?

The father had been waiting for his son to return home. When the father saw his son, he ran, embraced, and kissed his son. The father showed compassion to his son and forgave him, before the son said any words or expressed his repentance, regretting his mistake.

How did the son express his repentance? Did the father question or rebuke him? What did the father do for his son (v.21-22)?

A robe was an expensive piece of clothing. The father put his best robe on his son. The father brought the son back to his family and gave him the family honor: the robe, the ring, and the shoes. The father restored his identity as a son and gave him a new life to begin.

What else did the father do for his son (v.23)?

In that culture, only a big celebration had a fattened calf. It means the people in the neighborhood community were invited to celebrate. The father restored the honor and social status of his son, not only to his family, but also to the community. The father, on behalf of his son, asked the people to forgive his son and to celebrate his return with joy.

Read Luke 15:25-32

How did the older brother react to his father's celebrating the return of his younger brother? Why (v.28-30)?

The father asked his older son to forgive his younger brother, but he refused. When the father sold one-third of his property and gave it to the younger son, the remaining property and wealth became the older son's inheritance. All the living expenses for the younger son would need to come from this. The older son did not want to take his brother back and sacrifice any of his property.

What did the father say to his older son (v.31-32)?

In this parable, Jesus identified the Pharisees and the scribes in the person of the older brother. They thought they could inherit the kingdom of God by trying hard to obey their religious laws, like the older brother obeying his father's command. Jesus was teaching that they were just as lost as other people. The older brother was as lost as the younger brother. The older brother wanted only his father's property, just as the younger son did. Now the younger son wanted the love of his father and a loving relationship with him, but the older son never wanted that. The Pharisees and the scribes did not want a loving relationship with God, but wanted only what God can give them—a good life, heaven, etc.

Jesus identified us in the person of the younger brother. We are all lost. But unlike the younger son in the parable who had a bad older brother, we have a good older brother who cares about us. Jesus is our *older brother*. God the Father is compassionately waiting for us to come back to him. He has sent Jesus for us. Jesus was willing to leave his home in heaven and came to look for us and to bring us home, even though it cost him his life. Jesus sacrificed himself to die bearing the punishment of our sins on the cross as our substitute, so that we may receive God's forgiveness by believing in him and trusting our lives to him. When we put our faith in Jesus, God the Father gives us the righteousness and honor of Jesus—our spiritual robe—to cover our sin and shame. Jesus restores our identity as God's children and gives us a new life in him. One day, Jesus will return to this world and bring us home. He is now preparing a great celebration in heaven for us.

Lesson 11 – What is the Love of Our Hearts?

Read Luke 16:1-13 – The Rich Man and the Dishonest Manager

In the parable, what did the rich man hear about his manager, and what did he ask the manager to do (v.1-2)?

The manager knew that he was not being a good manager of his boss' estate. Perhaps, rental property was wasted and did not generate a good profit as the owner expected. He was fired, but his boss gave him time to turn in the account books and to prepare leaving the estate. He knew that he would not be able to find a manual labor job—like digging for farming—because he was not strong enough. He was also ashamed to beg (v.3-4).

What did the manager do to solve his problem—to survive and get housing after leaving the estate (v.5-7)?

The debtors did not realize that the rich man had fired the manager. They thought he was being generous to reduce the amount of their debts, and the manager simply acted as if he was told by the owner. Surely, they were very grateful to him for the reduction of their debts. The debtors would spoke highly about the rich man to their families and friends. He would be known as a generous man. He could lose his good reputation if he reversed back the debtors' debts. In fact, the debtors could be angry with him and the manager.

The rich man “commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness” and not for his dishonesty (v.8). Jesus points out that “the sons of this world” (those who reject God, do not believe in God, or do not have a personal relationship with God) are smarter or more skillful in making friends than “the sons of light” (God's children or followers of Jesus).

What did Jesus tell his disciples, and what do you think it means (v.9)?

“Unrighteous wealth” is worldly wealth—material possessions of this world. Everything in this world, including all material resources *will fail*—will be gone and no more. All the possessions that we have are given to us by God. Like the manager, we need to use our possessions shrewdly to help others, but unlike him, we need to be a good manager of what God has entrusted us. Jesus wants us to use our money for the work of God's kingdom in this world, showing God's love to other people in many ways, such as helping the needy and opening our homes for hospitality. By doing this, we will make more friends. Some of them will even become followers of Jesus and become our eternal friends.

What else did Jesus say to his disciples, and what do you think it means (v.10-12)?

Jesus clearly disapproved of dishonesty and commended faithfulness and honesty. If we cannot be a good manager of the worldly possessions that God has given us, God will not entrust us with *true riches* (heavenly riches or the things of God).

What else did Jesus say to his disciples to conclude his teaching (v.13)?

People have replaced the true God with many things including money to be their gods, to be the love of their hearts, or to be the ones that give meaning and purpose for their lives. Jesus teaches us to make him as the love of our hearts. Jesus is eternal. He is God who came to save us from our sins that blind us. When Jesus returns, he will create a new heaven and a new earth for us. Everything in this world will be no more. He wants us to be careful of what we make to be the treasure of our lives. Is it money, other things, or Jesus?

The dishonest manager is a picture of each of us. Without having Jesus as the love of our hearts and having a loving relationship with him, none of us are good managers of the worldly possessions that God has entrusted us.

Read Luke 16:19-31 – The Rich Man and Lazarus

Jesus told a parable to teach about how our current lives impacts our future lives.

Where was Lazarus taken to after he died, and who took him there (v.22)?

Abraham was the first Jew and the ancestor of the Jews. “Abraham’s side” is a metaphor for heaven. After Lazarus died, his soul was immediately brought to the presence of God and experienced heavenly joy.

Where was the rich man taken to after he died (v.23)?

Hades or hell is a place of torment for people who reject God and have never repented from their sins in their lives.

What did the rich man ask Abraham to do for him, and what was Abraham’s answer to him (v.24-26)?

What else did the rich man ask Abraham to do for him, and what was Abraham’s answer to him (v.27-31)?

The rich man still wanted Lazarus to be his servant. Abraham said that Moses and the Prophets—the books of the Old Testament—are sufficient for the rich man’s brothers to learn about God, his will for every person, and the afterlife. If they did not believe in these, even if Lazarus rose from the dead and warned them, they would not believe in him too.

The rich man never wanted a loving relationship with God, but only wanted what God could give him. Money was the love of his heart. Those who choose to reject God in their lives will receive what they want at the end: God will reject them forever. Those who choose to receive God and to have a loving relationship with him in their lives will receive what they desire at the end: a forever loving relationship with God in heaven and enjoying heavenly riches with God. Those who are poor according to the world but spiritually rich in God (believe in him and have a loving relationship with him) will at the end be richer than those who are rich according to the world but spiritually poor in God (reject him and do not want a loving relationship with him). Jesus came to this world, so that we can have a loving relationship with God through him. He became poor, so that we can be rich in him.

Lesson 12 – Being the Lights of Jesus in this Dark and Corrupted World

Read Luke 17:1-6

Followers of Jesus have three enemies: (1) the devil, (2) this sinful world, and (3) the flesh – our sinful nature and its sinful desires. Jesus teaches us that we should be careful not to sin against God and to make others sin against God as well. Jesus does not like anyone to cause his “little ones” to sin against God. “Little ones” (dear people) could be children or new believers who need guidance in many areas of life and are not spiritually mature yet.

What does Jesus say about a person who causes his dear people to sin (v.2)?

What did Jesus tell his disciples to do (v.3-4)?

Jesus teaches us that we should always be able to forgive others who wrong us. “Seven times” means unlimited or beyond count.

What did the apostles—the twelve core disciples of Jesus—ask of him, and what was his answer to them (v.5-6)?

The apostles thought that a big faith is needed in order to be able to forgive others much. Jesus, however, told them that if they had faith even like the size of a mustard seed, which is very small, their faith could move a mulberry tree. It is not about the size of the faith, but the object of the faith. If we have faith in God, we will be able to do great things with God. It is God who enables us, not the size of our faith. Although a mustard seed is very small, it grows into a big tree.

Jesus then told a parable to teach his disciples about being diligent and humble servants of God, rather than asking for a bigger faith.

Read Luke 17:7-10 – The Diligent and Humble Servant

Jesus described a common life of a person who owned a land and sheep and had a servant to prepare his meals, clean the house, and take care of his land and sheep.

Should a good servant expect to relax in the house after coming back from working in the field (v.7-8)?

Would the master be thankful if his servant was diligent and hard-working (v.9)?

What did Jesus tell his disciples about how their attitude should be as God’s servants? Why is such an attitude very important (v.10)?

In the parable, the servant would eat his meal after preparing his master's meal and serving him. At the proper time, the servant would have his reward—his meal and time to relax. Jesus wants his followers to be diligent and humble servants of God. Followers of Jesus are his ambassadors in this world. They are the lights of Jesus in this dark world. There is a lot of work need to be done, so that many people will see the light and the truth of Jesus and be saved from their sins and this dark world. At the proper time, all the hard work we do for God's kingdom will be rewarded. Jesus has prepared a banquet for us. He is the Master of the house who will bring us into his kingdom. He will also be the Servant who is preparing a feast for us. He is the diligent and humble Servant, who has carried our cross and died for us. He is now at the right hand of God the Father, ruling the universe. Hebrews 10:12 "But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God."

Read Luke 18:1-8 – The Unrighteous Judge and the Persistent Widow

Prayer is fundamental in the life of Christians. It is a way we communicate with God, listening to his guidance, receiving spiritual strength, and bringing our requests to him. When we face suffering or troubles, prayer is much more needed. Jesus told his disciples a parable to teach them about persistent prayer, so that they would not lose heart (v.1).

How did Jesus describe the character of a judge in the parable (v.2)?

What did a widow want from the judge, and why did the judge finally give the widow what she wanted (v.3-5)?

How did Jesus contrast God with the unrighteous judge in the parable (v.6-7)?

Will God delay giving justice to his people (v.8)?

Jesus was saying if an unrighteous judge would finally do the right thing, how much more would the righteous God do for his people. Jesus says that his people will suffer and experience trouble in this sinful world. He never promises to take troubles away from our lives, but he promises to be with us when we suffer. Just as the widow, we can experience injustice in this world. Jesus wants us to persistently pray to God and to trust in his sovereignty. God is righteous and wise. He is our heavenly Father and knows what is best for his people.

Jesus, who is at the right hand of God, also prays and mediates for us before God the Father. While living on earth as a man, Jesus has experienced troubles and injustice. As a man, he lived a perfect sinless life before God, yet he was crucified by sinful men, because he claimed to be the Son of God, making himself equal to God. Jesus loves us and is able to sympathize with us. He understands us and knows our needs. He prays for us and gives us strength. He will return to this world soon and bring us home.

There will be many people who do not believe in Jesus when he returns. He has given a warning. Let us do our best to be the light of Jesus among our family and friends.

Lesson 13 – Repentance and Faith in Jesus Result in Our Justification and Honor

Read Luke 18:9-14 – The Pharisee and the Tax Collector

The Pharisees were the religious leaders of the Jewish community. They considered themselves religiously righteous people and oftentimes looked down on people whom they considered as sinners or religious law breakers. Jesus tried to teach them a lesson.

Who were the two characters in the parable, and what were they going to do (v.10)?

Tax collectors were Jewish people who worked for the Roman government to collect taxes from other Jews. They often cheated people when they collected taxes. They took more money by force and would keep the extra money for themselves. They were robbers and cheaters and were hated by others. The Pharisees considered them to be very bad sinners.

How did the Pharisee pray to God? How did he justify himself as a righteous person before God? What do you think his attitude towards God might have been (v.11-12)?

How did the tax collector pray to God? What did he say to God? What do you think his attitude towards God might have been (v.13)?

With a heart of repentance, the tax collector asked God to be merciful to him and to forgive his sins. He humbled himself before God.

What did Jesus say about the tax collector and the Pharisee? How did he explain it (v.14)?

To be justified by God is to be honored and treated righteous by him. When we repent from our sins and put our faith in Jesus, trusting our lives to him, God forgives all our sins, credits us the righteousness and honor of Jesus, and accepts us as a righteous person.

Our righteous standing before God is not achieved by our own effort but is given by God's grace and is received by faith. The Pharisee thought he could be righteous by keeping religious laws. He tried to be a righteous person pridefully. He is a self-righteous person and wanted only God's blessings and gifts but not a loving relationship with God.

Jesus shows us true humility. Philippians 2:8 tells us, "And being found in human form, he (Jesus) humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." Jesus died on the cross bearing the punishment of our sins as ours substitute out of his love for God the Father and us. He gives his righteousness and honor to all who believe in him. When we have Jesus' righteousness, God honors and exalts us.

Read Luke 19:11-27 – The Nobleman and His Servants

As Jesus was near Jerusalem, the capital city of Israel, many people who followed him thought that he would establish the kingdom of God in Jerusalem and free them from the Roman Empire. Many Jews were expecting Jesus to be a political leader, who was sent by God to save them. However, Jesus did not come to save people from the political power, but from the spiritual power of sin and evil. He did not come to be a political king but to be the Savior who would sacrifice himself for his people. Many Jews would later reject Jesus.

In the Roman Empire, a man, who received a kingdom and became a ruler of a certain region of the empire, had to go to Rome to receive his appointment, before he started to rule. Often, the citizens of the kingdom did not like the new ruler. Jesus used this as the setting of his parable, where a nobleman went to a far country to receive a kingdom.

What did the nobleman do before his departure (v.13)?

A mina is equal to 100 working days of wage. The citizens of the kingdom apparently hated him and did not want him to reign over them (v.14).

What did he do when he returned (v.15)?

What did he find about the first and second servants? What did he say to them (v.16-19)?

What report did one of the servants give him? Why (v.20-21)?

What did he say to the servant (v.22-23)?

What did he order other servants to do to the wicked servant (v.24-25)?

What else did he say to them and order them to do (v.26-27)?

The first and second servants had a good business and made profit. They were humble and diligent servants. They said, "Lord, your mina has made ten minas." They did not say, "I have made ten minas." One servant did not do any business with the mina and did not even put it in the bank. His reason was that he was afraid of his master, who was noble but also severe, rather than admitting his laziness. He was a wicked servant. Jesus did not describe the other seven servants, either they made much or little profit. His point was to describe those who were diligent and humble, and one who was lazy and wicked.

The servants point to us. We are all God's servants, and God wants us to be humble and diligent servants, using what he has given us (our skills, knowledge, material possessions, job, etc.) to build up his kingdom, such as by demonstrating God's love through hospitality, helping others who are in need, and helping the spreading of the gospel. Wicked servants are those who do not have a loving relationship with the king (the nobleman), and who waste away what the king has given them. They live self-centeredly.

Jesus is the best Servant of God, who has given us a perfect example through his life and ministry on earth. He sacrificed himself for us, so that we can have a new life in him. The nobleman who became a king also points to Jesus. Jesus is indeed a noble king. Jesus has brought the kingdom of God to us. He will return to this world to bring those who are faithful to him—representing by the good servants in the parable—into his kingdom. He will also severely judge those who live in their sinfulness and self-centeredness—representing by the wicked servants.

Lesson 14 – The Return of King Jesus

Read Luke 20:1-18 – The Vineyard Owner and the Wicked Tenants

Jesus preached the gospel and taught people with authority. The gospel is the good news about God providing us a way to be saved from our sins and to restore our relationship with him, through believing in Jesus and what he has done for us on the cross (v.1).

What did the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders ask of Jesus, and how did Jesus respond to their question (v.2-4)?

John, known as John the Baptist, was sent by God to preach the gospel and to baptize people. He prepared the coming of Jesus. When Jesus appeared publicly, John declared to the people, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:27).

What was the answer of the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders to Jesus’ question, and what did Jesus say to them (v.5-8)?

Jesus told people a parable of a man who planted a vineyard and got tenants to take care of it. A vineyard owner and his tenants usually had an agreement to share the crops (v.9).

What did the tenants do to the first, the second, and the third servants whom the vineyard owner sent to them (v.10-12)?

What would the vineyard owner do next, and what was the result (v.13-15)?

What would the vineyard owner do to the tenants consequently? What did the people say to Jesus hearing this, and what did Jesus tell them in response (v.16-18)?

Jesus was speaking about God as the vineyard owner. The vineyard is the kingdom of God, which God entrusted to the leaders of the Jewish community, who were supposed to teach the way of God. Instead, they misled the people. Therefore, God sent his servants and messengers, such as the prophets, to bring God’s words to them and the people. However, they rejected God, and even beat and killed his messengers, including John the Baptist.

Finally, God the Father sent Jesus, his own son, as his last messenger. Here, Jesus foretold that he would be killed by the leaders of the Jewish community. God would destroy the tenants and give the vineyard (the kingdom of God) to the care of followers of Jesus from other nations. The listeners could not believe this and said, “Surely not!” (v.16). Most Jews would consider the kingdom of God as Israel—the Jewish nation—in a literal sense, rather than in a spiritual sense, that it began in Israel and then spread to all nations.

The builders point to the Jewish community leaders, and the building points to the kingdom of God. There was a stone that the builders rejected to be used for the construction. Jesus spoke of himself as the stone that the builders rejected. God has made Jesus become the cornerstone of the kingdom of

God. By quoting Psalm 118:22, Jesus was telling the people that the Old Testament prophecy pointed to him and he fulfilled it.

A cornerstone is a stone that builders lay as a foundation, and all other stones are set in reference to this stone. The cornerstone shapes the position of the entire structure. Jesus is the cornerstone of God's kingdom, and all other stones (followers of Jesus) in the structure are set in reference to him. Jesus gave a warning to the people, especially to the Jewish community leaders, that those who refuse to believe in him will receive his judgment. He will punish their unbelief and sins. He will crush and destroy them (v.17-18).

Read Luke 21:25-36 – The Fig Tree and All the Trees

Jesus was telling people that there will be signs of his return to the world (v.25-26).

How did Jesus describe his return (v.27)?

Jesus tells all his followers that if we see these signs, we should be encouraged and not afraid, because our redemption is near (v.28). Our redemption in a full sense is being delivered from the presence of evil and sin and being made in complete holiness. This includes receiving a new and heavenly glorified body, free from the corruption of sin, and living with Jesus eternally in heaven without any presence of evil and sin.

How did Jesus illustrate his return in a parable (v.29-30)?

When we see the signs in the universe, we will know that *the kingdom of God*—the return of Jesus who will bring the full manifestation of the kingdom of God—is near (v.31).

What did Jesus say to the people (v.32-33)?

There are several interpretations to what Jesus means by “this generation will not pass away until all has taken place.” Regardless of the interpretations, everything will pass away, but the words of Jesus will not pass away but will come true, because he is God.

What warning does Jesus give us in anticipation of his return (v.34-35)?

What does Jesus want his followers to do while waiting for his return (v.36)?

Jesus will return at a time when people do not expect it. He wants us to be watchful and not let ourselves be drawn into sinful life-style. Jesus will return as the Judge, and every person will stand before him to be judged. For those who refuse to believe in him, his return will be a terrifying day. For all followers of Jesus—those who have trusted their lives to him and have a loving relationship with him—his return will be a joyful day. The day we are judged by Jesus is the day we are affirmed as his people. Jesus will give us honor and welcome us into his kingdom to live with him for eternity. He will glorify us. King Jesus, who is the Son of God and the Son of Man, will return. Will you be ready when he returns?

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