

MU AUSTRALIA DIOCESE OF SYDNEY

BIBLE STUDIES 2009 LEADER'S MANUAL

Parables of Jesus



Four studies based on the Parables Jesus told:

- 1. The Lost Sheep & The Lost Coin** Luke 15:4-10
- 2. The Unjust Judge** Luke 18:1-8
- 3. The Ten Minas** Luke 19:11-27
- 4. The Great Banquet** Luke 14:15-24

By Barbara Dein

LEADER'S NOTES

STUDY 1: THE LOST SHEEP and THE LOST COIN LUKE 15: 4-10

Parables of Lostness:

Theological sequence: Theme of 'lostness'

In Luke 15 there are three parables of lostness:

The Lost Sheep: Luke 15:1-7 (the shepherd seeks out his sheep because it is precious)

The Lost Coin: Luke 15:8-10

The Lost Son: Luke 15:11-31 (the father welcomes his son back after he has strayed)

In our study we will touch upon the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin. Bear in mind that the well remembered parable of the prodigal son is a part of this trilogy in Luke and follows the parable of the lost coin, thereby reinforcing the teaching with different stories.

Background:

Kenneth E. Bailey suggests that this passage in Luke is a single unit in the form of a double parable.

It is assumed that the setting for these parables is over a meal. In Eastern cultures today, men of standing in the community may be willing to offer hospitality to needy persons as a token of their generosity, although they may not be present themselves.

'However, when guests are 'received' the host receiving them eats with them as a sign of acceptance. The host affirms this by showering his guests with a long series of compliments to which the guests must respond. Jesus is portrayed in the text as engaging in some such social relationship with publicans and sinners. Small wonder that the Pharisees were upset.' *Kenneth Bailey, Poet and Peasant and through Peasant Eyes. 1976 William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Michigan.*

(Refer to Mark 2:15f, where Jesus is clearly seen to be the host of the meal. This may be also true for Luke 15:2 even though it is not expressly stated.)

Jeremias states it this way: *To understand what Jesus was doing in eating with sinners, it is important to realize that in the east, even today, to invite a man to a meal was an honour. It was an offer of peace, trust, brotherhood and forgiveness; in short, sharing a table meant sharing life...Thus Jesus' meals with the publicans and sinners...are an expression of the mission and message of Jesus (Mk 2:17), eschatological meals, anticipatory celebrations of the feast in the end-time (Matt 8: 11) in which the community of saints is already being represented (Mk 2: 19). The inclusion of sinners in the community of salvation, achieved in table-fellowship, is the most meaningful expression of the message of the redeeming love of God.'* (Jeremias, *Theology*, 115f.cited Bailey)

Interesting facts about shepherds and sheep from the Bible.

The imagery of the sheep and the shepherd is a common theme throughout the old and new Testaments. Isaiah 53:6 states, *we all, like sheep, have gone astray.*

Psalms 119:176 we read, *I have strayed like a lost sheep.* And again in Psalm 100:3 we read, *We are his people, the sheep of his pasture.*

In Gen 29:1 we are told that flocks of sheep from different sheepfolds were often put together for protection at night, or to feed during the day. Three notable implements were used by the shepherds,

including the staff, which was used for sheep handling, a walking stick, and, as another protection device, the shepherds also used a rod made of oak, about 1.5 metres long with one end thicker, sometimes with spikes driven into it, used as protection against wild animals.

Ezekiel refers to the rod in Ezekiel 20:37 *I will take note of you as you pass under my rod, and I will you into the bond of the covenant.*

This refers to the practice of directing the sheep under the rod for counting or inspecting. The flock would be herded through a narrow opening. The shepherd would dip the end of the rod in some colouring material, and mark the head of every tenth sheep as it passed by. By this method, one tenth of the flock could be separated out when it was time to give one tenth of the herd to the Lord.

Leviticus 27:32 *The entire tithe of the herd and flock – every tenth animal that passes under the shepherd's rod will be holy to the Lord.*

The scepter, used by kings of the era, had its origins in the shepherd's rod. Kings were the shepherds of the people and the rod was a symbol of protection, power and authority.

Parable of the Lost Sheep: Luke 15:1-7

Question 1: Who was in the audience when Jesus told the parable of the lost sheep?

It appears that Jesus was dining with a group consisting of sinful people and outcasts; but there were also Pharisees mentioned.

N.B. 'Sinners' are people of ill repute within society.

Question 2: What is the relationship between v. 1-2 and the parable?

V. 1-2 sets the context of the parable and shows how the religious Pharisees are critical of Jesus because he associates with 'sinners'. The sinners are symbolically represented by the one lost sheep in the parable that is shown to be so very, very important to the shepherd.

Question 3: What is meant to be the climactic theme of the story? (v. 5, 6, 7)

The Lucan form of the story describes the joy of the shepherd who finds one of his sheep that has become separated from the rest of the group.

Question 4: How does the shepherd demonstrate his love and care for the lost sheep?

The shepherd leaves the rest of the sheep who are safe and will not return until he finds his lost sheep. He does not stop looking until he finds it. He rejoices to find it and carries it home.

Question 5: What is the response of the shepherd when he finds the lost sheep and why does this seem to be rather extraordinary?

He then rejoices by throwing a party for his friends and neighbours to celebrate the return of the sheep. The level of his love and care for his sheep is awesome.

Question 6: What is the significance of and basic difference between the two groups of people in v.7?

The two groups are: the sinner who repents and the many righteous who do not repent. The significant difference is the willingness to repent which first requires the recognition that one is a sinner (lost).

Discussion: Who are the contemporary ‘sinners’ of our society? Why do we often, personally and as a church, find it difficult to identify with them?

They are the marginalized, whether because of disability, race, habits or lifestyle. These people need to have some association with God’s people to hear the gospel and to have the opportunity to repent. They will then be the cause of great rejoicing.

Are our difficulties because we are personally uncomfortable with people who don’t present well, don’t fit the social ‘norm’, don’t look and act like us? (Try to build these questions into your social context and discuss ways of building bridges which will provide opportunities for gospel ministry.)

Discussion: How is Connect 09 relevant to us in the light of this parable?

Consider how you can use the resources of Connect 09 to go out and look for the lost sheep in your area etc.

Question 7: What is the relationship between v.2 and v.7?

The Pharisees’ critical attitude to Jesus mixing with sinners displays not only their indifference to the needy (not good shepherds of Israel) but also their own self righteous spirit.

Parable of the Lost Coin: Luke 15: 8-10

Background: (information from Commentary on Luke Howard Marshall p.603)

This is a similar picture to one in a rabbinic parable from about AD200 when a man loses something valuable in the house, lights many lamps and hunts until he finds it; so ought men to study the Torah which is of eternal value. The construction of this parable is almost identical with the parable of the lost sheep, which suggests that the two parables formed a pair in the teachings of Jesus.

Question 8: What do you think this parable is saying?

The parable is reinforcing what Jesus has taught in the first parable, highlighting the importance of one lost soul and the rejoicing in heaven when even one sinner repents.

Question 9: In verse 10, what makes the rejoicing so special to us as we read it and understand it in relation to our own conversion?

We are indeed like the lost coin. It is awesome to realize that when we repented of our rebellion against God and turned to serve Him as our Lord and Saviour, the angels in heaven rejoiced with our heavenly Father around His throne in heaven.

Question 10: What does the woman do when she realizes she has lost a coin and what does this tell us about the coin? (v.8)

She lights a lamp, sweeps the house and searches carefully until she finds it. The coin is very valuable to her.

N.B. Both parables speak of the one searching for the lost of doing it “until he/she finds it”. (v.4, 8) Compare Ezekiel 34:11-16 and John 10:14-16, 27. Share your response to these verses.

Discussion: What is the most precious item that you have lost and found? How did you feel when you found it? (e.g. losing a child in the supermarket).

Did you ever lose an item that you did not find? How do you feel about that precious thing you have not found?

Can you relate this to how the holy God must feel for those who have rejected His precious gift in Jesus?

Terminology

The New Bible Dictionary speaks of **Eschatology** as the doctrine of the last things. ‘Since God is the Lord of history, the consummation of God’s redemptive work will include the redemption of history itself. The prophets of the Old Testament were waiting for the day when the God of Israel in Christianity, who has already visited His people throughout history will come ‘in the last days’ to ‘judge the wicked, redeem the righteous and purge the earth of all evil’. New Bible Dictionary p.387 ‘The return of Christ, which may properly be called His ‘second coming’ (Heb 9:28) is represented by several important words. **Parousia** means “presence” or “arrival” (1Cor 16:17, 2Cor 7:7) and was used in Hellenistic Greek to designate the visit of a ruler. The same Jesus who ascended to heaven will again visit the earth in personal presence (Acts 1:11) at the end of the age (Mt 24:3) in power and glory (Mt 24:27) to destroy the antichrist and evil (2Thess.2:8), to raise the righteous dead (1Cor 15:23) and to gather the redeemed (Mt 24:31; 2Thess 2:1; Mt 24:37, 39; 1Thess 2:19; 1Thess 3:13; 1Thess 4:15,23; Nas v7,8; 2Pet. 1:16; 1Jn 2:28.)’

The New Bible Dictionary p.387

N.B. Leaders may like to compare the two accounts, (Parable of the Persistent Widow and Parable of the Friend at Midnight: Luke 11: 1-13), if there is enough time left in the study because it is a very interesting teaching on prayer. If not, simply ignore the reading.

Question 1 : In what ways does the parable of the Persistent Widow and the Unjust Judge remind us of the parable of the Friend at Midnight and the reference to Jesus’ teaching on prayer in chapter 11 of Luke?

Both parables are reinforcing one of the most important elements of prayer, that of continual, persistent prayer, however desperate the situation may be. Jesus knew what lay ahead for himself and also for his followers down through the centuries. In Luke 11 Jesus illustrates the generosity of our Heavenly Father (v13) by means of persistent prayer as he teaches his disciples how to pray. In Luke 18 Jesus reminds the disciples to pray continually and not to give up.

The conclusion of both stories dwells upon the character of God the Father in His dealings with His children.

Question 2: What does the parable in Luke 18 tell us about the Judge and about his character?

He is a judge in a small town. It is uncertain whether he is a Jewish judge, because they also could be corrupt, or simply a secular judge. His corrupt nature is suggested by his double characterization as one who neither feared God nor had regard for men. Ironically he may have been in a better position to gain her ends for her because he was corrupt and his influence in the small township was considerable.

Question 3: What is known about the widow from the story?

The widow was needy and helpless, without male support in a male dominated society. She kept coming back to the judge, day after day, not for the punishment of her tormenter, but requiring the justice that she was seeking.

Question 4: How should the Judge have acted towards the widow?

The Judge should have acted with concern and compassion on behalf of the widow. He was also legally required to give precedence to the widow’s case and he was not willing to do so. It may be that he was lazy or sensitive to the influence of her adversary or simply her case was of no benefit to him. Note the self-centredness of the Judge.

Question 5: How is the character of God compared with that of the judge in the parable?

The judge vindicated the widow who was a stranger to him, and so how much more will God vindicate His own chosen people whom he is absolutely committed to helping.

God is not like the Judge who had to be pestered before he would act out of self-interest on behalf of the widow. Although v.7b appears to be concerned with a delay in God's actions on behalf of His people, in eschatological terms the time will be short.

The question as a whole suggests a time of tribulation for the disciples in which they may be tempted to stop praying because they believe that their prayers are not answered; it is therefore meant as an exhortation to take seriously the lesson of the parable that God will certainly act to vindicate His children. As other parts of scripture would suggest, there appears to be an interval before the second coming of Christ, although there is also a sense of imminent expectation for 'no-one knows the day nor the hour'.

Question 6: Why does the judge decide to hear the complaint of the widow?

The simple answer is because her constant pleading has finally worn him down.

The phrase 'he said to himself' is a form of soliloquy used widely in the parables.

The word that was translated 'wear me out' is used in reference to prize-fighting and literally means a blow under the eye (1Cor 9:27). That does not mean that the woman will become violent. The judge acts out of self interest, unlike our heavenly Father.

Discussion: What is Jesus teaching us about our own prayer life and that of our church? Can you share personal experience of a persistent prayer request?

Question 7: What do you think the judge is thinking when he says, 'lest she forever continue coming and wearing me out' or in this translation, 'so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming'?

The Greek phrase is very strong and implies the will to go on forever. Therefore the judge has come to the conclusion that the woman will never give up.

Question 8: What is verse 7 suggesting about God the Father? What point is Luke making in this verse?

Verse 7 indicates God will bring about justice for (vindicate) his chosen ones who cry out to him day and night. The widow symbolizes God's elect who are precious to their Heavenly Father. If the judge vindicated the widow who was a stranger to him, how much more is God bound to help his own people. His 'chosen ones' were traditionally the Jewish nation, but the New Testament refers to those who have been redeemed through Jesus' death and resurrection. God will answer the prayers of His beloved who pray to him day and night in the midst of their pain. Their patience may be put to the test but they can be confident in both their relationship to their Heavenly Father and in His commitment to them. 'Will he keep putting them off?' Marshall concludes that 'The elect cry to God night and day, but he puts their patience to the test by not answering them immediately'.

N.B. The grammar in v.7 demands the answer 'yes'.

Question 9: Why do you think Jesus made reference to the Second coming in verse 8?

Marshall suggests that the question indicates a time of tribulation which will come upon the disciples and they may be tempted to give up faith because their prayers are not answered, and is a reminder that the lesson of the parable is that God will certainly act to vindicate them.

Discussion: Can you share a persistent prayer of yours that remains unanswered, a special burden in your heart for someone, or your own situation for which we can pray together?

When it seems that our prayers are unanswered, what is our source of encouragement? Are there other ways we, as MU members, can persist in prayer despite difficulties?

STUDY 3: THE TEN MINAS LUKE 19: 11-27

Interesting Information

This parable is similar in both form and content to the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30, although the Matthew parable does not include the theme of rejection of the king.

In the Matthew parable, there are three servants who each receive differing large amounts of money and in Luke's parable there are ten servants who each receive small amounts of money. The recipients are expected to increase the money as best they can.

N.B. The parable suggests an interval between the time of Jesus' ministry and his second coming and this belief was part of Jesus' teaching. The parable in essence is concerned with 'the entrusting of the kingdom to men and their responsibilities to use its spiritual benefits until the consummation.' Thus the parable 'contained the seeds of the Christological and eschatological development which it underwent in the early church.' (I. Howard Marshall p.702)

Question 1: v.11 – Why do you think the people thought that the coming of the kingdom of God was imminent?

The disciples and followers of Jesus began to understand Jesus in Old Testament categories. They therefore expected that Christ would redeem Israel by making a public stand to convict their wicked society, deliver the chosen people from their subservience to the Romans and declare himself as earthly King in the ancient tradition of King David. They did not understand that Jesus' kingship involved the redemption of humankind through His death and resurrection, the coming of the 'kingdom of God' and the return to earth of Jesus, the rightful King. These were not immediate events involving a political kingdom. They did not yet understand that Jesus would first establish the church, the bride of Christ, which would fulfill its mission before He came again in glory.

Question 2: v. 13 - The nobleman was to go away for a while and be crowned king. What responsibility did he give to his servants?

He left them with the task of continuing the work and making a profit – being faithful in the task he had given them with the resources he had also given them. They were to increase his business interests in his absence and in readiness for his return.

N.B. Traditionally, rich noblemen had a retinue of servants and bond-slaves, and among those were some, because of their abilities and resourcefulness, who could be trusted to care for the interests of their master while he was away.

Question 3: Who does the nobleman represent? What do you understand by this interpretation?

Jesus is, of course, speaking of Himself as the nobleman, who must leave His earthly kingdom for a time and has placed his servants, his disciples and other followers, you and I, in the possession of gifts and skills, some more than others, and we are expected to use these gifts to further God's kingdom on earth in preparation for Jesus, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, who will return in all his glory at the second coming. Only three of the ten were mentioned as showing the nobleman in the story how they had increased his wealth.

Discussion: How do you feel about the gifts and skills which God has given you to faithfully use "in his business" until He returns? In what ways do you need to revise your life practices?

Question 4: In v.14 why did the citizens hate the nobleman? How does this relate to today's world and the kingship of Jesus?

The nobleman demanded obedience and faithfulness from his subjects. He expected absolute loyalty and they would know that disobedience and rebellion would result in punishment. But they did not want Him to rule over them. God's requirements for his children are the same, and He has gifted us with His Spirit to enable us to grow in holiness, living lives which will honour and glorify Him.

Question 5: Why you think the nobleman's judgment was so harsh? (V.22-26)

The nobleman owned the money, but the servants were allowed to trade with it. However, the goal contemplated by the nobleman was not moneymaking as much as it was of them demonstrating their diligence and faithfulness, for he had trusted them with his money.

NB: There is another aspect to these verses. The nobleman did not admit to the statement of the servant which suggested that he was a 'hard man' but reflected the words of the unfaithful servant as a question to him, 'So that is how you thought of me?' If this was the opinion of the servant he should have acted accordingly and been more careful to obey his master.

Question 6: How does this relate to our Christian lives today?

In the same way Jesus has gifted His people mightily. (1Corinthians 12:1-11; Ephesians 4: 7-13; Romans 12:6-9)

God had given all of His children a variety of gifts and through His Holy Spirit He empowers us to use these gifts to His glory. We are therefore expected to live our lives in servant hood to others so that we will be a blessing.

It is an interesting phenomenon in the Christian life that even as we seek to bless others, so are we ourselves blessed mightily, which relates back to verse 26: *'I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what he has will be taken away.'*

N.B. The note of accountability for the Christian concerning his/her faithfulness in the Lord's service, which will take place upon the return of King Jesus, should not be overlooked.

Question 7: Of whom do you think Jesus is speaking in v.27?

Those who reject Jesus and His gospel. It is very serious to reject Jesus. The judgement upon unbelievers when Jesus returns, demonstrates this truth.

Howard Marshall indicates that this is the fate of the citizens who refused to accept the nobleman's rule. The language is used to characterize the disobedient citizens, who suffer the typical fate of ancient rebels. It was not uncommon for such massacres to take place before the ruler's presence (1 Samuel 15:33; Revelation 14:10) and there are frequent examples in ancient history. What is difficult is the use of this imagery with regard to the judgment of the Son of man on unfaithful people who reject his rule over them; but the language, although strange to us, is such as would make sense to Jesus' hearers and convey to them the seriousness of their position. (I. Howard Marshall p.709)

Note to leaders: *You could combine the following discussion ideas into one, or change the questions to suit your group as you choose.*

Discussion: How has the Lord Jesus made a difference in your life and how have you used your gifts and the gift of His Spirit?

Discussion: Let's share some of the difficulties we have experienced in following Jesus over the years.

STUDY 4: THE GREAT BANQUET LUKE 14: 15-24

Jesus was dining with Simon the Pharisee when he told this parable. It was in response to a comment made by one of the other diners at the dinner party. This guest burst forth with, '*Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God*' after he had heard Jesus speaking on the topic of being generous in hospitality towards those who could never reciprocate, for example, the poor and needy. Jesus said that such generosity would be rewarded by God (v.14:14)

INFORMATION:

In a similar parable in Matthew 22:1-14, the host is a king who holds a marriage feast for his son. Howard Marshall, in his commentary on Luke, records that 'Jeremias, in his book *Parables, pages 176-180*, interprets the parable in its original form as a warning to pious Jews that if they pay no heed to the gospel call, they will be replaced by the despised and ungodly, and find that they have left it until too late to come.' It is suggested that the parable may be based on an incident in the life of rich tax collector of the time, Bar Ma'jan, whose ungodly life contained but one recorded decent incident: 'He had arranged a banquet for the city councilors, but they did not come. So he gave orders that the poor should come and eat it, so that the food should not be wasted'. (J.Sanh. 6.33c; cited by Jeremias, op.cit.179).

The banquet is undoubtedly a symbol for salvation, the culmination of which is seen at the end of history. The final great banquet, often referred to as the messianic banquet at the end of time is also pictured in Revelation 19:9.

Ordinarily the nations and peoples who come to the Lord must bring gifts. In this passage from Isaiah the banquet is by pure grace alone – the participants from the nations bring nothing and the food being served is rich fare only enjoyed by kings.

(Kenneth E. Bailey; *Poet and Peasant and through Peasants' Eyes* a literary cultural approach to the parables of Luke, 1983 combined edition, Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Company Michigan)

Isaiah 25: 6-9

Question 1: How is salvation described in this text from Isaiah? As a great banquet.

Question 2: Who will this banquet be for? For all peoples/nations.

Question 3: What will God destroy and remove in verse 7?

The shroud of death, death itself, separation from God and the curse of sin and rebellion.

Question 4: When will this happen?

This will find its final fulfillment when Jesus returns at the second coming, as the Messiah will establish his kingdom.

Question 5: In verse 8, what will God do for his people?

He will *wipe away all tears*, abolish death and suffering, and *remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth*. Jesus has released us from death and disgrace and separation from God through His death and resurrection. God's salvation and eternal life are freely available to all.

Discussion and Discovery

If we are called upon to give an account of our faith in the Lord Jesus, how could we use this passage from Isaiah to reinforce our argument?

Is it not part of the wonder of our faith that prophets proclaimed the coming of the Messiah with great clarity hundreds of years before Jesus came to earth? (The heavenly feast or banquet of God is a picture of our salvation through the coming of the Messiah, and our acceptance into the Kingdom of God.

The feast or banquet is also associated with a coronation and is also referred to as a wedding banquet in Revelation 19:9)

Luke 14:15-17

Question 6: Why do you think the pious guest made that comment in the introduction to this parable?

He commented in this way because he was a Jew, one of God's people who expected to enjoy the blessings of the coming kingdom.

N.B. The term 'The kingdom of God' is used by Mark and Luke and occurs 66 times in the New Testament, but is not found in the Old Testament. It refers to the rule of God in the hearts of men and women and not a specific place. Matthew's gospel often uses the term 'Kingdom of Heaven'.

Question 7: A great banquet is naturally hosted by a great man. Acceptance is considered as a firm commitment. In verse 17 there appears to be a second invitation issued. Why do you think this appears to have been necessary?

See extra information below.

Extra Information: (from Kenneth E. Bailey's book, *Poet and Peasant and through Peasants' Eyes*)

"The double invitation is in perfect harmony with traditional Middle Eastern custom, which still persists in conservative areas. A village host must provide meat for a banquet. The meat will be killed and cooked on the basis of the number of guests. A host sends out his invitations and receives acceptance. He then decides on the killing/butchering of a chicken or two (2-4 guests), or a duck (5 - 8 guests), or a kid (10-15 acceptances), or a sheep (if there are 15-35 people), or a calf (35-75). Once the countdown begins it cannot be stopped. The appropriate animal is eaten that night. The guests who accept the invitation are duty-bound to appear. The host completes his preparations. Then at the 'hour of the banquet' a servant is sent out with the traditional message, 'Come, all is now ready,' meaning the meat is cooked and we are ready for you."

All is in readiness and going well, invitations were accepted, the animal butchered, the meat cooked, the guests summoned..... and all at once - excuses!

Luke 14: 18-21

Leaders: Questions 8 to 11 could be combined by asking the question, ***‘What do all these responses have in common, and how would you feel if a dinner guest responded with answers such as these at the last minute?’***

Question 8: Why do you think the excuse the first guest made was not very plausible?

It is a ridiculous excuse. Who would do such a thing? Even today a person would not buy a block of land without first looking at it or getting an agent to look at it.

N.B. Guest 1 in ancient culture would have certainly known the human history of the field. He would have known the owners from generations back and would have known how much profit had come from the land there.

Also, banquets are held in the late afternoon, and so the question is, ‘What was he doing all morning and throughout the day?’

Question 9: What is the guest indicating by offering such an implausible excuse?

His excuse is really a lie and he is implying that the field is more important than his word and than his relationship with the host. In New Testament culture interpersonal relationships are extremely important and so this is an even greater offence to the host. It is still true today that if an invitation has been accepted earlier, to decline at the last minute, unless it is an emergency, is not acceptable.

If the man wanted the host to believe him he may have said, *‘I’ve been negotiating for this field and the owner has suddenly insisted that we settle tonight’*. This would have been a way of saving the honour of the host and preserving their relationship. But his purpose was to intentionally insult the host by offering an obviously lame excuse.

Question 10: Why was the excuse from the second guest equally unbelievable? (v.19)

It was equally shallow and foolish.

N.B. In the Middle East, oxen are sold by two methods. They are firstly taken to the market place and then to a nearby field where they are put to the plough. The buyer may drive the oxen himself to make very sure that the animals work together as a team. A second method of sale is to announce that the team is for sale and will be working on a certain day. Buyers come and watch the team, and try them out before discussing a price. You can therefore see that this excuse is as insulting as the first. Who would trial a team of oxen in the evening? Fields are land, and land is holy. But oxen are animals and animals are unclean. The second guest is saying, ‘These animals are more important to me than my relationship to you.’

Question 11: Do you think the third excuse is more plausible, why or why not? (v.20)

No. Clearly weddings are planned in advance.

N.B. If there had been a recent wedding in a community such as this, the host would not have clashed with that occasion. All the guests would have been at the wedding. Also in this ancient culture, rules for speaking about women were very strict and his speech was very crude. A 19th century writer, Thomson, stated that Middle Eastern men were very reluctant to speak of the females in their families. (Thomson 1, 175f, cited Bailey p99)

The most insulting factor for the host in this case was that guest 3 did not even ask to be excused.

Question 12: How does the host respond? (v. 21)

The host had every reason to be terribly angry after such insults by ‘worthy’ members of his community. Yet he responds with grace and caring, not vengeance, and gives his servant an amazing instruction to invite the outcasts of the community, the poor, maimed, blind, lame, those who are marginalized and who can do nothing to repay this act of grace and kindness. The Qumran documents suggested that those who were ‘smitten in his flesh...or lame, or blind’ would be rejected from the messianic banquet, (cf .above, 90, cited Bailey p.100) which is why the listeners would have been stunned by the story.

Discussion and Discovery: What is the parable really saying to Jesus’ listeners?

They would know that the message referred to the messianic banquet and that ‘the hour of the banquet’ had come. Thus in the person of Jesus himself the kingdom of God is at hand. Yet they offer excuses for not recognizing him as Messiah and therefore reject him. The parable states that they are rejecting the great banquet of salvation promised by God in Isaiah, which is being set for them in the presence of Jesus with them.

Luke 14: 22-25**Question 13: Who have been invited to the banquet in v.23?**

Those who are from other places.

Question 14: As Christians in 2009, how do we understand this invitation?

We have already considered Isaiah 25:6-9 as a text which helps us to understand this parable. There is general agreement amongst contemporary scholars that the final invitation to the feast refers to an outreach to the Gentiles. It is interesting to note that the servant does not go out to gather the outsiders, because the command is given but not carried out. It is therefore *an unfilled future task* as the parable closes. Bailey believes that this parallels Jesus’ own ministry. He invited the outcasts of Israel but did not carry out major outreach to the Gentiles. Even the twelve were sent to the ‘lost’ within Israel (Matthew 10:5). Paul became the first missionary to the Gentiles.

MU AUSTRALIA DIOCESE OF SYDNEY

BIBLE STUDIES 2009

Parables of Jesus



Four studies based on the Parables Jesus told:

- 1. The Lost Sheep & The Lost Coin** Luke 15:4-10
- 2. The Unjust Judge** Luke 18:1-8
- 3. The Ten Minas** Luke 19:11-27
- 4. The Great Banquet** Luke 14:15-24

By Barbara Dein

Welcome to our series of studies for 2009.

In the previous two years we have been exploring the lives and faith of women from the Old and New Testaments and have found their journeys both thrilling and encouraging. But then, the study of any part of the bible is a joy and a great learning experience. In 2009 our focus will be on the parables of Jesus, and we will be studying four parables from the gospel of Luke.

THE PARABLE

“A parable is a metaphor or simile drawn from nature or common life arresting the hearer by its vividness or strangeness, and leaving the mind in sufficient doubt about its precise application to tease it into active thought.” (C.H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom*, New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1961, p.5)

The word ‘parable’ comes from the Greek ‘parabole’, and often referred to an illustration in the form of a brief narrative. It later came to mean a fictitious narrative, referring to something that might naturally occur, and through which spiritual and moral matters might be conveyed.

What is the Purpose of the Parables?

To teach one or two spiritual truths through storytelling that capture the imagination and stimulate reflection. For some the parables will remain riddles, but for others they will provide fresh spiritual insights. Some scholars believe that more attention to the cultural milieu of the day and the literary structure of the parables is required. Jeremias, in his volume *The Parables of Jesus* (trans. 1958, rev. 1963), used information regarding the Palestinian background of the parables from many sources and demonstrated how this overlaid the meaning of the parables in the life of Jesus. Along with Dodd, he saw the parables as predominantly Jesus’ teaching of the kingdom that was realised in and through his teaching. (Kenneth E. Bailey, ‘Poet & Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes’, p.16)

Where are the Parables to be found?

Parables are to be found in both the Old and New Testaments as well as in general literature. The parables of Jesus upon which we are focusing are among those found in Luke. The Gospel of Mark has only a few parables and related images; Matthew adds others, but Luke contains the majority of the parables in the New Testament. The word ‘parable’ is not used in the Gospel of John which contains only a few images that resemble the parables found in the Synoptic Gospels, (Mark, Matthew, Luke). In the Old Testament parables are found in: 2 Samuel 14:5-13; 1 Kings 20:39-42; Isaiah. 5:1-7, 28:21-29; Ezekiel 17:1-24, 19:1-14, 20:45-49. Nathan’s story told to David concerning the Ewe Lamb in 2 Samuel 4 is probably one of the most well known.

Did Jesus’ disciples understand the parables?

In the Gospel of Matthew, the disciples of Jesus appear to understand the parables, but in Mark, even the disciples have difficulty understanding the underlying message.

Matthew 13:51 *‘Have you understood all this?’ They (the disciples) answered, ‘Yes’.*

Mark 4:13 *And he said to them (the disciples), ‘Don’t you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable?’*

Mark 4:33-34 *With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything.*

Why did Jesus use parables to teach his great truths?

You might well ask why Jesus taught in this complex manner.

Jesus told his disciples in Mark 4:11-12 *‘The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables so that “they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!”*

Jesus likens his preaching in parables to the ministry of Isaiah, which, while it gained some disciples (Isaiah 8:16) was also intended to expose the hardhearted resistance of many to God’s warning and appeal. (NIV Study Bible, p1498) Theirs was a spiritual problem. They were intent upon proving Jesus to be wrong and so did not want to actually hear the truth of what he wanted to say.

STUDY 1: THE LOST SHEEP and THE LOST COIN: LUKE 15: 4-10



The parable of 'The Lost Sheep,' in the New Testament represents for me the most precious of all Jesus' parabolic teaching. We are given a portrait of Jesus' precious love and care for us as individuals in a way that inspires confidence and devotion in the One who has redeemed us through His sacrifice. As we study this wonderful story and with its implications for us, it is appropriate that we look back at the Bible to reflect upon the use of the analogy of the sheep and shepherd.

Shepherds and sheep from the Bible.

The imagery of the sheep and the shepherd is a common theme throughout the old and new Testaments.

Isaiah 53:6 *We all, like sheep, have gone astray.*
 Psalm 119:176 *I have strayed like a lost sheep.*
 Psalm 100:3 *We are his people, the sheep of his pasture.*

Another great shepherd

David was the first shepherd king and against his foe he used a sling, another weapon of the shepherd. It is interesting that God chose as his king for Israel a young man who actually was a shepherd.

1Samuel 16:11: *So he asked Jesse, "Are these all the sons you have?"*
 "There is still the youngest," Jesse answered, "but he is tending the sheep."

Psalm 23

This psalm is one of our most beloved, and tradition attests that it was written by David. The beautiful imagery, written by a shepherd about a shepherd, breathes authenticity and defines the shepherd's role of loving protection and care of his sheep very clearly.

The Good Shepherd

In John 10 Jesus speaks of himself as the Good Shepherd. The passage must be understood in the light of the Old Testament concept of the shepherd who symbolized a royal caretaker of God's people. God himself was called the "Shepherd of Israel".

Psalm 80:1; Isaiah 40:10-11; Ezekiel 34:11-16.

He had given great responsibility to the leaders (shepherds) of Israel, who had failed in their task and God had denounced them as false shepherds. He then had promised to provide the true Shepherd, the Messiah, to care for the sheep.

Ezekiel 34:23 *I will give them a king like my servant David to be their one shepherd.*

John 10:11 *I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.*

John 10: 14-15 *I am the good shepherd. Just as the Father knows me and I know the Father, I know my sheep and my sheep know me. And I lay down my life for the sheep.*

How blessed we are. Jesus, our good shepherd, has died to redeem his sheep, to bring them safely into the sheepfold, into the kingdom of God.

Parable of the Lost Sheep

Luke 15: 1-7

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear him. 2But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, 'This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.'

3Then Jesus told them this parable: 4“Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? 5 And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders 6and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbours together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' 7I 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.”

If you have a chance, compare this version of the Lost Sheep with the account found in Matt 18:10-14. There are a number of differences. Perhaps the one original parable had been developed differently in two separate traditions, or perhaps Jesus himself used the same basic parable more than once in different situations and for different purposes.

Question 1: Who was in the audience when Jesus told the parable of the lost sheep?

.....
.....

Question 2: What is the relationship between v. 1-2 and the parable?

.....
.....

Question 3: What is meant to be the climactic theme of the story? (v. 5,6,7)

.....
.....

Question 4: How does the shepherd demonstrate his love and care for the lost sheep?

.....
.....

Question 5: What is the response of the shepherd when he finds the lost sheep and why does this seem to be rather extraordinary?

.....
.....

Question 6: What is the significance of and basic difference between the two groups of people in v.7?

.....
.....
.....

Discussion: Who are the contemporary ‘sinners’ of our society?

Why do we often personally and as a church find it difficult to identify with them?

.....
.....
.....
.....

Discussion: How is Connect 09 relevant to us in the light of this parable?

.....
.....
.....

Question 7: What is the relationship between v.2 and v.7?

.....
.....

Parable of the Lost Coin



The woman in this parable lives in a peasant’s house with a low door, no windows and an earthen floor. She must light a lamp and sweep the house and search very carefully until she finds the lost coin. The money would have represented the woman’s savings or dowry, and it is often suggested that the ten coins may have been worn on a string as a headdress. If a coin is lost, great efforts are made to find it. The discovery of the coin leads to great rejoicing in which the neighbours are invited to share. The parable takes the form of a rhetorical question and as the preceding parable was about a man, a shepherd, so this picture is that of a woman who has ten drachmae. This was a Greek silver coin, similar in value to the Roman denarius. [Howard Marshall p.603]

The denarius

In 300 BC the denarius was the value of a sheep. This coin lost much of its value by the first century AD and there is uncertainty about whether the coin was in use in AD 20-60, around the time Luke wrote his gospel. It is suggested that Luke may have been using the name of a coin familiar to his readers.

Luke 15: 8-10

8 'Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Does she not light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? 9 And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbours together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.' 10 In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.'

Question 8: What do you think this parable is saying?

.....
.....

Question 9: In verse 10, what makes the rejoicing so special to us as we read it and understand it in relation to our own conversion?

.....
.....

Question 10: What does the woman do when she realizes she has lost a coin and what does this tell us about the coin? (v.8)

.....
.....

Discussion: What is the most precious item that you have lost and found and how did you feel when you found it? (eg. Losing a child in the supermarket)

.....
.....

Did you ever lose an item that you did not find? How do you feel about that precious thing you have not found?

.....
.....

Can you relate this to how the holy God must feel for those who have rejected His precious gift in Jesus?

.....
.....

Father if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless not my will but thine be done.

Matthew 26:39

So precious are the lost to God
that He sent His son Jesus to the cross to be the means of redemption for them.

Hymns for meditation

There were ninety and nine [v 3]

But none of the ransomed ever knew
 How deep were the waters crossed,
 And how dark was the night that the Lord passed through
 Ere he found his sheep that was lost.
 Out in the desert He heard its cry,
 All bleeding and helpless and ready to die.

(Words: Elizabeth C. Clephane 1868
 Music: Ira D. Sankey
 Sacred Songs and Solos, 1874)

O the Precious Love of Jesus [v 1]

O the precious love of Jesus, boundless love forever free;
 Rolling like a mighty ocean in its fullness over me.
 Boundless love forever flowing, boundless love forever free;
 Higher than the highest mountain, deeper than the deepest sea.

(Author unknown)

O the deep, deep love of Jesus [v4]

O the deep, deep love of Jesus, love of every love the best!
 'Tis an ocean full of blessing: 'tis a haven giving rest.
 O the deep, deep love of Jesus, 'tis a heaven of heavens to me.
 And it lifts me up to glory, for it lifts me up to Thee.
 Amen

(S. Francis 1834-1925; David L. Ward)

STUDY 2: THE UNJUST JUDGE: LUKE 18:1-8



Context

Jesus is travelling along the border between Samaria and Galilee on his way to Jerusalem (17:11). He had healed the ten lepers and was teaching his disciples about the coming of the Kingdom of God and the difficult time ahead for humankind. At the beginning of Chapter 18 Jesus uses the parable of the persistent widow to remind his disciples that they must always pray and never give up (v1). Thus the teaching of the coming of the Kingdom and the Son of God is concluded with this parable on prayer, urging the disciples to keep praying until the Parousia (the second coming) if necessary. The parable has a similar application in terms of persistent prayer to that of the parable of the friend at midnight in Luke 11: 5-8, i.e. ‘ask, and it will be given to you.’ Here the persistence of the friend is finally rewarded.

Cultural background: In the Old Testament times a widow was the typical symbol of the powerless, the oppressed and the innocent. We need only to recall our study on Naomi to remember her position. Other references are:

Exodus 22: 22-23; Deuteronomy 10:18, 24:17, 27:19; Job 22: 19, 24: 3,21; Psalm 68:5; Isaiah 10:2. It is also true that in Middle East culture, even today, that although women are generally powerless, they are respected and honoured. Women are allowed to shout public insults but men would be punished for the same behaviour. Only the menfolk go into the pushing, shouting environment of the courts, rarely the women. Therefore, if a woman has cause to go, it is because she has no menfolk who can represent her and is totally helpless. Such is the plight of the widow in the story.

Comment

Isaiah 1:17 calls upon rulers and the people to ‘plead for the widow’. In v.23 we read that ‘Everyone loves a bribe ... and the widow’s cause does not come to them.’ Therefore the widow cannot offer a bribe. The Jewish legal tradition declared “the suit of an orphan must always be heard first; next, that of a widow,” (Dembitz, 204, cited in “Through Peasant’s Eyes” p.133)

Luke 18: 1-8

Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. 2He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. 3And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.' 4 For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'even though I don't fear God or care about men, 5 yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming.'"

6And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust Judge says. 7 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? 8 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?"

Similar parable: The Friend at Midnight - Luke 11: 1-13

In Luke, prayer becomes a main theme in the instruction of the disciples but in Matthew teaching prayer is not presented as a theme. The section can be broken into a request for instruction on how to pray, a pattern prayer, and then a parable which teaches of the readiness of God to hear our prayer. There is a concluding statement on the certainty of God's answering prayer with an argument that God will answer prayer even more readily than a human father will respond to his children's requests.

Luke 11:1-13

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."

2 He said to them, "When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. 3 Give us each day our daily bread. 4Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation."

5 Then he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, 6 because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me and I have nothing to set before him.'

7 Then the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' 8 I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs.

9 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. 10 For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

11 Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? 12 Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? 13 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!"

Question 1: In what ways does the parable of the Persistent Widow and the Unjust Judge remind us of the parable of the Friend at Midnight and the reference to Jesus' teaching on prayer in chapter 11 of Luke?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Question 2: What does the parable in Luke 18 tell us about the Judge and about his character?

.....
.....
.....
.....

Question 3: What is known about the widow from the story?

.....
.....
.....

Question 4: How should the Judge have acted towards the widow?

.....
.....
.....

Question 5: How is the character of God compared with that of the judge in the parable?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Question 6: Why does the judge decide to hear the complaint of the widow?

.....
.....
.....
.....

Discussion: What is Jesus teaching us about our own prayer life and that of our church? Can you share personal experience of a persistent prayer request?

.....
.....
.....

Question 7: What do you think the judge is thinking when he says, 'lest she forever continue coming and wearing me out' or in this translation, 'so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming'?

.....
.....

Question 8: What is verse 7 suggesting about God the Father? What point is Luke making in this verse?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Question 9: Why do you think Jesus made reference to the Second coming in verse 8?

.....
.....

Discussion: Can you share a persistent prayer of yours that remains unanswered, a special burden in your heart for someone, or for your own situation for which we can pray together? When it seems that our prayers are unanswered, what is our source of encouragement? Are there other ways we as MU members can persist in prayer despite difficulties?

.....
.....
.....
.....

Prayer Challenges

6Therefore let everyone who is godly pray to you while you may be found; [Ps 32:6]

18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. [Eph 6:18]

2 Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. [Col 4:2]

16 Be joyful always; 17 pray continually; 18 give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. [1Thess 5:16-18]

13 Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. [James 5:13]

When you are sitting in church on Sunday, pray for your minister as Paul requested that his friends pray for him when he said, *19 Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should. [Eph 6:19-20]*

A quote by Matthew Henry (a Presbyterian clergyman and theologian, 1662 – 1714)

Let prayer be the key of the morning and the bolt of the evening.

STUDY 3: THE TEN MINAS: LUKE 19: 11-27**Money matters**

One talent was equal to 60 minas (Matthew 25:15) and a mina was equal to 100 drachmas. Each drachma was worth about a day's wages (Luke 15:8). Thus the total amount received was valued for each servant between two and three years' average wages, and a tenth would be about three months' wages. (N.I.V. Study Bible, p. 1574)

Context

Jesus was walking from Jericho to Jerusalem at the time of this story. He has just called Zacchaeus the tax collector to repentance and faith and invited himself to the home of Zacchaeus. While Jesus was at the home of Zacchaeus the consequence of the wonderful conversion of the tax collector became apparent, with the consequent conversion of the household, and Jesus reminded Zacchaeus and the other listeners in Luke 19:10, "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost." Jesus was close to Jerusalem when he told this teaching story in order to encourage his hearers in faithfulness and diligence, while they awaited the establishment of God's kingdom on earth. He knew that he was in his final days on earth. If only His beloved people could understand.

Luke 19: 11-27

11 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. 12 He said: "A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. 13 So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. 'Put this money to work,' he said, 'until I come back'.

14 But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, 'We don't want this man to be our king.' 15 He was made king, however, and returned home. Then he sent for the servants to whom he had given the money in order to find out what they had gained with it. 16 The first one came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned ten more.'

17 'Well done, my good servant!' his master replied. 'Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.'

18 The second came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned five more.' 19 His master answered, 'You take charge of five cities.'

20 Then another servant came and said, 'Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. 21 I was afraid of you, because you are a hard man. You take out what you did not put in and reap what you did not sow.'

22 His master replied, 'I will judge you by your own words, you wicked servant! You knew, did you, that I am a hard man, taking out what I did not put in and reaping what I did not sow?

23 Why, then, didn't you put my money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?'

24 Then he said to those standing by, 'Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas.'

25 'Sir', they said, 'he already has ten!'

26 He replied, 'I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what he has will be taken away.

27 But those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them – bring them here and kill them in front of me.' "

Question 1: v.11 – Why do you think the people thought that the coming of the kingdom of God was imminent?

.....
.....
.....

Question 2: v.13 - The nobleman was to go away for a while and be crowned king. What responsibility did he give to his servants?

.....
.....
.....

Question 3: Who does the nobleman represent? What do you understand by this interpretation?

.....
.....
.....

Discussion: How do you feel about the gifts and skills which God has given you to faithfully use "in his business" until He returns? In what ways do you need to revise your life practices?

.....
.....
.....

Question 4: In v.14 why did the citizens hate the nobleman? How does this relate to today's world and the sovereignty of Jesus?

.....
.....
.....

Question 5: Why do you think the nobleman's judgment was so harsh? (V.22-26)

.....
.....
.....

Question 6: How does this relate to our Christian lives today?

.....
.....
.....
.....

Question 7: Of whom do you think Jesus is speaking in v.27?

.....
.....
.....

Discussion: How has the Lord Jesus made a difference in your life and how have you used your gifts and the gift of His Spirit in your servant hood?

.....
.....
.....
.....

Discussion: Let's share some of the difficulties we have experienced in following Jesus over the years.

.....
.....
.....

An Exercise for our personal use, not necessarily to be shared within the group.

Write a list of the gifts you believe God has given you to minister to others.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Write a parallel list of gifts which you believe you have nurtured in your ministry to others

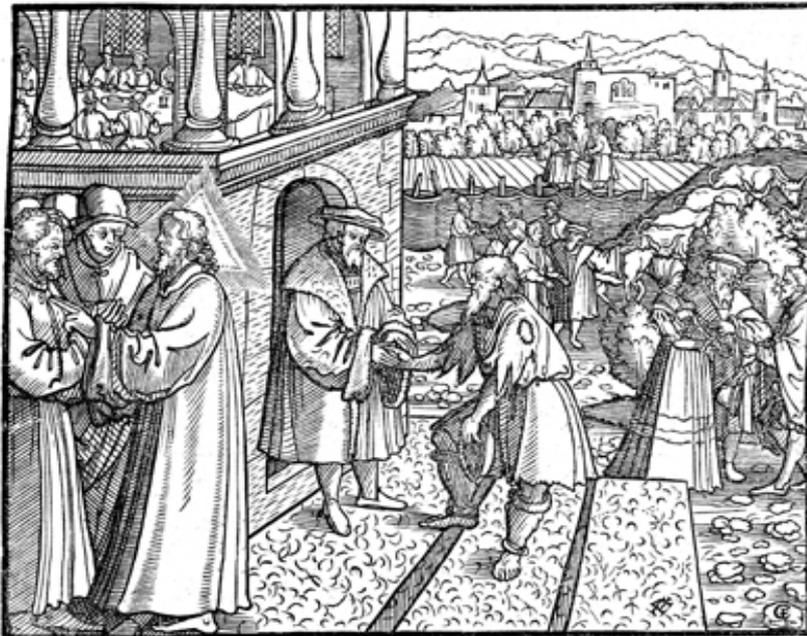
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Some reflections on Christians and gifts from *Salt in my Kitchen* by Jeanette Lockerbie

1. One person's hospitality can dispel another's loneliness.
2. You can't know who is watching your life today, but you can be sure someone is.
3. Recognizing that God has made me one-of-a-kind, I want to allow for the created differences in others.
4. A smile can be the shortest distance between two people.
5. We can't all be nightingales, but even sparrows sing!
6. If no-one seems to see, hear or care, remember that God does.
7. There are enough hours in the day for me to do what God requires of me.
8. What better day to start aiming to be great in God's sight?
9. God always has someone around to teach us – if we will be teachable.
10. Joy is as contagious as gloom – and a hundred times more attractive.



STUDY 4: THE GREAT BANQUET: LUKE 14: 15-24



The context in which Jesus told the parable of the Great Banquet

Jesus' parable of the Great Supper is imbedded in a prior narrative which informs the reader that Jesus has been invited to a wedding feast in the home of a prominent Pharisee in Luke 13:28-34.

At this function, Jesus urges those present to take the lower places rather than rushing to pick the places of honour at the table. *'For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled and he who humbles himself will be exalted.'*

Jesus then urges his host to invite the disadvantaged to his banquets and he will be blessed, for, although they cannot repay the host, he would be *'repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.'*

In response to this, one man, called the pious banqueter, invokes a blessing on those who will be accepted on that great day at the banquet. *'Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the Kingdom of God.'* . He would have expected Jesus to respond with an invocation like 'O Lord, may we be among the righteous and be counted without blemish, worthy to sit with the men of renown on that great day.' Instead Jesus told the parable of the Great Banquet. (Kenneth E.Bailey; *Poet and Peasant and through Peasants' Eyes*)

Old Testament References to a great banquet

Psalm 23:5 speaks of a banquet that God himself will spread for those who trust in Him.

The Old Testament background for the idea of the sacred meal with God is also found in Isaiah 25:6-9

<p>Isaiah 25:6-9 <i>6On this mountain the Lord Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine – the best of meats and the finest of wines. 7On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations, she will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth. The Lord has spoken. 9In that day they will say, “Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the Lord, we trusted in him, let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.”</i></p>

Question 1: How is salvation described in this text from Isaiah?

.....

Question 2: Who will this banquet be for?

.....

Question 3: What will God destroy and remove in verse 7?

.....

.....

Question 4: When will this happen?

.....

.....

Question 5: In verse 8, what will God do for his people?

.....

.....

.....

Discussion and Discovery

If we are called upon to give an account of our faith in the Lord Jesus, how could we use this passage from Isaiah to reinforce our argument?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Luke 14:15-17

15 When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, "Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God."

16 Jesus replied: "A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests.

17 At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' "

Question 6: Why do you think the pious guest made that comment in the introduction to this parable?.....
.....

Question 7: A great banquet is naturally hosted by a great man. Acceptance is considered as a firm commitment. In verse 17 there appears to be a second invitation issued. Why do you think this appears to have been necessary?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Luke 14: 18-21

18 "But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.' 19 Another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.'

20 Still another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.' 21 The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.'"

Question 8: Why do you think the excuse the first guest made was not very plausible?

.....
.....

Question 9: What is the guest indicating by offering such an implausible excuse?

.....
.....
.....
.....

Question 10: Why was the excuse from the second guest equally unbelievable? (v.19)

.....

Question 11: Do you think the third excuse is more plausible? Why or why not? (v.20)

.....

Question 12: How does the host respond? (v. 21)

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Discussion and Discovery: What is the parable really saying to Jesus' listeners?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Luke 14:22-24

*22 'Sir', the servant said, 'What you ordered has been done, but there is still room.'
23 Then the master told his servant 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them
come in, so that my house will be full. 24I tell you not one of those men who were invited
will get a taste of my banquet.'*

Question 13: Who have been invited to the banquet in verse 23?

.....

Question 14: As Christians in 2009, how do we understand this invitation?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

PRAYER

Loving Heavenly Father, what a great invitation we have been given, to the great feast of the Lamb of God. O what joy!! We cannot give anything in return for this loving gift of grace, made possible by the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus and his resurrection, the first born of many. We pray that as we die to our old selves, we will be raised to new life in the Spirit, through Jesus. Praise God!! Amen

Bibliography

Bailey, Kenneth E.: *Poet and Peasant and Through Peasant Eye* : A Literary – Cultural approach to the parables in Luke – Combined edition, 1980, William B Eerdmans Publishing Co., Michigan, USA.

Marshall, I. Howard: *Commentary on Luke*, New International Greek Testament Commentary, 1978, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Michigan, USA.

Dodd C.H.: *The Parables of the Kingdom*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961.

Jeremias J.: *The Parables of Jesus*, London: SCM Press (trans. 1958, rev. 1963)

NBD: *New Bible Dictionary*: Organising Editor: J.D.Douglas, Inter-Varsity Fellowship 1962, The Chaucer Press, Suffolk, England.

The New International Version Study Bible, 1995 edition, Kenneth Baker (General Editor), Zondervan Publishing House, USA.

Lockerbie, Jeanette W: *Salt in my Kitchen*, Moody Publishers, 2002, Chicago.

Details of Artworks:

Cover picture for studies: www.biblicalart.com Colour Print 'Parables' James Christensen, Swoyer's Fine Arts & Collectables

Picture: Study 1: www.biblicalart.com: 'The Lamb' by Stephen Shelby Sawyer
Crossmap, at 'Lord's Art'

Picture: Study 2: www.biblicalart.com 'The Unjust Judge and the Importunate Widow'
John Everett Millais, Tate collection, 1864, relief print

www.biblicalart.com Potato farmer and wife thankful for their harvest; Unknown Illustrator 'Standard Bible Story Readers, Book 3. 1925-28 by Lillie A.Faris, Standard Publishing Co, 1926

Picture: Study 3: www.biblicalart.com 'The Talents', Merian, Matthaeus the the Elder, 1625-30; from 'Icones Biblicae'

Picture: Study 4: www.biblicalart.com 'Parable of the Great Banquet', unknown artist, Woodcut, 1563, Master connected to the Protestant Reformation Era Writings; Pitts Theology Library