Parables of the Kingdom

The Parables of Jesus are some of the best known stories in the world. Allusions to the “Prodigal Son” and the “Good Samaritan” fill our literature and shape our post-Christian culture even today. These stories, like the grain of mustard seed, are small (most take just a minute or two to tell) and yet grow in the soil of our hearts to be powerful, life-shaping, world-changing, living branches of truth. Each of the parables demands the listeners’ attention, and requires a response in changed values and changed lives.

 Come and study some of the most beloved (and some of the most obscure) parables of Jesus and be startled by new perspectives from familiar stories and be encouraged by bedrock principles of God’s goodness and love for his people.

 There will be two times offered for this study: Sunday morning during the second service, and Monday nights at 7:15-8:45. You are welcome to come to either or trade-off as your schedule requires.

Led by Rich Lamb, Jon Teran and Rene Goh

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| **Date Sunday Date** | **Passage** | **Parable** | **Topic** |
| January 16 | Luke 15:1-2, 11-32 | The Two Sons and the Prodigal Father | God’s Crazy-Good-ness  |
| January 23 | Luke 11:1-13 | The “Friend” at Midnight | How to Pray |
| January 30 | Luke 18:1-8,Luke 18:9-14 | The Unjust Judge and The Pharisee and the Tax Collector | How to Pray So That God Hears You |
| February 6 | Luke 7:36-50 | The Two Debtors | God’s Forgiveness |
| February 13 | Luke 8:4-18 | The Sower and the Soils | Response to the Word |
| February 20 | Luke 10:25-37 | The Good Neighbor | Love Your Neighbor |
| February 27 | Luke 12:13-21 | The Rich Fool | Covetousness |
| March 6 | Luke 12:22-38 | The Faithful Servant | The Master Who Serves |
| March 13 | Luke 14:1-24 | The Great Banquet | Kingdom Priorities |
| March 20 | Luke 14:25-33, Luke 9:57-62 | The Tower BuilderThe “Would-be” Disciples of Jesus | Count The Cost |
| March 27 | Luke 16:1-9 | The Shrewd Manager | Faithful Stewardship |
| April 3 | Luke 16:19-31 | The Rich Man and Lazarus | The Purpose of Wealth |
| April 10 | Luke 19:11-27 | The Servants and the Talents | Use It or Lose It |
| April 17 |  |  |  |

Luke 15:1-2, 11-32

During personal time: rate each son on a scale of 1-10. What do you like and dislike about each of the sons?

Compare and contrast the two sons and their relationship with their father.

V1-2: This is the context for the story—explaining why Jesus is partying with prodigal sons, not protesting with older brothers.

V12: This request is equal to “You are as good as dead to me” or “I wish you were dead.” The son probably chafes under the supposed tyranny of his Father’s rules and oversight.

V12: typically, 1/3 of the estate would go to the younger son. This request would totally displace the family economy—selling off pieces of the family farm

V13: the younger son seeks independence from his father—he ends up in servitude to someone not nearly as generous

When does the younger son become lost? He is lost when he leaves his father’s house. He’s lost even when he’s a high roller. He’s lost even when he doesn’t realize it.

V13-17: Trace the son’s descent. He literally hits bottom.

Why did the son become hungry? (Poll of Seminarians)

* Americans: he squandered his money (v13): pers. responsblity
* Russians: a severe famine happened (v14): natural disaster
* Africans: no one gave him anything (v16): commty breakdown

Do we think the lost deserve what they get? Do we deserve what we get? Their minds are darkened… we must see ourselves in them and have compassion.

V16: “no one gave him anything”: none of his former friends are with him now.

What motivates the son’s return? His own hunger. He realizes he’d be better off in his father’s household, as a dependent on his father, rather than dependent on others.

What kind of repentance does the son make? It could be said that he just wants a secure job that pays a living wage. He doesn’t miss enjoying his Father’s loving embrace. Insincere.

V19: “I am no longer worthy”: at one time he felt he was worthy, but no longer.

V19: “treat me like one of your hired hands”: He isn’t worthy to be a son, but he’s willing to work for his father. He doesn’t ask for mercy, but for a job. He will earn his keep—that’s what he’s asking for.

V20: **The Waiting Father:** The father sees him a long way off: he’s been waiting for his son, eyeing the distance for a sign of his return.

## The Parable of the Lost Sheep

Now all the tax-collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. 2And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, ‘This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.’

## The Parable of the Prodigal and His Brother

11 Then Jesus\* said, ‘There was a man who had two sons. 12The younger of them said to his father, “Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.” So he divided his property between them. 13A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and travelled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. 14When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. 15So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. 16He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. 17But when he came to himself he said, “How many of my father’s hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! 18I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; 19I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.’ ” 20So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. 21Then the son said to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.”

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| V20: This image of God the father is one of the most shocking images in scripture. Imagine a regal, wealthy patriarch running to see his stinky naughty son. Oh the scandal! | What kind of man is the father? He is waiting for his son, seeing him a long way off, he runs out to greet the boy before he can even bathe. He’s willing to be undignified |
| V21: The son starts his rehearsed speech, but is not allowed to finish it—the father waves him off before he makes his offer to become like a servant in his Father’s household. | The father refuses to treat his son like a servant, but like a beloved son. |
| The journey home for the younger son: 1) realize a need (v14), 2) nowhere else to turn (v16), 3) take stock of the situation (v17), propose a “reasonable” or “fair” bargain to God (v18-19), 5) experience the overflowing goodness and mercy of God (v20-23), 6) celebrate in the presence of God (v24). |
| V21: The father doesn’t rub it in, neither does he contradict whatever statement of contrition he gets from the son.  |
| The boy’s leaving of his father: 1) geographic distance, 2) moral decline *“dissolute living”,* 3) financial decline “*squandered his property*”, 4) cultural decline *“would have filled himself with the pig’s pods”*: He’s as far from home in v17 as he can get. |

22But the father said to his slaves, “Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; 24for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!” And they began to celebrate.

25 ‘Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. 26He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. 27He replied, “Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.” 28Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. 29But he answered his father, “Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. 30But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!” 31Then the father\* said to him, “Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. 32But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.” ’

V22: the best robe, ring, sandals: signs of sonship, not slavery. Fatted calf: this is a big deal.

V24: The son says, “You are dead to me”. But it is the son who died. Leaving his father = experiencing death.

V25: The elder son, coming in from a hard day’s work, reveals his true colors: resenting his brother, angry at his father, misunderstanding the relationship he had with his father (“working like a slave”). He too, thought his Father wanted him to be a slave. He never rebelled on the outside, but inside, he was seething.

V25ff: The real focus of the story, central to its purpose, is the older brother. He’s the “good kid” but he too resents his father, he too views him as a task master, he too has failed to live as a son but is working for his father as a slave, as he says, “never disobeyed your command”.

V28: **The Searching Father:** the Father is again going out to his son, this time leaving the party to try to talk his son into seeing the situation the way the father does: “we had to celebrate”… This would have almost been as shocking as seeing the father run—certainly at least as humbling. He could have simple ordered his son to come in to the party, and to enjoy it… as patriarch, that might have been expected. The father pleads with his son.

V29: How could the older son have gotten a party? By asking for it, rather than trying to earn it.

V29: “celebrate with my friends”: probably excluding the Father—who was no friend of the older son’s. The older brother doesn’t really value “always with me” being with the Father.

V31: “Son” literally “my child” a term of endearment

V32: The story doesn’t end. Does the older boy join the party, his heart melted by the love of his father? Or does he refuse, stay outside, and pout? This story is told not to younger sons, but to older sons—inviting them too to come in and join the party.

Compare the two sons: both initially see their father as a taskmaster: one is dutiful, the other rebels. But both resent and reject him and relationship with him. Yet the younger son comes to his senses and is welcomed into the embrace of the party with the father. The older brother? We don’t know, do we? Does he join the party? The only way to get to know the Father is to participate in the celebration with him as people return to him.

The older son’s problem was pride. He wanted to earn a party, for which he could be proud, instead of ask for a party, for which as a gracious gift from his Father, he could not boast but only humbly and thankfully accept.

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| **Younger Son**“bad”, wanderlustEntitled lifeSpends wildly, lots of partiesFather = taskmasterDishonored father by leavingWants to earn his mealsIs given a party, joins inNEW relationship w/FatherGratitude, grace, sonship | **Older Son**“respectable”, stays at homeEarned lifeIs uptight, never had a partyFather=taskmasterDishonored father by resentingFeels he’s earned a partyRefuses a party, doesn’t join inNO relationship w/FatherPride, resentment, slavery | The Pharisees want Jesus to cheer their devotion and strict obedience to God’s laws, but instead he parties w/people w/no such devotion, “sinners”. The Pharisees never understand God’s love, and feel that favor w/God is something to be earned. |
| Which of the two sons do you most identify with, now in your Christian life? Where do you struggle to see the goodness of the Father, or resist his loving care? Evidence of older brother-ness: resenting others who are experiencing the forgiveness of God, or who have received forgiveness, answered prayer, or some measure of exaltation. |
| The issue is servanthood vs. sonship. Do we see God as the taskmaster we must serve or the loving father of whom we are grateful children? Do we accept the invitation to join the party (opportunity) or do we grudgingly serve God out of duty (obligation)? |
| “Prodigal” means recklessly extravagant, spendthrift. A better title for this parable would be **The Prodigal Father,** because it is the Father who is recklessly extravagant in the way he loves both his sons. He is the one who serves them, and he’ll run out to meet us if we just begin to turn back to him. |
| Jesus view of life: not entitled or earned, but gifted: grace and mercy. How do you see your life? Do you believe God would give you a party? When you turn back to God, what do you expect his heart to be? |

Luke 11:1-13

## The Lord’s Prayer

Authority obedience reward sin/punishment worship

As you read the Lord’s prayer—take it slowly and allow yourself to notice one or two things about the prayer you haven’t noticed before.

V1: They ask, “Teach us to pray” which can mean both, “How to” and “To actually pray, to be motivated to pray.” He does both.

V2-4: each line in the prayer is a request. “Father, may your name be hallowed, honored, made holy.” “May your kingdom come here, in my life, in the lives of people around me.” Prayer for the advancement of God’s kingdom, not our own. In *us*, not just in others.

V3: “daily” bread, sufficient for the day. Implies that we are praying this prayer every day, aware of our need for God on a daily basis.

 V3-4: “us” “our” “ourselves”: this prayer is meant to be prayed corporately.

V4: our receiving forgiveness connected to our extending forgiveness

V5-6: The urgent request is driven by a cultural expectation of hospitality. It is ministry, and not midnight munchies, that drives the man over to his friend’s home.

V7: *“my children are with me in bed”:* a common situation in that culture; there is a family bed and for the man to get up could involve waking his entire family.

V8: “persistence”: really, shameless boldness.

V8: persistence is stronger than friendship. Even if it were right to say yes to this man’s request, friendship isn’t enough to overcome the man’s desire for sleep and the poor timing of the request. But if the friend keeps knocking at the door, even the man’s laziness will force him to give him what he needs simply to get rid of him.

What would it take to be the man who stands knocking at the door in the middle of the night? Desperation, and a belief that it will eventually work.

If you lived next to a man who would respond this way to you, what would that do to your likelihood of going to ask him for something? What does it say about the man’s condition? He was desperate. He wouldn’t have gone over to his friend in the middle of the night to bother him for something small, or for a bowl of ice cream for himself.

Why does Jesus use this image of a friend to teach about prayer? Certainly God is not anything like this grudging, grumpy, sleepy man in his bed who tells his friend not to bother him! No God is nothing like this. So if even this man will grant his request, HOW MUCH MORE (v13) will God do so.

V9-10: Ask, search, knock: the promise is that these activities, which take patience and persistence, will not be in vain or fruitless. Searching specifically implies effort and the passing of time—but the promise is that we will find what we are looking for: wisdom, guidance, clarity, God’s will, God’s love, God’s resources for God’s work.

V13: Why does he say, “you, who are evil”? He is comparing people’s behavior to God’s, and saying, “Even (relatively) evil people know how to give good gifts to their children, how much more will our entirely good and loving heavenly Father!”

The problem is that we think of God in ways that make him seem less attentive than reasonable parents, less generous than even poor parents, and less ready to help than even grudging, grumpy sleepy friends. But God is not anything like this! We have so misunderstood God when we are tempted to think this way.

He was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.’ 2He said to them, ‘When you pray, say:

Father,\* hallowed be your name.
   Your kingdom come.\*
3   Give us each day our daily bread.
4   And forgive us our sins,
     for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us.
   And do not bring us to the time of trial.’\*

## Perseverance in Prayer

5 And he said to them, ‘Suppose one of you has a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say to him, “Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; 6for a friend of mine has arrived, and I have nothing to set before him.” 7And he answers from within, “Do not bother me; the door has already been locked, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.” 8I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, at least because of his persistence he will get up and give him whatever he needs.

9 ‘So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. 10For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. 11Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish? 12Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion? 13If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!’

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| The argument of “the lesser to the greater”:Snake << fish, Scorpion << eggGrumpy neighbor at midnight << GodYou “evil” parents << GodGifts parents give to children << Holy SpiritIf friends and parents are like this, HOW MUCH MORE God! | If we are living in a way concerned for others, [the Good Samaritan story is the immediate context] so that we want would have something of real sustenance to set before them (say, the gospel!), then we will run out of our own resources and be drawn to prayer and dependence on God. Evangelism 🡪 Prayer. |
| Three ways to respond: * Eager to have a friend arrive at midnight: *Pray to ask God to bring us someone who takes us to the end of our own resources.*
* We have that friend: *Pray for a breakthrough of God’s Spirit in the life of that friend.*
* We have seen God come through with bread at midnight: *Pray for faith to ask again.*
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Luke 18:1-8

## The Parable of the Widow and the Unjust Judge

Authority obedience blessing/reward sin/punishment

Why does Jesus use the image of the unjust judge to teach people about seeking justice from a just God? Why does Jesus pick the characters he picks in his stories?

 This judge doesn’t fear God (therefore doesn’t care about justice or integrity) nor does he respect people (so doesn’t have compassion or mercy). He is an un-God. And a terrible judge.

Why does Jesus use a widow, not just a woman? The widow is at the bottom of society, with no advocate. No husband, no male protector. She relies on the just judgment of the judge. (Big mistake… but she has no other options.)

V5: “I will grant her justice” implies that the judge knows the right thing to do is to find in favor of the widow. But knowing what is right is not enough to get him to find in her favor. It is her bothering him and the threat of it going on and on that gets him to relent. Otherwise, doing what is right was not motivation enough to get him to act.

V6: Jesus says that we can learn something about God from what the unjust judge is like. The un-god teaches us about God!

V7: rhetorical questions, “Will not God grant justice…? Becomes, when you take the rhetorical question and turn it around, “And God will grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night! God will NOT delay long in helping them.”

So why do we need to pray always and not lose heart? Because there are delays, from our perspective, and though God acts it is not always in the way we expect. But we look to him in faith.

V8: “when the Son of Man comes” not if. He will come, and quickly grant justice. (Perhaps not soon, but quickly when it happens.) In that case, we will get, not justice, but mercy, which we need even more.

V8: “will he find faith on earth?” This is not a rhetorical question. It goes unanswered. It is the central issue—not God’s faithfulness, but ours. God will vindicate, but will we still be looking to him in faith, expecting our deliverance from his hand?

Faith 🡪 prayer 🡪 answers 🡪 faith, etc.

When are we tempted to lose heart?

Then Jesus\* told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart. 2He said, ‘In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. 3In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, “Grant me justice against my opponent.” 4For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, “Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, 5yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.” ’\* 6And the Lord said, ‘Listen to what the unjust judge says. 7And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? 8I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them. And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?’

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| Why do prayers take a long time sometimes? God is faithful, but sometimes justice is served by the delay. Sometimes what we need is a “no” answer to our prayer. God’s answer is best, even if we don’t see it at the time. | Prayer can keep us from losing heart, whether God answers 1) at all, 2) quickly, 3) the way we like. |
| We have evidence that God is much better than the unjust judge. *“He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else?”* **Romans 8:32** |  |

[continued]

Luke 18:9-14

Authority obedience blessing/reward sin/punishment

What do you know about a Pharisee and a Tax Collector? The Pharisee is a deeply devoted religious person. He would give regularly, and was pious. People would have been impressed with him. The TC was a rough type, probably NOT very religious, and this might have been his first, or at least a rare, appearance in the temple. Churches are filled with people who would have admired the Pharisees. (They “R” us.)

With which of these characters do you relate?

V9: Jesus is still teaching those older brother, Pharisee types. He hasn’t written them off. He is hoping still that some have ears to hear, and will listen to his words, which offer them life.

V11: The Pharisee thinks that he himself is a gift to God. He thanks God that he is the way he is, but ultimately he thinks God is pretty impressed with him. The TC expects no such esteem by God, and beats on his breast. He knows that he needs God, rather than the other way around.

It is easy for us to be glad we are not anything like this Pharisee. “I thank you God that I am not so proud as this Pharisee. I am a sinner, I know well, but at least I admit it, and am therefore a little bit better than the rest of those hypocrites at church.”

The bottom line is that both of these characters can be found in us—the sense of accomplishment and pride that comes when we think we have contributed to God, and the sense of shame when we realize we let him down.

It is not that we are one or the other—we travel back and forth from one to the other. But we can recognize, as our eyes focus on others, that we are not a gift to God because we are so much better than those around us, but rather that we are in desperate need of what God is only too glad to give us, mercy, if we but ask.

The sinner’s prayer: “God, be merciful to me, a sinner!” We can pray this every day. Every day we need God’s grace and mercy.

## The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax-Collector

He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt: 10‘Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax-collector. 11The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, “God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax-collector. 12I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income.” 13But the tax-collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner!” 14I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted.’

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| Pharisee (older brother) | Tax collector (younger brother) |
| Doesn’t ask for anything or need anything | Asks for mercy |
| Tells his credentials, tries to impress God | Has no credentials, no attempt to impress |
| Compares himself to others | Compares himself only to God |
| Justifies himself and his actions | God justifies him |
| Thinks God needs him | Knows he needs God |
| Proud 🡪 humbled by Jesus | Humble 🡪 exalted by Jesus |
| Both men seek God in his temple |
| Both men pray—have a sense that God can be approached, sought, communicated with |
| Both men acknowledge and confess something about themselves |
| Both compare themselves to a standard (other men or God) |
| Both men get what they ask for (nothing or mercy) |
| This parable is filled with theological significance. The prayer the tax collector prays is, as Jesus says, a saving prayer. He doesn’t mention the name of Jesus, or his death on the cross, or salvation by faith, or the virgin birth. This is the minimal saving prayer, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner.” When people ask, “What about those who have never heard the name of Jesus? How can God condemn them?” The answer is that Jesus shows us an example of someone who doesn’t know (presumably, this is a parable after all) the name of Jesus, but Jesus himself says he’s saved. No one is saved apart from the blood of Jesus, but certainly lots of people will be in heaven who didn’t hear that name in their lifetime (think OT characters). Joining that group we can suppose that people in remote places have existed, never hearing of the gospel, yet somehow know through creation that God exists, and know through their own consciences that they have sinned against their creator. Instead of turning to the things they can do to impress, assuage or distract that creator God, they decide simply to throw themselves on God’s mercy, and pray this saving prayer. If they pray this prayer, they too can be saved, by virtue of the blood of Jesus, whose name they have never heard. Of course, the problem with this is that this kind of thinking is rare. The thought process of the Pharisee is much more common: I know I’ve done a few bad things, but I’ve done more than enough compensating good things to make up for it! That gets us nowhere. So, there is an answer to the question, “What about those who’ve never heard?” But it still calls for us to try to tell them! |

Luke 7:36-50

## A Sinful Woman Forgiven

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| **The Woman**Humble, desperateBold, effusive, extravagantforgiven much 🡪loves much(younger brother) | **Simon**Proud, RighteousLaid back, Not needyforgiven little🡪loves little(older brother) |

V36: dinner at the Pharisee’s house: probably an all male gathering: very intimidating for a woman of this type to barge into the dinner (uninvited, certainly!) and make such a scene.

Why was Jesus there at the Pharisee’s house? The scandal among the Pharisees was that Jesus ate with sinners. But he also ate with Pharisees. Here Jesus is reaching out to Simon, eager to forgive Simon too (if he would but ask!).

V38: this seems intentional, bold, planned, yet she allowed herself to be out of control. She was deeply touched by his love.

V39: Simon, in his thoughts, brings up the question of Jesus’ identity: certainly a prophet could see beneath the surface and know that this woman is a “sinner”. It actually probably didn’t really even take a prophet. But Jesus proves that he sees the unseen by addressing Simon’s unasked question and telling the story.

V41: Jesus raises the stakes on the identity issue by telling a story which puts himself as the creditor, when the story is properly understood. But, as they ask in v49, “Who can claim to forgive sins?” Only the one to whom the debt is owed! This is much more than simply a claim as teacher or even as prophet! This is a claim to divinity. When people sin, they create a debt to Jesus.

V42: He cancelled the debts for both of them. No struggle, no thought about the cost of cancelling these two large debts.

V43: “I suppose…” Simon is hesitant—he doesn’t like the direction this story and line of questioning is going…

V44: “Do you see this woman?” An excellent question. Simon of course sees her there, though he has scarcely looked at her directly (to preserve his righteousness, no doubt). But really, he doesn’t see *her*, he sees *her type, her kind* (v39). He knows she’s a sinner, that’s all he needs to know. But he hasn’t really seen *her*.

V44-46: Jesus says Simon didn’t offer water, kiss, olive oil—typical host-provided signs of welcome. But the woman offers tears, kisses, more expensive ointment: in each way superior to the typical but missing shows of hospitality and honor.

V44-46: To be unfavorably compared to a prostitute would be a shocker for Simon. The woman also would probably be shocked to hear Jesus make this favorable, gracious comparison. The woman humbles herself and Jesus exalts her.

V47: “her sins, which were many”: Jesus demonstrates that he does know what “kind” of woman she is: much forgiven!

V47: What is the “Therefore” there for? Jesus is not saying “Therefore she is forgiven much because she loves much. But rather, “Therefore I tell you” as in “The evidence of her forgiveness is plain in her loving actions, so I can affirm that she’s been forgiven of much.” The forgiveness comes first (based on faith) and the love comes after: gratitude at what she’s received. Faith 🡪 forgiveness = saved 🡪 shown much love🡪 go in peace.

V48: “Your sins are forgiven”: summarizing what has already happened. He says this for everyone else to know what she already knows, as if he’s pronouncing her “former sinner” not “sinner”, changing her identity.

V50: she came in turmoil, she leaves in peace

Authority faith/obedience blessing/reward sin/punishment worship

One of the Pharisees asked Jesus\* to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee’s house and took his place at the table. 37And a woman in the city, who was a sinner, having learned that he was eating in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster jar of ointment. 38She stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to bathe his feet with her tears and to dry them with her hair. Then she continued kissing his feet and anointing them with the ointment. 39Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw it, he said to himself, ‘If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him—that she is a sinner.’ 40Jesus spoke up and said to him, ‘Simon, I have something to say to you.’ ‘Teacher,’ he replied, ‘speak.’ 41‘A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii,\* and the other fifty. 42When they could not pay, he cancelled the debts for both of them. Now which of them will love him more?’ 43Simon answered, ‘I suppose the one for whom he cancelled the greater debt.’ And Jesus\* said to him, ‘You have judged rightly.’ 44Then turning towards the woman, he said to Simon, ‘Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has bathed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. 45You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet. 46You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. 47Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which were many, have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little.’ 48Then he said to her, ‘Your

sins are forgiven.’ 49But those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, ‘Who is this who even forgives sins?’ 50And he said to the woman, ‘Your faith has saved you; go in peace.’

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| **Perceptions** | **Simon** | **Woman** | **Jesus** |
| **Simon** | “Righteous,” little need for forgiveness | “sinner” | Prophet? Hah! |
| **Woman** | Male, on top of society, the opposite of her in every way | “sinner” in need of much forgiveness | Forgiver, beloved |
| **Jesus** | Sees clearly Simon’s thoughts | Really sees the woman | The creditor, forgiverJesus loves them both. |
| The story is about perceptions—self-perceptions, how we see others, how we see Jesus. Jesus sees the woman’s burden of humility and shame, and he lifts her up, exalting her before Simon. Jesus sees’ Simon’s self-righteousness, and he tries to correct that also. He has compassion on both Simon and the woman, seeing them both clearly. Not disgusted with the woman, nor impressed by Simon, he offers needed forgiveness to both. |
| Do we see ourselves as $50 sinners or as $500 or $5m sinners? How do we see others? Jesus? We know people know we are sinners, but how do we respond when others see our sin, specifically? Are we quick to deny it, to be defensive, to explain it, or simply to acknowledge it? Are we quick to blame others or compare our (minor) sins to others who have sinned more egregiously? Our self perception is key. A willingness to see ourselves, not just as theol. sinners, but as specific sinners, needing forgiveness. |

Luke 8:4-18

Authority faith/obedience blessing/reward sin/punishment

It seems that Luke links the great response from all over to Jesus’ choice to tell this parable.

V5-8: the seed is all the same, not “good seed” and “bad”: the soil differentiates the results.

V8: No sower expects 100% responsiveness. But the sower is looking for yield.

V8: “Let anyone with ears to hear listen!” Whatever the parable means, it is important!

V9: They don’t understand the parable, so they ask about it, but at least they understand that it is important. Others who didn’t understand the parable walked away without asking questions.

KEY safety tip: Do not read the Bible without asking questions!

V10: What are some of the Secrets of the Kingdom of God?

* Not understanding, but interest
* Knowing that Jesus’ words are important
* Coming to Jesus and asking questions
* Hearing, holding in their hearts and bearing fruit patiently
* Giving (attention) and getting more (words)

V10: Isaiah 6:9-10; Isaiah 55:9-11. Jesus calls, teaches people, so they’ll become insiders, asking questions and seeking the Kingdom, and come to understand.

V11-15: The Word: sower sows it; Satan takes it away; some receive it with joy; it brings trouble or persecution; choked by cares of the world; love of wealth, desire for other things; when heard and accepted, bears much fruit.

V17: nothing hidden, except to be disclosed: The purpose of confusion, in Bible study, is to be resolved. This gets and keeps people’s attention, ideally, and is how Jesus taught.

V18: “to those who have, more will be given”: it sounds so unfair. But he’s not talking about money or wealth—he’s talking about spiritual interest. To those who have (interest) will more (words, understanding) be given. Those who don’t really listen will lose what little understanding they do have.

V18: Don’t listen without really hearing! Listening is not a neutral act. Be careful what you hear!

V18: The parable of the math lecture: no one understands but a few students go to the prof after and get better explanations. They are ready when the test comes, but the crowd that walks away doesn’t get it.

## The Parable of the Sower

When a great crowd gathered and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable: 5‘A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell on the path and was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up. 6Some fell on the rock; and as it grew up, it withered for lack of moisture. 7Some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew with it and choked it. 8Some fell into good soil, and when it grew, it produced a hundredfold.’ As he said this, he called out, ‘Let anyone with ears to hear listen!’

The Purpose of the Parables

9 Then his disciples asked him what this parable meant. 10He said, ‘To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God; but to others I speak\* in parables, so that “looking they may not perceive, and listening they may not understand.”

## The Parable of the Sower Explained

11 ‘Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. 12The ones on the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. 13The ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe only for a while and in a time of testing fall away. 14As for what fell among the thorns, these are the ones who hear; but as they go on their way, they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. 15But as for that in the good soil, these are the ones who, when they hear the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patient endurance.

## A Lamp under a Jar

16 ‘No one after lighting a lamp hides it under a jar, or puts it under a bed, but puts it on a lampstand, so that those who enter may see the light. 17For nothing is hidden that will not be disclosed, nor is anything secret that will not become known and come to light. 18Then pay attention to how you listen; for to those who have, more will be given; and from those who do not have, even what they seem to have will be taken away.’

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| How can we teach or share our faith in a way that uses parables, that allows people to ask questions, and that elicits and illustrates responsiveness? | How do we remain responsive to the word as Bible study leaders? It can be tempting to think that, because I teach the word, I am good soil. But the Pharisees and Scribes thought that way. |
| If response to the word is what is important, what are ways we try to look good spiritually w/o true response to the word? Shortcuts to obedience? Leadership, teaching, sacraments, attendance, Bible knowledge… These things, as responses to the Word, help us grow spiritually. As replacements for response to the Word, create resentment, pride, disappointment with or distance from God. |
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## The True Kindred of Jesus

Luke 10:25-37

## Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus.\* ‘Teacher,’ he said, ‘what must I do to inherit eternal life?’ 26He said to him, ‘What is written in the law? What do you read there?’ 27He answered, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.’ 28And he said to him, ‘You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.’

Opener: Put the elements of the story into a modern day parallel: setting, characters, actions, motives.

V25, 29: Lawyers love posing questions to which they know the answers. Lawyers love defining terms, arguing over appropriate and contextual definitions. This lawyer expects to win this match because it is played on the lawyer’s home court.

V25: This question would be easy but fundamental, a test to determine both orthodoxy and theological sophistication.

V25: A contextual way to read v25: “What is God’s will for my life?” The lawyer implies (v29) that God’s will is not plain. Jesus points to the law and says, “God’s will is pretty plain. The issue is not knowledge, but action. Go and live it out!”

V26: What do you think of Jesus’ strategy, pointing the man to the Law? Why didn’t he talk about faith? The law is all about faith. The law teaches us to live by faith.

V26: We might take issue with the language of the man’s qn: “Hey, there is nothing you can DO…” But Jesus doesn’t. Rather, “do this and you will live.”

V29: “*Justify himself*”: 1) Justify asking such an easy question. “Ah, yes, but you fail to grasp the subtlety of the question!” 2) Justify not actually loving his neighbor: the law is a bit unclear on this point.

V29: “*Who is my neighbor?”* i.e., “I’d love my neighbor if only it wasn’t so difficult to know who I’m supposed to love.”

V29: “The real problem is not just that I’m not loving my neighbor but that God hasn’t clearly defined his terms. His problem, not mine.”

V29: What kind of answer does the lawyer expect to his question? 1) some specific definition of neighbor (every Jew 1 miles around, every Jew 2 miles around, etc) about which they could argue—to broad, too narrow, etc. 2) to agree, “Yeah, you’re right, it is hard to know exactly who a neighbor is.”

V30: *“from Jerusalem to Jericho”:* a rocky, deserted mountain road, called “the bloody way” because of common robberies.

V31: Why would they pass by? Priorities: religious, economic, societal, they couldn’t be bothered.

V31-33: the typical narrative order would be priest-Levite-Israelite. Samaritan as hero would be total shocker.

V33-35: The Samaritan’s response to the man shows a lifestyle of mercy, compassion, and generosity. This takes FAITH in God—reliance on his resources in order to live this way: resources: time $, oil, comfort, care.

V35: “Whatever more you spend”: The man writes a blank check for the care of this guy. “Whatever it takes” not three hours/week.

The Samaritan was a **servant**: 1) *sensitivity* to needs, 2) *willingness* to step in, 3) *ability* to meet the needs.

The Samaritan was a “neighbor” not a savior. He served the man, and then went on his way. He had responsibility to the man, to help him, but not responsibility for the man, to stay with him. A balanced model.

V37: *“Go and do likewise*”: Is this a rhetorical challenge so that the man will come back later and say, “I can’t do it?” Or is this a true pointer to a life of faith in God?

29 But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor?’ 30Jesus replied, ‘A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. 31Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. 34He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, “Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.” 36Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?’ 37He said, ‘The one who showed him mercy.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Go and do likewise.’

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| Jesus changes the focus of the question:  | Jesus defines terms:**Neighbor**: someone in need who crosses your path**love**: extravagant servanthood |
| Who is my neighbor? | To whom can I be a neighbor? |
| Obligation | Opportunity |
| Knowing the law | Doing the law, doing what we know |
| Testing knowledge | Testing action: What do we DO? |
| How are we like the lawyer, asking, “Who is my neighbor?”* How far do you go with this?
* How much money are you supposed to use in this way? (Or how much can we keep?)
* What is God’s will for my life?
 | Have you ever asked, “What is God’s will for my life? The answer may come back, “Love God, Love People” to which we may be likely to reply, “Ah, yes, but how, exactly?” God wants us to turn it around—how can my life be more about God’s revealed will, living out his values? |
| What would happen to us if we lived this way? We’d run out of our own resources, so we’d need God. We’d pray more, be expectant, rely on his power. Our faith would grow. (Lk 11) | **Jesus IS the Good Samaritan:** He takes half-dead people like us and uses God’s resources to build them up. He’s the one who shows mercy, and we have received it in order to demonstrate God’s love to others in need. |
| **Jesus** describes God’s economy of abundance v the economy of scarcity. To live with these priorities means that, as we serve, he serves us; as we love, we abide in Jesus’ love. As we lose our lives, Jesus will restore us, save us, bring us new life. |
| We are like the lawyer, tempted to blame God’s unclarity for our lack of love and obedience. |

Luke 12:13-21

## The Parable of the Rich Fool

V13: This request is totally out of the blue. Perhaps he is just asking for justice, but Jesus still challenges his attitude.

V14: God made Jesus judge, but he refuses to take the judge role in this case, at this time. Perhaps it is just not yet his time.

V15: “Take care!” This is an incredibly dangerous area. Like a cliff, Jesus’ words are the warning sign. DO NOT GET TOO CLOSE. DEADLY FALL. When it comes to $, we tend to want to get very close to the precipice. We think, “I can handle it. I won’t fall.”

 V15: “all kinds of greed” or “all covetousness”: central human desire—take away risk or uncertainty, get ourselves to the point where we have no worry about the future.

V16: “the land produced abundantly”: not his own hard work, but clearly God’s blessing: rain, nutrients, etc. Apart from God’s blessing, it could easily have gone differently.

Our equivalent of land: talent, abilities, time, temperament, money, even our ability to work hard: if it is productive, it is a gift from God. Failure to recognize that, to thank him or to recognize its contingency in light of God’s work in the world and in our lives, gets us into trouble.

V17: “What should I do?” A failure of imagination: the man cannot think about generosity, the needs of others, or anyone other than himself. Lots of great answers could have come to this question: “What should I do with the abundance given me by God?”

V17-19: “my crops” “my barns” “my grain” “my goods” “my soul”: this man seems to talk as if his life—his soul—consists in the abundance of his possessions.

V20: “But” The tragic “but” the turning point of the story

 V20: then “whose will they be?” God’s, which they were all along, though the man—a fool—did not realize it. This is this parable’s definition of a fool—failure to see “your things” in proper perspective—on loan from God. We are stewards, not owners. Only a fool would fail to see this or would fail to live accordingly.

V20: Even your soul can be required of you, so don’t get cocky about your possessions, your things, your abilities or land, your life.

V20: The man was a fool because he lived as if he could control his circumstances and could know his future.

V21: A man’s life “does not consist in the abundance of his possessions” (v15) but rather in his wealth “toward God”. What is relationship with God, what does that look like? (Stay tuned till next week…)

Someone in the crowd said to him, ‘Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.’ 14But he said to him, ‘Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?’ 15And he said to them, ‘Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.’ 16Then he told them a parable: ‘The land of a rich man produced abundantly. 17And he thought to himself, “What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?” 18Then he said, “I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 19And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.” 20But God said to him, “You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?” 21So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich towards God.’

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| There are two banks: treasure stored up in barns (or 401Ks and real estate) and wealth toward God. Only one of these is secure. Have you thought enough about your wealth toward God? | Is this a problem for us?* Do we have a tendency to see material blessing masking our own spiritual poverty?
* Or covetousness: replacing a thirst for rel. w/God by seeking after material things, like the man in the story who doesn’t listen to Jesus but rather gets him off track.
 |
| The man’s problem: he lacked “soul food”. His spiritual poverty was masked by material blessing, which reduced his sense of need for God. |
| Covetousness: thinking that the problem in society is caused by people who are “rich”. “We ought to tax the rich more.” Clamoring for higher taxes on the rich is an example of covetousness. So is resenting the success of others. Or blaming our problems on others’ success. |
| Life is unfair. The man at the beginning of this story is concerned for what is fair, but Jesus doesn’t reflect or encourage that concern. This man has been cheated by his brother: life’s unfairness is against him in this case. But the man in the parable has benefitted from especially productive land (made productive by God’s rain and sun and the nutrients in the soil). The man in the parable has received benefit from life’s unfairness in his favor. Unfairness in life is a given: sometimes against us, most often (for Americans) it is in our favor. Jesus’ concern is not fairness (nor should ours be) but rather contentment vs covetousness and greed. Rich and poor alike are affected by this. |

Luke 12:22-38

## Do Not Worry

 What is encouraging in these verses? What is surprising? What picture of God emerges from this passage?

V22: “Therefore”: Remember what went before: the story of the rich fool, who was NOT rich toward God. So Jesus goes on to tell us how to have treasure in heaven (v33) and to be rich toward God. Happily, it also means that the cares of this world get taken care of as well.

V23: an argument for not worrying about life, food and clothing.

V24-28: Two lesser-to-greater arguments, ravens and lilies. If God cares about birds and flowers, how much more will he care about us, if we have faith!

V28: “*you of little faith*”: thinking that God cannot or will not provide for our needs. Faith in God = look to him for your treasure.

V29-31: Our job: strive for the kingdom. God’s job: provide for the necessities of our life. We don’t work to live: we live to work (for the kingdom)! By which means we will be served by our servant king…

V32: God is not only generous; he loves being generous. He loves loving us! He takes pleasure in giving us the things we need.

V33: “Make purses for yourselves”: he could simply have said, “Don’t make purses—don’t acquire (like the rich fool did)”. But rather, he says, “Make the right kind of purses—those that don’t wear out. It is OK to want treasure—in heaven! It’s the best kind of treasure anyway!

V34: This is a statement of fact, worth pondering…

V35: “*Be dressed for action*”: literally, “gird your loins” or “put an apron on” or “fasten your belts” (see v37, same words). Be dressed for action, but in this case, action means service. “Put on your apron and get ready to serve… because the master wants to find you ready for service when he comes. And when he finds you ready for service, HE WILL SERVE YOU.”

V37: a dramatic reversal. We would expect, “Be ready for service, for when the master comes home, he’s going to call for his pipe, and his drink, his cigar and his newspaper. He’s going to want you to serve him!” But instead, we have a Master who serves! This we do not expect….

V38: “comes in the middle of the night”: like the previous story, or the rich man in Luke 16, God can come and demand our lives—if we are not ready for service, we will miss the blessing of the master.

What words describe the typical master-slave relationship? Have you ever been treated like a slave by a boss or authority figure? How did it feel?

Have you ever thought of yourself as a servant of God? How does it feel?

These slaves are dependent on their master, and they must be ready to serve. But they do not serve him—rather the picture is of a Master who Serves.

He said to his disciples, ‘Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. 23For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. 24Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! 25And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?\* 26If then you are not able to do so small a thing as that, why do you worry about the rest? 27Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin;\* yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. 28But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith! 29And do not keep striving for what you are to eat and what you are to drink, and do not keep worrying. 30For it is the nations of the world that strive after all these things, and your Father knows that you need them. 31Instead, strive for his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.

32 ‘Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. 33Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. 34For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

## Watchful Slaves

35 ‘Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit; 36be like those who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet, so that they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks. 37Blessed are those slaves whom the master finds alert when he comes; truly I tell you, he will fasten his belt and have them sit down to eat, and he will come and serve them. 38If he comes during the middle of the night, or near dawn, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves.

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| Which phrase of v32 is your favorite—or speaks most personally to you at this time? | What is surprising in these passages? How does the picture of God here fit with your own? |
| What is the goal of Jesus’ teaching? To be ready for service🡪 through which you’ll be served. Its OK to look for a reward (purses, treasure in heaven) from the one to whom you owe service. Our Father takes delight in blessing us. |
| Consider how God has served you in the midst of your serving others this past week. |

Luke 14:1-24

## Jesus Heals the Man with Dropsy

Intro questions: What makes a good party? A good guest? A good host? Are these topics you think Jesus would talk about?

Even here, Jesus is still trying to teach and invite the Pharisees to respond to need.

V2: dropsy, involves swelling, associated with sexual promiscuity by the Pharisees. A trap. This is why they are watching closely.

V3: Jesus does not ask them “Is healing work?” or “Is it lawful to work on Sunday?” These are the questions they would have been glad to speak to. He defines the terms of the debate—hence no debate at all. They are silent—speechless.

V4: Jesus, guest of honor, comes as a servant and heals the man.

V5: The man with dropsy: to Jesus, like one’ s own child. To the Pharisees, he’s just an object, a prop for their little test.

V5: Jesus’ questions silence their accusations. The sabbath’s intention to restore relationships w/family, with God.

V7: “*he told them a parable*”: how is this a parable? It sounds more like advice. It is a parable in that its application is more than simply to behavior at parties.

V7-10: He advises people to be humble *in order to be exalted.* He doesn’t mind that people want to be exalted—he just teaches them the secret strategy for how to arrange that. Jesus’ strategy involves faith, and looking to the host for your exaltation.

V10: “Friend”: friendship is a status symbol, of desired intimacy

V12: Having offended all the guests by pointing out their lapse in humility, he now offends his host, pointing out his failure to invite those most in need of a dinner.

Places of honor aren’t wrong. They will exist. Yet people seek them for themselves rather than to serve, especially those who are left out (the poor, lame, blind). What do you do with the places of honor in your life? How can we say, in different ways, “Friend, move up higher”? Honor as a currency of servanthood.

V12: “in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid”: this is exactly why they are inviting these people—to get repaid. But Jesus doesn’t have a problem with wanting to be repaid—he only has a problem with them settling for being repaid by others, rather than by the host of the banquet in the Kingdom of God, at the resurrection of the righteous…

V13: Jesus is looking for true generosity, not reciprocity.

V14: “repaid at the resurrection of the righteous”: repaid by the one from whom it really matters. The ultimate host repays you.

V15: “Blessed is anyone…” the guest hears him mention the resurrection, and thinks of that glorious feast in the kingdom, expecting that, of course, everyone at the table will be there celebrating. Jesus paints a somewhat different picture.

On one occasion when Jesus\* was going to the house of a leader of the Pharisees to eat a meal on the sabbath, they were watching him closely. 2Just then, in front of him, there was a man who had dropsy. 3And Jesus asked the lawyers and Pharisees, ‘Is it lawful to cure people on the sabbath, or not?’ 4But they were silent. So Jesus took him and healed him, and sent him away. 5Then he said to them, ‘If one of you has a child or an ox that has fallen into a well, will you not immediately pull it out on a sabbath day?’ 6And they could not reply to this.

## Humility and Hospitality

7 When he noticed how the guests chose the places of honor, he told them a parable. 8‘When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not sit down at the place of honor, in case someone more distinguished than you has been invited by your host; 9and the host who invited both of you may come and say to you, “Give this person your place”, and then in disgrace you would start to take the lowest place. 10But when you are invited, go and sit down at the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, “Friend, move up higher”; then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at the table with you. 11For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.’

12 He said also to the one who had invited him, ‘When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. 13But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. 14And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.’

[continued]

## The Parable of the Great Dinner

V15: “Blessed is anyone…” the guest hears him mention the resurrection, and thinks of that glorious feast in the kingdom, expecting that, of course, everyone at the table will be there celebrating. Jesus paints a somewhat different picture.

V21: He tells the slave to go out and invite people. [The slave does this], and (v22) comes back and reports that it has been done. There is a time delay between v21 and 22.

V21: God is not satisfied without a full house—sometimes we don’t want the house full, or fear it.

V21: “into the streets and lanes … and bring the poor, crippled, blind” these are Jews, but the ones that society has overlooked. Perhaps v23: “go out again” further, to the Gentiles, and compel them to come in also…

V24: Why does the master want the room to be full? It seems he thinks that if his dinner is not full, the original invitees, who disdained his company, might eventually decide to condescend to drop by, expecting to be welcomed into the feast. But the master wants to preclude this from happening by making sure that the entire feast is enjoyed by those most needy for it, and most grateful.

We must act on the invitation or we’ll lose our chance. If we assume we’ll be at the party and then don’t prioritize readiness to come when called we’ll miss out.

The poor bring their neediness and gratitude. Do we see God’s party as one more event on our busy social calendar or as THE thing on our agenda?

Why wouldn’t people want to go to God’s party?

* Property
* Possessions
* Business
* Romance/family/relationships
* Convenience/pride

15 One of the dinner guests, on hearing this, said to him, ‘Blessed is anyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!’ 16Then Jesus\* said to him, ‘Someone gave a great dinner and invited many. 17At the time for the dinner he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, “Come; for everything is ready now.” 18But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, “I have bought a piece of land, and I must go out and see it; please accept my apologies.” 19Another said, “I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please accept my apologies.” 20Another said, “I have just been married, and therefore I cannot come.” 21So the slave returned and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and said to his slave, “Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.” 22And the slave said, “Sir, what you ordered has been done, and there is still room.” 23Then the master said to the slave, “Go out into the roads and lanes, and compel people to come in, so that my house may be filled. 24For I tell you, none of those who were invited will taste my dinner.” ’

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| This story is not just about the invitation to come into the Kingdom of God, to become a believer. It is about that—and explains why people can fail to respond to the invitation. But it is also about the invitation we get repeatedly to move toward greater intimacy with God, greater trust in him, greater obedience to his Word. We are getting that invitation again this morning. Some of us will receive that invitation this week, and in one way or another, say “Please accept my apologies.” |
| The original party guests assume that the party is always an option. They don’t make it a priority, but they still expect to “eat bread in the Kingdom of God”. They have a surprise in store for them! | We must act on the invitation or we lose our chance. (Luke 8:18, “what they have will be taken away”) If we assume we’ll be at the party and then don’t prioritize readiness to come when called we’ll miss out.  |

Luke 14:25-35

## The Cost of Discipleship

 V25: The size of the crowds causes him to respond by speaking of the cost. If it seems that being a follower of Jesus is easy, it is because people don’t really understand what it means.

V25: The crowds are attracted by Jesus—they need to know the cost. (It’s worth it—he’s just taught about the banquet.)

V25: We tend to want people to feel comfortable. Jesus is not eager for people to feel too comfortable as they follow him.

Following Jesus means more than joining a crowd.

Does popularity itself make ministry suspect?

V26: “hate”: Temptation to compromise, to placate, to minimize, to temporize. Jesus uses the word “hate” to make the contrast clear. Primacy of commitment to Jesus (see vv1-24)

V27: “carry the cross”: identify as a criminal; “disciple” = disciplined learner.

V28-32: both building a tower and going to war are significant undertakings, purposeful, intentional, planned out. Lots of initial excitement about the project, but can you finish it? That is the question!

V30: an unfinished tower is a monument to bad planning. It is embarrassing.

V32: but fighting an unwinnable war is more than embarrassing, it is a matter of life and death

Think of the images: building a tower, of our achievements. Fighting a war: for our independence. Abandon the plans for a glorious monument to yourself, don’t go to war against God. Don’t declare independence.

V33: compare v28, v31: “*none of you can become my disciple if you do not [first sit down and consider whether you can] give up all your possessions*”

V34-35: If you want to be a disciple, then you need to live like a disciple. ½-way is worthless, flavorless.

V34: the flavor of a disciple: renunciation, devotion, dedication, single-mindedness

V35: How to recover the flavor of a disciple: “Listen!” to Jesus’ words!

9:57-62: In small groups, develop contemporary analogues for these objections. For example, “Bury my father” ≈ “place my father in a skilled nursing facility” or even “Bury my father” ≈ “get my children through high school”. Excuses for postponing active discipleship in favor of some well-meaning and noble-sounding worthy cause.

We don’t know what was in the minds of these “would-be disciples” of Jesus. Perhaps he is just giving general warnings, or perhaps he knows what’s in their hearts better than they do. But let’s try to think about what Jesus is stressing with these three folks.

V57: he could really mean, “I will follow you wherever *I* go!” or “I will follow you wherever success takes you!” He may not be expecting homelessness.

V58: “nowhere to lay his head”: are you prepared to follow someone who is not welcome in the world?

V58: “Count the cost! Are you sure you are ready to follow me wherever I go?” What the man imagines and what Jesus describes are likely pretty different.

V59: “bury my father”: His father is not likely dead. What he means is, “I need to support my parents until they die, at which point I’ll be free to follow you!” .

Now large crowds were travelling with him; and he turned and said to them, 26‘Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple. 27Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. 28For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it? 29Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to ridicule him, 30saying, “This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.” 31Or what king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand? 32If he cannot, then, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for the terms of peace. 33So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.

34 ‘Salt is good; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored?\* 35It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure heap; they throw it away. Let anyone with ears to hear listen!’

Luke 9:57-62

## A Samaritan Village Refuses to Receive Jesus

## Would-Be Followers of Jesus

57 As they were going along the road, someone said to him, ‘I will follow you wherever you go.’ 58And Jesus said to him, ‘Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.’ 59To another he said, ‘Follow me.’ But he said, ‘Lord, first let me go and bury my father.’ 60But Jesus said to him, ‘Let the dead bury their own dead; but as for you,

go and proclaim the kingdom of God.’ 61Another said, ‘I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home.’ 62Jesus said to him, ‘No one who puts a hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.’

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| V59-60: “follow me” = “go and proclaim the kingdom”. Discipleship means an invitation into ministry, proclamation | V61: “Lord, but…” He calls Jesus “Lord” but wants to define the terms of Jesus’ authority.  |
| V60: Jesus speaks of the priority of the Kingdom over family relationships. | V62: Jesus calls his followers to be devoted, not divided. |
| What does it mean for us as followers of Jesus that we must “hate” our families? | Hate: passion, emotion, heartfelt distance= we don’t organize around our parents’ hopes for our lives. There will be conflict with those close to us. |
| Some won’t follow Jesus but those who are worst off are those who try to do it half-way. |
| V26: Sometimes our friends and families will consider our gospel-motivated choices as hateful, even while we love them, just not as much as we love God. Or we are more truly loving them but in ways they cannot perceive. They just feel the loss. | Following Jesus involves a high price. But would we really want it any other way? “Don’t sell **all**—it’s not worth that!” |

Luke 15:1-10

Now all the tax-collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. 2And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, ‘This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.’

 These are the first two of three stories: 1) the lost sheep, 2) the lost coin, 3) the lost boys. The lost objects are passive, the lost sons active.

Why don’t the Pharisees see things the way Jesus does?

* People on top tend to believe that people get what they deserve
* The lost are commodities, not part of a treasured set. They’d no more seek out a lost one than seek out a raisin that fell off the table into a grate.

A church that isn’t putting energy into seeking the lost will complain and grumble and put its energy into labeling people: “Sinners!” etc.

Jesus again takes two unlikely characters and uses them as standins for God: a shepherd, who was low on the social totem pole, and a woman.

V3: “Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness…” Does Jesus really expect that this would be a common occurrence? Wouldn’t it be likely that these religious leaders, if they own sheep, also have people to do their flock tending? Would they, personally, leave the sheep in the wilderness to go after the one? Wouldn’t they delegate out the task? Or actually, wouldn’t they figure that 100+/-1 is approximately correct, and not worry about the rounding error. “One sheep out of a hundred—that is acceptable tolerance…”

V6, v9: “Rejoice with me”: the finders want others to rejoice and enter into their joy. They want their friends to see the finding the way they do. See 15:32, the Father wants his older son to rejoice in the return of the lost younger son. “We had to celebrate…”

V7: The Pharisees would have done a lot of thinking about what brings joy to God in heaven, but they would not have assumed that one sinner’s repentance would be more pleasing to God than a whole church-full of “righteous” people

V7: lost things get God’s attention, not the un-lost.

V10: “joy in heaven” “joy in the presence of the angels of God”: joy is shared in community, among those who know what it is like to be lost and then found. Who know (truly) what being found means.

that chance search everyone have

3 So he told them this parable: 4‘Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? 5When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. 6And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, “Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.” 7Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who need no repentance.

## The Parable of the Lost Coin

8 ‘Or what woman having ten silver coins,\* if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? 9When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, “Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.” 10Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.’

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| We tend to think of the lost the way we think of commodities or cash: one more or less doesn’t matter that much. But God thinks of them like the woman: they are part of a set. Bring the set back together: seek the lost. | We celebrate all sorts of things: our sports team winning a game, anniversaries and birthdays, important milestones or accomplishments. Do we value people entering the kingdom, experiencing their spiritual birthday? |
| Our church should be oriented towards the LOST, people who can repent, who know their need for God. That is where the heavenly joy is. | Do we think the lost deserve what they get? Do we deserve what we get? Their minds are darkened, and they are in the grip of the enemy. We must have compassion. |
| From 14:25-33, we see a call to leave behind our possessions. Here we hear that God has left all to find us. If our possessions keep us from God, we aren’t experiencing being lost and being found by God. Possessions also keep us from being a finder; they keep us from entering into the heart of God. | 1. Who is lost and how do you know?
2. How and when do they discover that they are lost?
3. List 10 people you know who are lost:
	1. Older brother types
	2. Younger brother types
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Luke 16:1-9

## The Parable of the Dishonest Manager

 V1: The manager is like an accountant and a manager combined—he kept the books, but he had delegated authority to enter into and execute contracts. He is fired because, instead of buying low and selling high, he was doing the reverse.

V1: “squandering his property”: What would be the hardest to hear: “You’ve squandered time, money, relationships, opportunities.

V3-4: He only considers a limited range of options: 1) his current white collar job, which he’s losing, 2) manual labor, 3) begging, or 4) graft. Graft (white collar crime) is by far the easiest.

V4: Time elapses:he thinks through his options, and then makes a plan.

V5: He gives away his masters money by changing the accounts on the books. We know that this is illicit by the word “quickly”—don’t get caught!

V6-7: He’s fudging the books by different amounts, so as to make detection more difficult.

Commentators have a problem with this passage: it seems like they want to make this guy honest. Perhaps the master was cheating by charging interest, which Jewish law forbids, and the man was simply removing the interest charges. But this doesn’t make sense of the parable, or of Jesus’ comment on him: “dishonest manager”. No, Jesus has the master (a stand-in for God) commending the dishonest manager because of his shrewdness. This is a stumper for some commentators.

V8: Yet surprise, the master does catch him. We expect the master to punish, or at least condemn the dishonest manager because he has been cheated. But instead, he commends him because he acted shrewdly. This is what he was looking for in a manager: shrewdness. In fact, this is what he was fired for: squandering = not being shrewd. So after being fired, the master catches the manager in an act of (uncharacteristic) shrewdness: Who knew? Why couldn’t you have pulled out some of that shrewdness in my service?

V9: why “*dishonest wealth*”? another way to put it might be “worldly wealth”. It is dishonest because it lies to us: we can think it belongs to us but it really belongs to God. We are stewards, not owners. (Ps 50:12: “*for the world and all that is in it is mine.*”)

V9: “*when it is gone*” not “if”: Money will fail at the point of death. No uncertainty about that.

V9: the fullest definition of friendship: the desire to party with our friends in heaven forever. [Marriage is not forever –Mark 12:25—but friendship can be, if people become believers…

Definition of shrewd: using limited resources for maximum impact

What made it possible for the man to be generous: He knew two things: 1) the money wasn’t his, and 2) he wouldn’t have access to it for very long. These things are also true of us: all of our resources are God’s and we will not have access to it for very long. We are managers of God’s resources, to use them the way he’d want: shrewdly!

How do we invest our resources so that we’ll have more eternal friends?

Then Jesus\* said to the disciples, ‘There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was squandering his property. 2So he summoned him and said to him, “What is this that I hear about you? Give me an account of your management, because you cannot be my manager any longer.” 3Then the manager said to himself, “What will I do, now that my master is taking the position away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. 4I have decided what to do so that, when I am dismissed as manager, people may welcome me into their homes.” 5So, summoning his master’s debtors one by one, he asked the first, “How much do you owe my master?” 6He answered, “A hundred jugs of olive oil.” He said to him, “Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it fifty.” 7Then he asked another, “And how much do you owe?” He replied, “A hundred containers of wheat.” He said to him, “Take your bill and make it eighty.” 8And his master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly; for the children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light. 9And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth\* so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes.\*

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|  | Children of this ageWorldly businesspeople | Children of lightDisciples of Jesus | We can fail to be generous when we forget that $ isn’t ours and that we won’t have it for very long (it seems long to us). We need to expand our time horizon, and think with an eternal perspective. |
| Shrewdness: | Duplicity, cunning | Generosity |
| Goal: | Gain money | Love people |
| Tool: | Use people | Use money |
| Motto: | “Use people to make money” | “Use money to love people” |
| The master was a shrewd businessperson himself. He had fired the manager because the manager was not shrewd in his dealings. So, in a moment of desperation, this inept manager developed a plan that was uncharacteristically shrewd. When the master discovered the plan, his own appreciation for shrewd thinking (even though at the same time he was dismayed about it) made him commend his former manager for this unexpected display of brilliance. |
| People tend to think, “Friends just click.” Intentionality seems not sincere—manipulative. “If I’m strategically pursuing people then they can’t really be my friends.” Yet we spend money on things that we think are important. Jesus is saying to invest in friendships that make an eternal difference. | On this earth the only eternal investments we can make are in people. Degrees, buildings, corporations, etc. will all end. People, for good or ill, are eternal beings. Jesus is inviting us to use the resources entrusted to us for maximum impact. |
| The gospel says that God so loved people that he spent his only-begotten son on the cross in order to save them. God used his resources to make friends who would celebrate with him in heaven. Jesus is telling us to do the same. |

Luke 16:19-31

## The Rich Man and Lazarus

V10-18: Jesus is teaching the religious leaders, who have problems with his teaching about money and wealth.

V19: evidences of outrageous wealth: fine food, fine clothing. Purple, connoting royalty, ostentatious wealth. But we eat and live this way today in the US. How does our spending on these kinds of things affect our ability to share with the poor?

V20: “Lazarus”: derived from Eleazar, “one whom God helps”. The only named character in any of Jesus’ parables. Unusually, the rich man is unnamed while the poor man given a (significant) name.

V22: The earthly reality of these two lives is just the context for the story. Death comes for both men. The action in this story all takes place after death.

V23: Jesus always communicates about Hell as if it is a real place of torment, and not simply a place of imagined or metaphorical torment.

V24: The rich man is used to ordering people to do his bidding, especially someone as lowly as Lazarus. But he doesn’t address Lazarus directly (on what basis could he appeal to Lazarus?) but rather to the big wig in heaven that he has boldness to ask to send Lazarus.

V24: The flames licking the rich man in death is parallel to the dogs licking Lazarus’ sores in life.

V24: The rich man asks for mercy, water. He’s sorry he’s there, but he’s not particularly repentant.

V25: the reversal. This is simply what is fair. God was at work in Lazarus helping him to learn to live by faith. The rich man never did learn how to do that.

V26: Two chasms: between the dead in Hell and Heaven, and between the rich and the poor. The rich man never learned how to break down that chasm in life, and it became fixed in death.

V27-28: The rich man thinks the reason he and his brothers live the way they do is that they have never gotten a really clear message about what is required. They need a messenger who will warn them so that they won’t end up here. At one level, a touching concern for his brothers.

V29: Abraham says, actually, Moses and the prophets have already been clear. They should just act on what they read there. It is not God’s fault that the rich man and his brothers don’t believe.

V31: Of course, this is a prophetic statement: Jesus is saying that even his own resurrection will not bring some people around to repentance, including most of the Pharisees and religious leaders.

The question is, “How did the rich man end up in Hades? He believed in God, was aware of Moses and the prophets, honored Abraham as his Father. Was it simply his wealth?

This parable illustrates the last: the rich man didn’t use the worldly wealth entrusted to him to make friends for himself, and not only found himself friendless, but also on the wrong side of the “great chasm”.

We think “Buy friends” or you won’t have any when you get to heaven. But this story says more: “Buy friends” or you may not end up in heaven!

‘There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. 20And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, 21who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man’s table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. 22The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. 23In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side.\* 24He called out, “Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames.” 25But Abraham said, “Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. 26Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us.” 27He said, “Then, father, I beg you to send him to my father’s house— 28for I have five brothers—that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment.” 29Abraham replied, “They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.” 30He said, “No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.” 31He said to him, “If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.” ’

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| The great chasm didn’t begin so large—in life it was simply a fence and a gate. But the rich man made no efforts to break down those temporary barriers (for example, by bringing a cup of water for Lazarus, or by inviting him to eat at his table), which became fixed at the point of death. | Here we have Jesus’ biting critique of the hypocritical rel. leaders, who were “lovers of $”, not people or God. They claim to honor Moses, but they don’t listen to Moses, and they won’t be convinced even if someone rises from the dead (like Jesus). |
| The chasm between rich and poor: which side am I on? Using resources to break down barriers, or to build them up? Suburbs as pre-chasms. | The rich man wouldn’t have been saved simply by giving to the poor, but he could have been saved from his selfishness and idolatry by entering into a rel. with Lazarus. |
| Imagine if he’d invited Lazarus in for a meal, noticed his sores, asked about medical care, advocated for Lazarus with the clinic, paid his bills. The chasm would have been crossed, and in faithful death the rich man would have enjoyed the company of Lazarus (and Abraham) in heaven, as Luke 16:9 indicates: he would have had a friend to welcome him there! |

Luke 19:11-27

## The Parable of the Ten Pounds

 V11: This teaching is meant to help people understand that there will be a delay between now and the full consummation of the Kingdom of God, and to partly understand its purpose—to demonstrate risk in faith.

V12: “a distant country to get royal power”: This is what a king in Judea would do: Go to Rome to be invested as King (by the Emperor) and then return. This had happened recently: Archelaus, son of Herod, went to Rome.

V13: “pound”, literally a mina, or 100 denarii, or 3-4 months’ wage for a laborer. Say $5K to 10K for each slave.

V14: Why does he tell us of the nobleman being hated? It makes the activity and trading of the slaves that much more extraordinary, being as they might be associated with the nobleman and hated as well.

V14: Jesus is going to Jerusalem, where he will also be rejected. Yet ultimately he will return and he will rule.

V15: He is eager to know how they did, not to get his money back.

V16: 1000% increase, means the servant has made big risks with this money. It would be difficult to get this kind of a return with safe investing.

V17: “very small thing” the money was a small amount for the king. He wasn’t trying to make money off the efforts of others. Rather, he was looking for managers he could trust, and he finds them by giving a small task, sharing a small amount of his wealth, to test each slaves’ faithfulness.

V18-19: 500% return. Proportional responsibility doled out. Satisfactory result.

It is interesting in this story there is no example of a man who really tried to risk and invest his pound but ended up with nothing. Risks in faith seem to bring a payoff. The third example is not an example of a failed risk-taker, but of a person who didn’t trust the nobleman to be fair or generous.

V21: “*take what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow*”: stock cliché phrase for a harsh miser.

V21: “you take what you did not deposit”: It seems that this man has a very warped idea of the nobleman: actually the truth is the opposite. His pound is given to the one with 10, because the master trusts him the most. He isn’t a miser or a cheater, he’s generous and an investor.

V22: “wicked slave”: he’s wicked because he maligns his master and acts on a false picture of his master.

V22-23: The master rejects this slave because he wasn’t shrewd with his master’s money. He didn’t understand the master and has misjudged his motives. The master becomes harsh to the slave who expected him to be harsh.

V24-25: People object to the seeming unfairness, but the master is being shrewd: investing resources for maximum impact.

V26: Luke 8:18 again: about responsiveness to the Word: do we act on what we’ve received? Do we take risks with and invest with what we’ve been entrusted?

V27: There will be a day when those who have rejected Jesus’ authority will be, in turn, rejected by Jesus. Do not mistake patience with enemies for incompetence. This is not a democracy.

As they were listening to this, he went on to tell a parable, because he was near Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately. 12So he said, ‘A nobleman went to a distant country to get royal power for himself and then return. 13He summoned ten of his slaves, and gave them ten pounds, and said to them, “Do business with these until I come back.” 14But the citizens of his country hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, “We do not want this man to rule over us.” 15When he returned, having received royal power, he ordered these slaves, to whom he had given the money, to be summoned so that he might find out what they had gained by trading. 16The first came forward and said, “Lord, your pound has made ten more pounds.” 17He said to him, “Well done, good slave! Because you have been trustworthy in a very small thing, take charge of ten cities.” 18Then the second came, saying, “Lord, your pound has made five pounds.” 19He said to him, “And you, rule over five cities.” 20Then the other came, saying, “Lord, here is your pound. I wrapped it up in a piece of cloth, 21for I was afraid of you, because you are a harsh man; you take what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.” 22He said to him, “I will judge you by your own words, you wicked slave! You knew, did you, that I was a harsh man, taking what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow? 23Why then did you not put my money into the bank? Then when I returned, I could have collected it with interest.” 24He said to the bystanders, “Take the pound from him and give it to the one who has ten pounds.” 25(And they said to him, “Lord, he has ten pounds!”) 26“I tell you, to all those who have, more will be given; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. 27But as for these enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them—bring them here and slaughter them in my presence.” ’

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| Three kinds of people in this story: 1) faithful slaves, 2) wicked slaves who are embarrassed by their king, 3) enemies of the king. | We don’t tend to think of risk aversion as wicked, but it is motivated by a lack of faith in God, a misunderstanding of God’s character. This is a result of sin. We must repent of our unwillingness to take risks with our lives, $, time. |
| We hear people say, “Not called to be successful, just called to be faithful.” And often “faithful” seems to be just quiet acceptance of our fruitless lives. But this is a picture where faith means risk means fruit. We climb out on a branch where if God wasn’t in it, we’d fall. Why? Because that’s where the fruit is! |
| Low risk portfolios: many activities, no focus. Success on the world’s terms AND in the kingdom. Lots of options and fall back positions if faith-risks don’t pan out. High risk: invest highly in something that can fail; see God work! |
| How we trade depends on our vision of the master. IF we trust in his goodness, we will feel free to take risks. |