



Parables of Jesus

STUDY GUIDE

BIBLE COURSES
COLLECTION

PARABLES OF JESUS, PDF E-BOOK

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SCRIPTURE TRANSLATION

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No translation of Scripture is perfect and without slight pollutions of the interpretations of man. The has been selected based upon the fact that it is a word-for-word translation of the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts of Scripture using current English language. We value other translations such as the King James (KJV) and New King James (NKJV) versions of Scripture for their accuracy and also, New International (NIV) and New Living (NLT) translations for their readability.

All Biblical definitions in this book are from Strong's Hebrew and Greek Lexicon, Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon, and Thayer's Greek Lexicon.

Parables of Jesus

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COURSE DESCRIPTION & INTRODUCTION: 10 UNITS

This course will impart an in-context revelation of the Parables of Jesus, in order to know Him and understand His teachings so that you might apply them to your life and do them.

PRAY FOR REVELATION:

Before taking this course, pray and ask the Lord to give you wisdom and revelation as you grow in your knowledge of Him. We are believing with you that the Lord will illuminate His word for you through this course and open your mind to understand the Scriptures and the truth of Jesus like never before.

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Unit One: The Purpose of Parables

With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it. He did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything.

Mark 4:33-34

A. Why Jesus Spoke in Parables

1. Jesus spoke in parables so that so that only those with ears to hear would understand what He was revealing about the Kingdom of God

Matthew 13:10-17 - 10 Then the disciples came and said to him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" 11 And he answered them, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. 12 For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. 13 This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. 14 Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says:

"You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive."

15 For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.'

16 But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. 17 For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it."

2. Jesus quotes and is the greater fulfillment of Isaiah 6.
 - a. After Isaiah saw the glory of the Lord and had his lips cleansed, he offered himself as a servant, saying, "Here am I. Send me!" Then the Lord instructed Isaiah what to say.

Isaiah 6:9-13 - 9 And he said, "Go, and say to this people: "'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' 10 Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed." 11 Then I said, "How long, O Lord?" And he said: "Until cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without people, and the land is a desolate waste, 12 and the LORD removes people far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land. 13 And though a tenth remain in it, it will be burned again, like a terebinth or an oak, whose stump remains when it is felled." The holy seed is its stump.

- b. Isaiah's calling was to preach the truth until the heart, ears, and eyes were closed off to God completely. He was to continue proclaiming the word of the Lord until the calamities promised by God came upon the people to bring utter destruction and only a "stump" remained.

3. Jesus speaking in parables is also the fulfillment of Psalm 78.

Matthew 13:34-35 - 34 All these things Jesus said to the crowds in parables; indeed, he said nothing to them without a parable. 35 This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet: "I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world."

- a. Psalm 78 as a reason for parables is mentioned only in Matthew's Gospel because his audience was primarily Jewish. As such, they would have known this was the opening passage of Psalm 78, which inferred the applicability of the remainder of the Psalm without quoting the entire Psalm.
- b. Psalm 78 was written by Asaph, recounting the story of Israel's repeated rebellion against God, forgetfulness of His goodness toward them, and testing God through their unbelief. Even though they had seen and experienced God's miraculous signs and wonders, they stiffened their necks and refused to believe Him.
- c. Psalm 78 also concludes with recognizing David as the chosen leader of God. David's descendant, the Messiah would lead God's people with righteousness and skill.
- d. Matthew's Gospel was written to refute and dispel the erroneous ideas held by the Jewish religious leaders about the coming Messiah and the Kingdom of God. His intent was that Jews who heard the word of Messiah would not stiffen their necks as their ancestors did or if they did, that quoting this would be a testimony against them.

B. A Parable is a Proverb.

1. Hebrew word for proverb.

Word Study: Strong's Hebrew-H4912: Mashal/masal: A proverb or parable; 1) a proverbial saying, aphorism; 2) byword; 3) similitude, parable; 4) poem; 5) sentences of ethical wisdom, ethical maxims

- a. Solomon wrote the Book of Proverbs as a collection of wisdom sayings. The purpose of a Proverb is to give instruction so that hearers gain wisdom and understanding for righteous living, observation and application of the truth and the fear of the Lord.

Proverbs 1:2-6 - 2 To know wisdom and instruction, to understand words of insight, 3 to receive instruction in wise dealing, in righteousness, justice, and equity; 4 to give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth-- 5 Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance, 6 to understand a proverb and a saying, the words of the wise and their riddles.

- b. Jesus is one "greater than Solomon." (Matthew 12:42; Luke 11:31) Jesus is the wisdom of God. (1 Corinthians 1:24, 30.)

2. Jesus' primary message was, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!" The cry of His heart was for people to repent of their foolish ways, turn to Him, and be spared from the wrath of God coming when the Kingdom of God overthrows the kingdoms of this world. This is the same cry of wisdom personified in the Book of Proverbs. Those who will not listen to wisdom will suffer the consequences.

a. *Proverbs 1:23-33 - 23 If you turn at my reproof, behold, I will pour out my spirit to you; I will make my words known to you. 24 Because I have called and you refused to listen, have stretched out my hand and no one has heeded, 25 because you have ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproof, 26 I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when terror strikes you, 27 when terror strikes you like a storm and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you. 28 Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but will not find me. 29 Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD, 30 would have none of my counsel and despised all my reproof, 31 therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way, and have their fill of their own devices. 32 For the simple are killed by their turning away, and the complacency of fools destroys them; 33 but whoever listens to me will dwell secure and will be at ease, without dread of disaster."*

| Wisdom's Cry | Jesus' Cry |
|---|--|
| Turn at my rebuke, leave your simple ways. (Proverbs 1:23, 8:5, 9:6.) | Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand. (Mark 1:15) |
| Whoever is simple, come to me. (Proverbs 8:1-4, 9:4) | Follow Me. (Matthew 4:19) |
| I will show you the way of life. (Proverbs 8:6-9) | I AM the way, the truth, and the life. (John 14:6) |
| The wise will be made wiser. (Proverbs 1:5, 9:9) | Those who have, more will be given. (Luke 8:18) |
| Since you disregard my advice and do not accept my rebuke, I will mock when calamity overtakes you. (Proverbs 1:24-27) | For the one who rejects Me and does not accept my words; the very words I have spoken will judge them on the last day. (John 12:48) |
| They will call to me but I will not answer; they will look for me but not find me. (Proverbs 1:28-31) | On that day I will say to you, "I never knew you, you workers of lawlessness." (Matthew 7:22-23) |
| Whoever listens to me will live in safety and be at ease, without fear of harm. (Proverbs 1:32-33) | If you continue in My word... you will know the truth and the truth will set you free. (John 8:31-32) |

C. Types of Parables/Proverbs, One Main Point

1. Parables will often include a transition such as "Therefore" or "truly truly" to draw the reader to attention for the explanation of the main point of the parable.
2. Parables often take on various forms of expression to emphasize the point the speaker is making to the hearers. (This is not an all-inclusive list.)
3. Similitude: Saying that something is like something else to drive home one main point.

- a. Example: The Kingdom of Heaven is like...
4. Contrast: Juxtaposing different or opposite things to drive home one main point.
 - a. Example: Parable of the Two Sons: one obeys, one does not.
 - b. Example: The Wicked Servant and the Faithful Servant in same passages.
 5. Pairing: Saying the same thing two different ways to drive home one main point.
 - a. Example: Parable of the Mustard Seed and Parable of Leaven are always side by side to drive home the point that something starting small grows into something big.
 - b. Example: Parable of the New Cloth and Parable of the New Wineskin are always side by side to drive home one main point that new cannot mix with old.
 6. Climactic: A series of parables given in sequence leading to and driving home one ultimate point.
 - a. Example: Parable of the Lost Sheep → Parable of the Lost Coin → Parable of the Prodigal Son.
 - i. These in sequence together drives home the value of people in God's sight.
 - b. Example: Parable of the Hidden Treasure → Parable of the Pearl of Great Price → Parable of the Dragnet.
 - i. These in sequence together drives home the point that the Kingdom of God will include those who weren't looking and found it, and those who were searching and found it, because it is available to all people equally.
 7. Comparative/"It is better..."/"How Much More...": Comparing things which seem different, or valuing one thing above another to drive home one main point.
 - a. Example: If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter eternal life maimed than to have two hands and enter eternal fire.
 - b. Example: If you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give...
 8. Story: A more lengthy discourse told to drive towards one ultimate point to the hearers. It is often told against the hearer without being direct accusation. (Old Testament example of Nathan to David about the poor man's lamb.)
 - a. Example: Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard is prompted by Peter asking, "What will we get for leaving everything for you?" Then, He tells this Parable which expresses His point in that all will receive the same pay.
 - b. Example: Parables of the Tenants is told in response to religious leaders challenging His authority. He tells this Parable against them to express His point that their authority is being revoked because they have not produced righteous fruit.

D. Contrasting Parables to Other Forms of Speech

1. Parable vs. Allegory/Type/Shadow: Biblical allegory is recognizing a type or shadow from the Old Testament which has been fulfilled in Christ. By definition, an allegory is, "a story, poem, or picture that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning, typically a moral or political one."¹ In an allegory, abstract concepts are typically personified or symbolized as characters, places, or things. (For example, Pilgrim's Progress is an allegory of the Christian journey.)
 - a. Example: "As Moses lifted up the snake, the Son of Man must be lifted up." (John 3:14) Jesus is using allegory from an Old Testament story/historical event to point to Himself as its ultimate and eternal fulfillment.
 - b. Example: "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." (John 1:29) John is using allegory to point to Jesus as the ultimate sacrifice offering for sin, fulfilling the sacrifice requirement of the Law of Moses.
 - c. Example: Paul's use of allegory to describe our freedom in Christ based on the story of Hagar and Sarah from the time of the patriarchs. (Galatians 4:21-31; Genesis 21:8-14)

Allegories typically have multiple elements which may be symbolic or have significance. In contrast, the elements in parables serve only to drive towards one main point and should not be over-scrutinized. There have been many throughout church history whose use of allegorical interpretation of parables have diverted from a simple reading of the parable and disregarded Jesus' intended meaning by creating/imposing metaphoric meaning into the elements of the parables.

For example, in 2nd Century Theologian Origen's allegorical interpretation of the Parable of the Good Samaritan, the beaten man signified fallen Adam, the priest represented the Law, the Levite represented the Prophets, the donkey represented Christ's physical body which bore our sins, and the Samaritan signified what Christ's sacrifice did for us.

However, Jesus told this parable for a singular purpose in response to being asked the question, "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus concluded the parable with His own question in return, "Which one of these was a neighbor?" and then gave the point of the parable which is, "Go and do likewise."

2. Parable vs. Illustration: By definition, an illustration is "A comparison or an example intended for explanation or corroboration; the act or process of illuminating; the act of clarifying or explaining."² Illustrations are used by teachers/preachers in an attempt to assist the hearers in their ability to understand their teaching.
 - a. Jesus clearly stated that aiding understanding was not the intent of His parables. Jesus did not use illustrations.
3. The context leading up to and the conclusion of the parables of Jesus is highly significant to understanding the point He is making through the parables.

¹ Oxford Dictionary

² Dictionary.com

- a. Jesus often gave a parable as an answer or response to a specific question being asked
 - i. Example: The questions, "What is the greatest command...Who is my neighbor?" were answered through Jesus telling the Parable of the Good Samaritan.
- b. Jesus gave parables in the context of teaching on a specific subject.
 - i. Example: Teaching "the last will be first and the first will be last" led into the Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard, which also concluded with "the last will be first and the first will be last."
- c. The final point or concluding line of the parable is key to understanding the intended implication of the parable as a whole. This is particularly important for longer parables which incorporate several concepts and characters in the middle of the parable. The final concept is the main point of what Jesus was driving towards the whole time He was telling the parable.

E. Context by Gospel Writer

1. Parables in the Gospel of Mark. Mark was the first Gospel written by Mark who was the Apostle Peter's scribe to relay the essentials of the faith to believers. As essentials, almost all of Jesus' parables in Mark are also covered by Matthew and/or Luke. Mark and/or Peter's intent was to encourage believers (both Jewish & Gentile followers of Jesus) so that they could endure in faith through increasingly intense persecution against Christians. In the Book of Mark, Jesus is portrayed as the humble Servant of the Lord who was obedient even unto death and was resurrected to eternal life.
2. Parables in the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew was the second Gospel account written by Matthew/Levi an apostle of Jesus. As a tax collector, Matthew emphasizes parables pertaining to money more than any other Gospel writer. Matthew was Jewish and his audience was predominantly Jewish. Because of this, Matthew refers to the Kingdom of God as the "Kingdom of Heaven" due to the fact that Jews do not utter the holy name of God. Matthew emphasizes parables of Jesus which reveal that the Kingdom of Heaven is different than the Jews were expecting and that Jesus is the Messiah to whom they will have to give account on the day of judgment to come. In the Book of Matthew, Jesus is portrayed as the Son of David, the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies to Israel. Matthew is also the only Gospel writer to quote the Scriptures Isaiah 6 and Psalm 78 as being fulfilled by Jesus speaking in parables.
3. Parables in the Gospel of Luke. Luke was the third Gospel account written by Luke, a physician who set out to research and relay an accurate and orderly account of the life and ministry of Jesus. With a mixed Jewish and Gentile audience, Luke emphasized parables of Jesus for the poor, the weak, the outsider i.e. Good Samaritan, Prodigal Son, Pharisee & Tax Collector, Persistent Widow, etc.) Luke also highlights the significant role of women more than any other Gospel writer. In the Book of Luke, Jesus is portrayed as the Son of Man who redeems all mankind.
4. Parables in the Book of John. John is the latest Gospel written by the Apostle John to prove the deity of Jesus to a Jewish & Gentile audience of persecuted believers and with evangelical intent to reveals Jesus to unbelievers. John's Gospel does not include any parables per se but in some ways, John is more allegorical and more literal than the synoptic Gospels. John incorporates

imagery from the Old Testament and marks time by the Biblical Feasts, but also emphasizes the literal "I AM" declarations of Jesus which are not found in the other Gospels. In the Book of John, Jesus is clearly portrayed as the Son of God and indeed, even as God in the flesh.

F. Fragrance of Life or Death

1. Parables are intended to lead us in the way of Jesus. His message is one that is the fragrance and light of life to those who are being saved but is veiled and has the stench of death to those who are perishing. (2 Corinthians 2:15, 4:3)
2. Some parables were Jesus' way of talking about what He was doing at the moment to those who did not understand Him or His ways.

For example, He taught the Parable of the Sower about the four different types of soils representing the various responses various individuals have to the Gospel message. In context, this was after He had been received as the Messiah by some and accused of working for Satan by others. The parable was His way of explaining His mission and what was happening right then in those moments.

3. At the very beginning of His ministry, in His hometown of Nazareth, Jesus quoted a well-known parable to the people, "Physician, heal yourself." This was not a proverb of Solomon but was probably commonly used by Romans, Greeks, and Jews in that day.

Luke 4:23 - 23 And he said to them, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Physician, heal yourself.' What we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well."

The meaning of the proverb is the supposition that someone cannot heal another of a malady which ails them personally. The people of Nazareth rejected Jesus due to their own unbelief and presumptuous familiarity with Him. It was their own unbelief which caused Jesus to not be able to do many miracles for them. (Mark 6:5) After quoting this parable, He reminded the people of other instances from Jewish history.

Luke 4:24-27 - 24 And he said, "Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown. 25 But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land, 26 and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. 27 And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian."

This explanation appears only in the Book of Luke who was emphasizing the inclusion of Gentiles in God's promises to Israel. The Jews were not expecting Gentiles to be included in the purpose of Messiah even though it is the fulfillment of prophetic Scriptures. However, Jesus knew from the beginning of His ministry that He would be rejected by His own people in Nazareth, but also as the Messiah of the Jewish people, and even as savior of the whole world. When Jesus was being crucified on the cross, He was mocked by Gentile rulers with similar words.

Luke 23:35 - 35 And the people stood by, watching, but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!"

Though He could have called twelve legions of angels to spare Himself from the horrors of the cross, Jesus did not. Taking up His cross to suffer at the hands of sinners, even unto death was the eternal purpose of God rather than using His deity and power to save Himself. (Philippians 2:6-8) This was also unexpected.

People were expecting a "lion" to come and conquer the Gentiles by granting conclusive military victory to Israel. Instead, Jesus came as a "lamb" who suffered as a sacrifice for sin. People were expecting a Messiah who would bring blessing to Israel and condemnation to Gentiles. Instead, Jesus shed His blood for the sins of the whole world so that anyone from any nation, tribe, or tongue could believe Him and be saved. People were expecting a "Physician who would heal Himself." Instead, Jesus came as the Savior of mankind in the form of a Suffering Servant who gave His life to save and heal others.

4. In the middle part of His ministry, Jesus spoke to the multitudes about not judging others and told a parable about becoming like Him.

Luke 6:39-40 - 39 He also told them a parable: "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? 40 A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher."

- a. This parable uses the imagery of a blind person leading another blind person. Clearly, if both people are blind then neither one of them know and they could both be in grave danger.
 - b. Yet, Jesus then changes imagery to express that a student who learns fully from their teacher should be able to do what the teacher can do.
 - c. He proceeds into the parable of the plank in your eye (to be covered later) about the process of being taught how to see clearly and how to assist others who we think are "blind."
 - d. Until we go through this process, we are no better than blind guides. But once we have been trained by Jesus, who is the Judge of all things, we will be able to discern correctly and serve others the way He does.
5. At the Last Supper before His crucifixion, Jesus spoke figuratively because the disciples could not handle plain speech without before the Holy Spirit was poured out. Jesus looked forward to the day when He would soon be able to speak to His disciples plainly.

John 16:12-13 - 12 "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. 13 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come."

John 16:25 - "I have said these things to you in figures of speech. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech but will tell you plainly about the Father."

- a. Without the Holy Spirit, the disciples did not understand what Jesus was talking about, particularly as it pertained to His suffering, death, and resurrection. But once the Holy Spirit was poured out, they understood what the parables meant.

Therefore: Ask God to give you wisdom and revelation throughout this course and to give you insight into the simple and intended meaning of the Parables of Jesus.

Unit Two: The Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 13)

All these things Jesus said to the crowds in parables; indeed, he said nothing to them without a parable.

Matthew 13:34

A. Context 1:

Earlier in this day, while Jesus was healing the sick and casting out demons, the people wondered if He might be the Messiah: the promised Son of David who would usher in the Kingdom of God. However, the Pharisees accused Jesus of working for Satan. He warned them about blaspheming the Holy Spirit. They demanded a sign from Him, but He refused to give them any sign except the sign of Jonah. Jesus emphasized that a tree must be made good in order to bear good fruit because a tree is known by its fruit. They may be His biological brethren, but they were a brood of vipers. His true family consists of those who do the will of God from the heart. (See Matthew 12.)

Matthew 13:1-3a - 1 That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. 2 And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. 3 And he told them many things in parables...

1. **Parable of the Sower** (Matthew 13:3-9; Mark 4:2-9; Luke 11:17-18.)

Matthew 13:3-9 - 3 And he told them many things in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow. 4 And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. 5 Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, 6 but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. 7 Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. 8 Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. 9 He who has ears, let him hear."

The Parable Explained. (Matthew 13:18-23; Mark 4:14-20; Luke 8:11-15.)

Matthew 13:18-23 - 18 "Hear then the parable of the sower: 19 When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. 20 As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, 21 yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. 22 As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. 23 As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."

- a. The seed is the word of God. (Luke 8:11) Specifically, the seed is the *logos* word of God.

Word Study: Strong's Greek-G3056: Logos. In a broad sense, logos is the entirety of God's revealed word in Scripture. In the Book of John, the logos is the word of God which created all things and which became flesh in the person of Jesus. The logos is summed up in the life, teachings, words, and doctrine of Jesus. (i.e. Anyone who hears these logos of mine and does them... Matthew 7:24.)

- b. The "word of the Kingdom" is the declaration of Jesus as the promised Messiah of Israel and the seed of the first woman who crushes the head of the ancient serpent for the redemption of mankind. All of mankind has fallen away from God since Adam and Eve and as such, is subject to death and the wrath to come. This world in this age is under the kingdom of darkness ruled by the serpent. But Jesus announces God's Kingdom and ultimate victory over sin and death for those who believe that Jesus is King.
- c. To "make the tree good," is a matter of changing the heart. Believing Jesus and demonstrating this belief through obedience to His teachings is the evidenced of a changed heart. Without Jesus, every human heart is a bad tree producing bad fruit.
- d. The sower sows seed liberally into all kinds of soils. The soils represent the condition of the human heart to receive, understand, and implement the teachings of Jesus.
- e. The first soil heart hears the word but does not understand or believe. The word of the Kingdom is foolishness to these people and they continue in their life unchanged.
- f. The second soil heart hears and receives with joy but is unable to endure through persecution, trials, and tribulation. Though they professed faith and believed they had it, these people fall away from the faith in the times of testing.
- g. The third soil heart hears the word but becomes distracted by the deceptions of money/riches, the cares/anxieties of this life, and the pleasures/desires of this world or their flesh. These people may be doing a lot of things in the name of God but their motives and trusts are carnal and worldly. Matthew and Mark says they are unfruitful but the Luke version says they do not bear fruit to maturity. (Luke 8:14.)
- h. The fourth soil heart hears the word of the Kingdom and understands. These people implement the teachings of Jesus in their lives and are changed. The tree is made good. Because it has been made good, it produces much fruit, good fruit, fruit that will last. Thirty, sixty, one hundred times as much as was sown.
- i. The Luke version says that fourth soil hearts receive the word and "hold it fast with an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience/endurance."

Definition: *Endurance*. (Strong's G5281-Greek: *hypomone*.) Steadfastness, constancy, and endurance. In the New Testament, this is characteristic of a man who is not swerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings.

Parable Point: God is looking at the response of the human heart to the word of His Son, Jesus. The person who responds in faith with obedience and endurance demonstrates they understand the significance of God's eternal Kingdom.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus is explaining why some people have had a positive response to His ministry and some have accused Him of evil. His focus right now is on sowing the seed. What the seed produces will be revealed in time.

Further Considerations:

- i. Israel was supposed to be the light of the world, demonstrating God's righteousness and revealing His glory to all nations. Instead, their hearts became hardened through religious rules, judgmentalism, and disdain for Gentiles. When God came in the flesh, they accused Him of working for Satan.
- ii. To blaspheme is to reject, curse, vilify, or disdain. When we believe Jesus, the Holy Spirit comes into our lives to transform us and make us fruitful with righteousness. Through the first three soils, we can reject and disdain the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.
- iii. Tying back to what Jesus said about the sign of Jonah, the proclamation of the Kingdom of God is much like Jonah's proclamation about Nineveh's impending doom and destruction. It is a warning that God will overthrow the kingdoms of this world in a great day of judgement. The resurrection (after three days in the heart of the earth) proves that Jesus is God's messenger just like being spat out after three days in a fish's belly demonstrated that Jonah was sent by God. If we believe that Jesus was sent by God to proclaim the coming conquering Kingdom, we should respond to Him through repentance, faith, and obedience.

2. **Parable of the Weeds/Wheat and Tares** (Matthew 13:24-30.)

Matthew 13:24-30 - 24 He put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, 25 but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. 26 So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. 27 And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?' 28 He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' So the servants said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' 29 But he said, 'No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. 30 Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, "Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.'"

The Parable Explained. AFTER telling the parable of the Mustard Seed and Leaven and after Jesus had departed from the multitude. (Matthew 13:36-43.)

Matthew 13:36-43 - 36 Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples came to him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field." 37 He answered, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. 38 The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, 39 and the enemy who sowed them is the

devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. 40 Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. 41 The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, 42 and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 43 Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

- a. This time, the good seed are sons of the Kingdom. The righteous, holy ones. Those who believe Jesus and are led by the Holy Spirit. (See prior parable and Jon 1:12; Romans 8:14.)
- b. The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, Jesus.
- c. The bad seed are sons of the evil one. Unbelievers, the unrighteous who are disobedient to God and who are still slaves to sin. (See Colossians 3:6; Ephesians 5:6.)
- d. The one who sows the bad seed is the evil one who is constantly enticing man into rebellion against God through deception and discord.
- e. Since the fall of Adam and Eve, God said that there would be enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, the evil one. Ultimately, it was promised that the seed of the woman would crush the head of the evil one. Not snakes, but people obeying the evil one, are sons of the devil. (1 John 3:8, 10.)
- f. John the Baptist said that the ax was at the root of the tree, ready to chop it down for not bearing good fruit of righteousness. The people who were expecting to be found righteous were instead proving to be a brood of vipers. Natural descent from Abraham (being Jewish) would not be a guarantee of salvation. The Messiah was coming to baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire, to winnow the wheat from the chaff and burn it with fire. This indicates that even John the Baptist believed that Messiah was coming imminently to judge. In his perspective,

Luke 3:16-18 - 16 John answered them all, saying, "I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 17 His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." 18 So with many other exhortations he preached good news to the people.

- g. Jesus came the first time to baptize with the Holy Spirit. To put His Spirit within us to write His law upon our hearts in the New Covenant. (Jeremiah 31:31-34.) Jesus is returning to baptize the world with unquenchable fire and judge all unrighteousness.
- h. The harvest is at the end of the age and the reapers are the angels. First, they will gather the weeds for burning. Then, the righteous will be gathered into the Kingdom.

Parable Point: In contrast to the expectation that the Kingdom of God was coming to uproot and overthrow the "weeds" of the unrighteous Gentile nations, the harvest is yet to come at the end of the age. Until then, the wheat and weeds both grow to maturity side by side.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus is explaining that He did not come to judge the wicked yet. He is planting seed and letting it grow. The time will come when He will judge and wheat/tare will be exposed.

Further Considerations:

- i. Jesus does not negate the fact that a day of judgment is coming. Jesus wished the fire were already kindled. (See Luke 12:49.) But first, He came to proclaim salvation for all who will believe. Recall that the parable is explained AFTER Jesus told the parable of the mustard seed and leaven: small things which spread and grow with time.
- ii. It is not the place of God's people to judge or condemn the disobedient. We are not the reapers for judgment. The angels will do this at the end of the age. We must learn to grow as wheat in the midst of the weeds.
- iii. While the Bride of Christ becomes mature in purity, power, truth, devotion, and unity, the world will also increase in wickedness, domination, deception, flattery, and one world order united against believers. We should not think that the wheat is going to displace or take over the weeds until they are removed by the reapers.
- iv. In contrast to the expectation of a pre-tribulation rapture, this parable clearly says that the weeds will be gathered first.

3. **Parables of the Mustard Seed & Leaven** (Matthew 13:31-33; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18-19.)

Matthew 13:31-33 - 31 He put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. 32 It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches." 33 He told them another parable. "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened."

- a. The mustard seed is a small seed which becomes a large plant.
- b. The birds of the air represent Gentile nations. (See Ezekiel 17:23, 31:6; Daniel 4:12.)
- c. The leaven/yeast is a small thing that spreads throughout dough.

Parable Point: In contrast to the expectation that the Kingdom of God was going to take over the world through large-scale efforts at world domination, instead it would come through a single seed (Jesus) falling to the ground and dying. (See John 12:24.) This would establish the New Covenant which would allow Gentiles to rest in God's salvation. This message of the Kingdom will spread like yeast throughout the world until all nations hear the message of Christ. And then the end will come.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus is explaining that He is the seed – just one man – who is being planted by God in the soil of the earth. He and His small band of followers are like yeast which in time, will transform the whole world, including the Gentiles.

Further Considerations:

- i. God works in and through small things. Jesus does not model for us mass salvation and outreach programs in the ways of men. He does not model alignment with the governments

of this world or political efforts to take over the world. Instead, as one seed, He offered Himself entirely to God so that His life could bring forth much fruit. We miss the point if we think it is a world-takeover program when truly, it is a heart-takeover program – starting with us.

- ii. God works through hidden things. A seed goes into the ground and is hidden beneath the surface until it sprouts forth according to God's growth. Yeast goes into dough and is invisible to the eye but its impact is noticeable.
- iii. The context of these parables in Luke reveals Jesus telling it as a rebuke for religious Pharisees who condemned Him for healing on the Sabbath. We miss the point if we think the Kingdom of God is about religion.
- iv. God wants all people to be saved through repentance and knowledge of the truth. (See 1 Timothy 2:4.) Jesus will not return until the whole lump is leavened with the message of the Kingdom and everyone has had a chance to believe.

4. **Parables of the Treasure & Pearl** (Matthew 13:44-46.)

Matthew 13:44-46 - 44 "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. 45 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, 46 who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

- a. The one who found treasure was not looking for it. This represents the Gentiles who were not looking for the Messiah of Israel or God's Kingdom.
- b. The merchant was looking for a special pearl. This represents Jews who were eagerly seeking their Messiah and the Kingdom of God.

Parable Point: In both parables, the one who discovered the treasure considered it worth more than all that they owned and everything in this world. This is the right response to Jesus and His Kingdom.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus is the treasure. He will be found both by people who have not sought Him and by people who have sought Him. His desire is the salvation of the whole world.

Further Considerations:

- i. Those who were not looking for Messiah's salvation (Tax Collectors & sinners) found it.
- ii. Those who were looking for Messiah (observant, righteous people) also found it.
- iii. These two go together to show that both are included in the Kingdom of God when they find it and recognize its value.
- iv. History proves that after the first century of Christianity, Gentiles became the majority among those who believe that Jesus is Lord. This is why Jesus give the treasure parable first. Jews, however, are softening to Jesus as their Messiah and God's purpose for them will be fulfilled.

5. **Parable of the Net** (Matthew 13:47-50.)

Matthew 13:47-50 - 47 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. 48 When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad. 49 So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous 50 and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Parable Point: As a culmination to the Treasure and Pearl parables, the Parable of the Net makes clear that God is casting a wide net into the whole earth. The Kingdom of God is not just for Jews awaiting their Messiah, it is for the salvation of the whole world, all who will believe. Those who do not believe will be thrown into the fires of hell.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus is not judging but casting a wide net for anyone who wanted to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

6. **New & Old Treasures** (Matthew 13:51-52.)

Matthew 13:52 - And he said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old."

- a. A scribe was an expert in the Old Testament Scriptures. A scribe who understood the heart of God would recognize Jesus as the perfect fulfillment of the Old Covenant, and the inclusion of Gentiles in the New Covenant as the fulfillment of God's redemptive plan for all mankind.

Parable Point: Jesus opened the way for all to be saved, but the Jewish people have some advantage of the "old treasures" from their history with God and His word. (Romans 3:1-2; 9:4-5.)

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus is the fulfillment of the Law & Prophets. (See Matthew 5:17.) Those who have deep understanding of the Old Testament Scriptures will be doubly blessed at the revelation of Jesus the Messiah.

Further Considerations:

- i. The Bible is one story, from Genesis to Revelation, Old Testament and New Testament. The Old Testament points to Messiah and the need for His work. The New Testament reveals what Jesus did, what it means for us, and what He has yet to do.

Big Picture of Context 1: The Kingdom of God did not come through a world takeover where Israel's Messiah conquered and overthrew the rest of the world. The Kingdom of God is a matter of the heart and it is available to people from every nation, tribe, and tongue. Jesus fulfilled (and is fulfilling through believers) God's assignment for Israel to make His name and His ways known throughout all the earth so that they can be spared from the day of His wrath. If our hearts are not converted by God, we will not enter His Kingdom.

Unit Three: Foundational Parables (Mark 1-4, 8-9)

And Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men. And immediately they left their nets and followed him.

Mark 1:17-18

Note: Most of these parables are found in all three synoptic Gospel accounts, indicating that they are fundamental to the teachings of Jesus. Some are found only in Mark.

A. Context 1:

Mark 1:1-2 - 1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. 2 As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way..."

Mark narrates quickly through the essential elements of introducing Jesus as the Messiah of Israel. John the Baptist preceding Him, Jesus' baptism and temptation, leading up to Jesus at the Sea of Galilee, ready to call His first disciples.

Mark 1:14-16 - 14 Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, 15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." 16 Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen.

1. **Fishers of men** (Mark 1:17; Matthew 4:19; Luke 5:10.)

Mark 1:17-18 - 17 And Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men. 18 And immediately they left their nets and followed him.

- a. Like fisherman use all sorts of methods to find and catch fish, Jesus calls His disciples to find and catch people for the calling and purpose of God and His Kingdom.
- b. This is particularly poignant for Simon/Peter because Peter was a fisherman.

Parable Point: The call of Jesus is to follow Him. When we follow Him, His priorities become our priorities. Finding and saving souls is of paramount importance to God in this hour.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus is fishing for men and recruiting other fishermen. Jesus' primary purpose was/is to seek and to save the lost. (Luke 19:10.)

Further Considerations:

- i. Jesus saying, "The time is fulfilled" indicates that there is a story already in progress. This is good news, not new news. It has been anticipated for centuries but has now finally arrived.

- ii. Notably, Jesus begins His ministry in Galilee, where it was prophesied that the ruler would come and bring light to the world. (Isaiah 9:1-7.) The Galilee area had been given by King Solomon to the King of Tyre but the King of Tyre did not like them and gave them back and called them good for nothing. (1 Kings 9:10-13.) Jesus was here to redeem the "good for nothing."
- iii. Old Testament prophecies pertaining to the Messiah were being fulfilled in the person, life, and ministry of Jesus. These include: The timeline given by Daniel for the arrival of Messiah; prophecies about the servant of God's character and ministry; prophecies about God as a Bridegroom to Israel the Bride and the Wedding Feast; the promise of the New Covenant.

B. Context 2:

Earlier this day, Jesus healed a paralytic man whose friends had lowered him through a mat. Jesus healed the man by saying, "Your sins are forgiven" which enraged the Pharisees who questioned Jesus' authority to forgive sin. After this encounter, Jesus called Levi (who is Matthew), the tax collector to follow Him. Jesus and His followers went to eat a feast at Matthew's house.

Mark 2:15-16 - 15 And as he reclined at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. 16 And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

1. **Sick Need a Physician** (Mark 2:17; Matthew 9:12-13; Luke 5:31.)

Mark 2:17 - 17 And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

- a. Those who are healthy have no need of a doctor.
- b. Those who are righteous (or think they are) have no need of a Savior (or don't think they do.)
- c. The Matthew version includes/adds: "Go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."
- d. The Luke version includes/adds: "to call sinners to repentance."

Parable Point: In contrast to the Pharisee's idea that God would come to their aid because of their own righteousness, Jesus instead came to the aid of those that the Pharisees looked down upon and considered unworthy of God's attention.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus is seeking and finding the lost.

Further Considerations:

- i. The Pharisees thought they were "healthy" because they thought they were following the rules of God. The Pharisees were not righteous in the sight of God but they were in their own sight so they would not humble themselves to receive from God.

- ii. What the Law & Prophets actually declare as the work of God is to show mercy, care for the poor, and to bind up the wounded, and set free the captive and oppressed. Showing MERCY is what God calls the heart of true fasting.

The Heart of Fasting: Isaiah 58:5-7: **Is such the fast that I choose, a day for a person to humble himself?** Is it to bow down his head like a reed, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast, and a day acceptable to the LORD? **Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?**

The Heart of God's Servant: Isaiah 42:1-3: Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; **a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench;** he will faithfully bring forth justice.

- iii. Not only had the Pharisee's lost their perspective on they heart of God in showing mercy to those who need mercy but they were horrified and offended when Jesus demonstrated it in action.

Context Note: The context leading up to this question of fasting is exactly the same in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Healing a paralytic through forgiveness of sins and calling a Tax Collector to follow Him.

2. **Bridegroom with Guests** (Mark 2:19-20; Matthew 9:15; Luke 5:34-35.)

Mark 2:18-20 - 18 Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. And people came and said to him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" 19 And Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. 20 The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day.

- a. Biblical fasting is an act of self-denial, affliction, and repentance before God for the seeking of His Kingdom and His mercy, favor, and the fulfillment of His purposes.
- b. Pharisees fasted to be seen by men while looking down on others. (See Matthew 6:16; Luke 18:9-14.)
- c. John the Baptist's disciples fasted for the arrival of the eternal Kingdom of God. (See Daniel 2:35, 44-45, 7:13-14, 26-27.) They eagerly awaited the Messiah's arrival and the induction of the Messianic age, preparing the way through calling people to repentance from sin.
- d. The people of Israel waited with anticipation of the Messianic feast of God, the marriage of God to His people, as a bridegroom to a bride.

Biblical Concept: Wedding Feast, Bridegroom/Bride, *Scripture Selection*

Isaiah 25:6-9 - On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples **a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.** And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever;

and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken. It will be said on that day, "Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

Isaiah 54:4-8 - "Fear not, for you will not be ashamed; be not confounded, for you will not be disgraced; for you will forget the shame of your youth, and the reproach of your widowhood you will remember no more. **For your Maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts is his name;** and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called. For the LORD has called you like a wife deserted and grieved in spirit, like a wife of youth when she is cast off, says your God. For a brief moment I deserted you, but with great compassion I will gather you. In overflowing anger for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you," says the LORD, your Redeemer.

Isaiah 61:10 - I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, **as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.**

Isaiah 62:4-5 - You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate, but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her [Hephzibah], and your land Married [Beulah]; for the LORD delights in you, and your land shall be married. **For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your sons marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.**

Psalm 45, a Wedding Psalm. Psalm 45:6-7 - Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness; you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions; (Quoted in Hebrews 1:8-9 about Jesus as the Messiah.)

- e. The Bridegroom is Jesus. He is the Messiah. He has arrived. If they were fasting for the Messiah to arrive, they should stop fasting now that He is here.
- f. Wedding guests are the people with Jesus, including the sinners and tax collectors.
- g. A feast is prepared to be enjoyed as a festive occasion in celebration of a great event.
- h. Jesus' disciples will fast in anticipation of His return but not while He is with them.

Parable Point: When Jesus was on earth, it was time to celebrate because the King has arrived. It was not a time of mourning or sorrow or self-affliction but for rejoicing in the lovingkindness and mercy of God.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus had been demonstrating what true fasting looks like as the walking demonstration of Isaiah 58. Jesus is also revealing His identity as the Bridegroom.

Further Considerations:

- i. The Pharisees had lost their connection with the true purpose of fasting.

- ii. John the Baptist's followers anticipated war in accordance with the Scriptures of the Day of the Lord and judgment upon all nations. But God also promised that when Messiah came, He would be a husband to Israel, His Bride.
- iii. The purpose of fasting was for the arrival of the King. The King had arrived in Jesus. Still, Jesus knew that the time for the marriage feast had not yet fully come.
- iv. This was the engagement feast. The Jewish wedding custom in those days was for a groom to go to the home/family of the bride selected for him by his father and become engaged to her. The engagement was a contractual agreement, binding commitment like marriage to the degree that a certificate of divorce was required to nullify it. Then, the groom would return to his father's land and build a home (prepare a place) to bring his bride. Once the home was built, he would return to collect his bride and bring her to the home he had prepared for her. (For similar language, see John 14:2-3.) This is a picture of Jesus' first and second coming.
- v. Jesus makes explicitly clear that His disciples will fast after His departure to humble ourselves in preparation for His return. New Covenant fasting is *similar* to John the Baptist's disciple's fasting, in anticipation of the coming Messiah and the Day of the Lord when the eternal Kingdom of God will be established on the earth.

3. **Old Garment** (Mark 2:21; Matthew 9:16; Luke 5:36.)

Mark 2:21 - 21 No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the patch tears away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made.

- a. An old garment has already shrunk from washing and drying.
- b. A new patch of cloth has not been shrunk from washing and drying.
- c. Old garments of flesh are filthy like menstrual rags. (Isaiah 64:6.)
- d. Jesus did not come to "patch up" menstrual rags. Instead, He gives new garments, pure vestments to stand before the Lord in His righteousness.

Biblical Concept: New Garments for Zion's Holy Ones, *Scripture Selection*

Psalms 132:16-18 - Her [Zion's] priests I will **clothe with salvation**, and her saints will shout for joy. There I will make a horn to sprout for David; I have prepared a lamp for my anointed. His enemies I will clothe with shame, but on him his crown will shine."

Isaiah 61:3, 10 - ...to grant to those who mourn in Zion-- **to give them a beautiful headdress** instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, **the garment of praise** instead of a faint spirit; ...I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God, for **he has clothed me with the garments of salvation**; he has covered me with **the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.**

Zechariah 3:4 - And the angel said to those who were standing before him, "Remove the filthy garments from him." And to him he said, "Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and **I will clothe you with pure vestments.**"

- e. The earth and this world have also been referred to in Scripture as a garment. In contrast to the Pharisee's and John the Baptist's expectation of the Messiah bringing war to conquer the nations and overthrow their Roman oppressors in this world, Jesus did not come to "patch things up" in this world but to declare the inevitability of its end. God will instead make a new heaven and a new earth for the righteous to dwell with Him forever.

Biblical Concept: The Earth as a Garment: *Scripture Selection*

Psalms 102:25-27 - Of old you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you will remain; **they will all wear out like a garment. You will change them like a robe**, and they will pass away, but you are the same, and your years have no end. (Quoted in Hebrews 1:10-12 about Jesus as the Messiah.)

Isaiah 51:6 - Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look at the earth beneath; for the heavens vanish like smoke, **the earth will wear out like a garment**, and they who dwell in it will die in like manner; but my salvation will be forever, and my righteousness will never be dismayed.

Biblical Concept: New Heaven and New Earth: *Scripture Selection*

Isaiah 65:17 - For behold, I create **new heavens and a new earth**, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind.

Isaiah 66:22 - For as **the new heavens and the new earth that I make** shall remain before me, says the LORD, so shall your offspring and your name remain.

2 Peter 3:13 - But according to his promise **we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth** in which righteousness dwells.

Revelation 21:1 - Then I saw **a new heaven and a new earth**, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.

Parable Point: Jesus did not come to "patch things up" in this world through judgment of sinners and greater enforcement of the Law. His Kingdom is one bringing salvation, deliverance, and liberty to those who have been bound and oppressed. It is like a new garment.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus is handing out new garments to those who are filthy.

Further Considerations:

- i. Jesus is continuing on the theme of the Bridegroom and wedding. Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah would clothe Zion like a Bride in garments of salvation and righteousness. Isaiah 61 is what Jesus declared about Himself and His ministry. (Luke 4:16-20.) Forgiving sin, healing the sick, and having mercy on sinners is what the gift of salvation is about. It is Good News!

4. **New Wine in New Wineskins** (Mark 2:22; Matthew 9:17; Luke 5:35.)

Mark 2:22 - 22 *And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins - and the wine is destroyed, and so are the skins. But new wine is for fresh wineskins.*"

- a. A wineskin holds wine. In those days wineskins were made of goatskin which is flexible.
- b. New wine expands through aging in the fermentation process.
- c. An old wineskin has already been stretched and is dried out. To pour new wine into it would cause the skin to expand past its elasticity and it would burst.

Biblical Concept: Vineyard/Vine/Wine Scripture Selection

A vineyard is a metaphoric picture for Israel. (Isaiah 5:1-7; Isaiah 27:2-6.)

The vine of the wicked is the vine of Sodom & Gomorrah. (Deuteronomy 32:32.)

The wine of Babylon, or the world, is the blood of the saints because it is so opposed to God and His holy ones that it sheds their innocent blood. (Revelation 17:6.)

The vine of the Lord is Jesus, in whom we are called to abide so that we can produce good fruit for eternity, rather than the wine of wickedness. (John 15:1-17.)

Jesus will tread upon the wicked in the winepress of God in judgment of the world. (Isaiah 63:2-6; Revelation 14:18-20, 19:15.)

Communion is the wine of the cup of the New Covenant, the blood of Jesus which was shed for the forgiveness of our sins. (Matthew 26:27-28.)

Jesus will not drink the fruit of the vine again until He drinks it NEW in his Kingdom. (Matthew 26:29.)

- d. Luke version includes: "And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for they say, 'The old is better.'"

Parable Point: Jesus is establishing God's New Covenant with Israel because they broke the Old Covenant which is the Law and Prophets. (Jeremiah 31:31-34.) It was like an old wineskin that is becoming obsolete, fading away and will eventually disappear completely. (Hebrews 8:13.) In the New Covenant, God completely forgives sins and writes His Law upon hearts through the indwelling Holy Spirit. We must be dead to the Law in order to live for the Spirit. (Galatians 2:19; Romans 8:1-2.)

What Jesus is Doing: Knowing that His blood was going to be poured out for the forgiveness of the sins of mankind, Jesus is extending mercy to people, especially the sick, lost, and oppressed.

Further Considerations:

- i. The whole world produces the fruit of the vine of Sodom & Gomorrah: evil, corruption, wickedness, violence, immorality, deception, and rebellion against God. Even God's own people were producing the wine of Babylon, as evidenced by their killing His prophets. (Isaiah 1:9-10.) The human heart is desperately sick. (Jeremiah 17:9.)
- ii. Through faith in Jesus and His blood shed for us, God forgives our sins and gives us a new heart and a new spirit. (Ezekiel 11:19-20.) We are made into new creations. The old is gone, the new has come. (2 Corinthians 5:17.)

- iii. For the Pharisees, absolute mercy for sin seemed like a dangerous endorsement of lawlessness. They preferred the old wine of the written code with rules to follow. They say the old is better.

Big Picture Context 2: God is merciful, willing to forgive, and desires to liberate those who are suffering. He is not looking for legalistic hearts bent on following rules and enforcing them on others, even at the expense of their dignity or humanity. The Pharisees had everything totally upside down. Therefore, the heart of the Kingdom of God was an offense to them.

C. Context 3:

Jesus had been healing the sick and casting out demons in the Galilee region. Pharisees accused Jesus of using the power of Beelzebul, the prince of demons.

Mark 3:22 - 22 And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, "He is possessed by Beelzebul," and "by the prince of demons he casts out the demons."

1. **Kingdom Divided** (Mark 3:23-30; Matthew 12:25-29; Luke 11:17-22)

Mark 3:23-30 - 23 And he called them to him and said to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? 24 If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25 And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. 26 And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end. 27 But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house. 28 "Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, 29 but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin"-- 30 for they were saying, "He has an unclean spirit."

- a. It would not be in Satan's best interest to evict himself from a place he already occupied.
- b. A kingdom at war with itself will crumble from within. Jesus acknowledges that Satan has a kingdom, the kingdom of darkness, which is different than His Kingdom, the Kingdom of God. The whole world is under the power of the evil one. (1 John 5:19.)
- c. A house in conflict will not stand. The Biblical concept of a House is not a building but a family, household, or group of people under the same leadership or belief system. For example, the House of Israel encompassed all the descendants of Jacob/Israel and also, rabbinic schools were called "House of Hillel" or "House of Shammai" after the names of their rabbis. The whole world is the House of Satan.
- d. Each individual person is also a "house" for evil or for good, for Satan or for God.
- e. A strong man is the owner, leader, or guardian of the house. The strong man is Satan who has invaded the world and people's lives.
- f. The Mark and Matthew version say that the strong man must be bound. To bind means to tie up, but is also legal term for forbidding or prohibiting one's right or access to do something.

- g. The Luke version speaks of the strong man being fully armed, guarding his own house until one stronger than him attacks and overcomes him, and takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides the spoil.
- h. The goods of the strong man are the souls, lives, minds, hearts, and bodies of the people that Satan possesses and oppresses through deception and demonic power.
- i. Those who are sick or demonically possessed/oppressed are in bondage to Satan, bound by him as the strongman of their house. (See Luke 13:16.)
- j. The Matthew and Luke versions add: "Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters." Jesus and His work are divisive. There is no halfway when it comes to Him.
- k. Jesus forgives all sin except for blasphemy against or rejection of the Holy Spirit. As previously covered, to blaspheme is to reject, curse, vilify, or disdain.

Parable Point: In Jesus' life and actions, the Kingdom of God was at hand, dispossessing the kingdom of darkness and its influence in people's lives. He came to destroy the works of the devil, which is the power of sin. God's mercy through forgiveness of sins made the strong man's ability to bind people null and void. People who reject the work of the Holy Spirit, reject the truth in their heart and therefore, never receive this forgiveness. Their sin remains with them unto eternal condemnation.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus is not empowering those whose lives have been wrecked by sin. He is destroying the works of the devil by overpowering the evil one's hold on their lives through mercy and setting them free from the devil's bondage and oppression.

Further Considerations:

- i. Satan has a right into people's lives because of sin. Through Adam & Eve's sin, Satan became the ruler of the world and mankind became slaves to sin. For those under the Law, sin invokes the curse of the Law as the penalty for sin. Through individual sins, we open ourselves up to deeper oppression by the evil one, including demonic oppression and possession.
- ii. Sin causes God to remove His protection from the evil one and people are turned over to torment and oppression. Through deception leading people into sin and death, Satan thought that he could hold men bound forever due to their inability to keep themselves from sinning.
- iii. Jesus came to show God's MERCY. By forgiving sin completely, Satan has no more right of access to the person's "house."
- iv. In Jesus, the Kingdom of God had come to demolish Satan's hold on the lives of the oppressed. (1 John 3:8.)
- v. War had been declared between light and darkness, between God and Satan. No one can remain neutral regarding Jesus and His work.
- vi. Anyone who persistently rejects the testimony and witness of the Holy Spirit that Jesus is Lord is already condemned and never receives salvation. (John 3:16-18, 16:8-10.) Saying that works of God are being done by the evil one is clearly a misassessment of God's work.

Context Continued:

Even Jesus' family started to think He was out of His mind. But Jesus made clear that natural lineage is not an indication of His "House" or family. Only those who do the will of God are members of God's "House." Jesus then proceeded to teach by the Sea of Galilee.

2. Parable of the Sower (Mark 4:3-20.)

Previously covered, given here for context.

Explaining what Jesus is doing and the varied reactions of the crowd.

3. Lamp Under Basket (Mark 4:21-22; Matthew 5:15-16; Luke 8:16-17.)

Mark 4:21-22 - 21 And he said to them, "Is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket, or under a bed, and not on a stand? 22 For nothing is hidden except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret except to come to light.

- a. A lamp lights a room to give light for people to see.
- b. A lamp represents God's Word, commands, and teachings being lived out in a person's life. Jesus called John the Baptist a burning and shining lamp. (John 5:35.)
- c. Jesus is the Word made flesh, which is the Lamp of God. He was putting the light of God and the perfect application of the Word of God on display through the good works He was doing to heal the sick and release people from demonic oppression.

Biblical Concept: Lamp *Scripture Selection*

Psalms 119:105: **Your word is a lamp** to my feet and a light to my path;

Proverbs 6:23 - **For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light**, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life;

Proverbs 20:27 -**The spirit of man is the lamp of the LORD**, searching all his innermost parts.

Psalms 132:17: There I will make a horn to sprout for David; **I have prepared a lamp for my anointed;**

Revelation 1:20: As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the **seven golden lampstands**, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and **the seven lampstands are the seven churches.**

- d. The Mark and Luke versions are given in the context of the parables of the Kingdom of God, reaffirming the need for open ears and a heart to receive the seed of the Word of God. These versions are followed by:

"And he said to them, "Pay attention to what you hear: with the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you. For to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away."

- e. The Matthew version and context slightly different than Mark and Luke, in the context of the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus' life and teachings are the perfect fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. Those following Him put God's glory on display through their righteousness, holiness, and obedience to God.

Matthew 5:14-16 - 14 "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

- f. Our lamp represents our faith in and focus on God.

In the context of not laying up treasures on earth:

Matthew 6:22-24 - "**The eye is the lamp of the body.** So, if your eye is healthy [single], your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is bad [evil], your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. (See Deuteronomy 15:9.)

In the context of rebuking Pharisees and an evil generation for demanding a sign:

Luke 11:34-36 - **Your eye is the lamp of your body.** When your eye is healthy [single], your whole body is full of light, but when it is bad [evil], your body is full of darkness. Therefore, be careful lest the light in you be darkness. If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, it will be wholly bright, as when a lamp with its rays gives you light."

Definition: *Single.* (Strong's G573-Greek: *haplous.*) Simple. Single. Whole. In which there is nothing complicated or confused.

- g. The Matthew version is followed by:

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them."

- h. Jesus was not an enemy of the Law but the fulfillment of it. He is perfect theology on two feet, demonstrating a righteous life for all who will follow Him with their absolute focus on God.
- h. Whether in the context of the Beatitudes or the Parable of the Sower, Jesus is focused on the heart behind the things we do and shining brightly for God through obedience to Him and displaying His mercy and compassion for people who repent.

Parable Point: Jesus sets us free from the Law of sin and death so that we are totally free to shine brightly with holy conduct and good works from a pure heart, regenerated by the Holy Spirit. This light illuminates the dark world with the knowledge of God and demonstration of His heart – just like Jesus demonstrated as the light of the world and the Lamp of God.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus is putting the Kingdom of God on full display in all its splendor. He is not hiding it. He is living out the fulfillment of Isaiah 58 in action.

Further Considerations:

- i. Jesus did not abolish the Law, He fulfilled it. Likewise, we do not nullify the Law through our conduct but we uphold it in its purest application from the heart, not out of obligation to its requirements but from a heart of willing devotion. (Romans 3:31.)
- ii. Good works are not done to receive favor from God but are lived out of a heart that is devoted to God in service to Him. Good works done with the right motives reveal the love of God to the dark and hurting world. Good works done to be seen by men will receive no eternal reward from the Lord.
- iii. Everything we do and even the motives of our hearts will ultimately be revealed on the day of judgment in the light of God. (Romans 2:14-16.)

4. **Parable of the Growing Seed** (Mark 4:26-29.)

This parable is only in the Book of Mark.

Mark 4:26-29 - 26 And he said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. 27 He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how. 28 The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. 29 But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."

- a. As previously covered, the seed is the Word of God. The field is the world and the hearts of men. The good seed is the sons of the Kingdom.
- b. When the sower is finished sowing seed into the ground/hearts of people, it produces fruit.
- c. The sower does not know how the soil produces fruit but can see the process of its maturing. First the blade, then the ear, then the grain. When the grain is ripe at maturity, it is time for harvest.

Parable Point: Jesus sowed the seed of the Word of the Kingdom and tells us as His disciples to sow the same seed into the lives of people. The word takes root and grows in a person's life in a way which only God knows. When the fullness of believers all over the world has come in and the crop is mature, it will be time for the harvest of God at the end of the age.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus is scattering the seed of the word of God. Then, He will leave and let it grow. When the crop is ripe, He will return to harvest.

Further Considerations:

- i. Sowing seed through evangelism must be done in all nations to prepare the harvest field for the harvest of God. Until the Gospel is proclaimed to all nations, Jesus will not return. (Matthew 24:14.)
- ii. Discipleship can be encouraged in the lives of others, but it can never be contrived or forced. It is the work of God alone in the human heart. There is a process to maturing in God and its effects are outwardly noticeable, but no one understands how it is wrought. God gives the growth. (1 Corinthians 3:7.)

- d. The fruit produced in a person's life is righteousness from the heart and the character of God. (See Galatians 5:22-23.)
- i. The purpose of ministry is to build up the Body of Christ until we are united and mature and reach the full measure of the stature of Christ in His likeness. (Ephesians 4:12-13.) Until the Body of Christ is mature and ready for harvest, it will not come. Therefore, we must continually allow the work of God in our hearts until we are mature and complete and lack nothing. (James 1:4)

5. **Parable of the Mustard Seed**

Previously covered, given here for context.

Jesus is the seed planted in the human heart to cultivate it to spiritual maturity and the likeness of Christ. Even heathen Gentiles/Nations would be included in the salvation and Kingdom of God.

Big Picture Context 3: Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil but not everyone believes Him or recognizes His mission. Nevertheless, He taught openly and did not cower at the rebuke of the leaders of the day. He came to scatter seed and let it grow to maturity before He returns to harvest. The family of God consists of those who receive Him and do the will of God from the heart.

D. Context 4:

Jesus miraculously fed 4,000 people with just a few fish and a few loaves of bread, having previously fed 5,000 in the same manner. Then, the Pharisees came to test Him by demanding a miraculous sign from heaven. Jesus refused to give them a sign. Next, the disciples realized they had forgotten to bring bread for them to eat.

Mark 8:14 - 14 Now they had forgotten to bring bread, and they had only one loaf with them in the boat.

1. **Leaven of Pharisees** (Mark 8:5; Matthew 16:6, 11-12; Luke 12:1.)

Mark 8:15-21 - 15 And he cautioned them, saying, "Watch out; beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod." 16 And they began discussing with one another the fact that they had no bread. 17 And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? 18 Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember? 19 When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?" They said to him, "Twelve." 20 "And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?" And they said to him, "Seven." 21 And he said to them, "Do you not yet understand?"

- a. As previously covered, leaven is yeast. Yeast is a very small thing but it spreads throughout dough to cause bread to rise. Scientifically speaking, yeast corrupts a dough and changes its character through fermentation.
- b. Yeast was forbidden on the altar of God, with very few and specific exceptions. In fact, an entire feast of God is observed through eating unleavened bread for 7 days after Passover. (See Exodus 13:3-10, 23:15, 34:18, etc.)

- c. The Matthew version includes the leaven of Sadducees. adds: Then they understood that he did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Pharisees: Religious leaders of the day who imposed priestly ritual purity on the common people and required strict adherence to their interpretation of the Law of Moses. Pharisees believed in the supernatural, in angels, and in the resurrection.

Herod: The Roman appointed ruler, self-named king of the Jews. He was a brilliant man who built large and grandiose cities with innovative methods. However, he was also arrogant, self-willed, self-exalting, paranoid, worldly, and self-indulgent.

Herodians: Partisan supporters of Herod and his political/governmental regime.

Sadducees: Religious leaders of the day who believed only in the first five books of Moses, did not believe in the supernatural or in the resurrection. They believed the blessing of God was for this world and death was the end. Therefore, their practices blended with worldliness to enhance their position and financial success.

- d. The Matthew version adds:

“Then they understood that he did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

- e. The Matthew version adds a rebuke from Jesus to His disciples: “Oh you of little faith.”
- f. The Luke version is in a different context and clearly identifies the leaven of the Pharisees as hypocrisy. A hypocrite is an actor. This is also in the context of all hidden things of the heart being revealed in time. What the Pharisees claimed to believe and what their actions displayed about their hearts were incongruent.
- g. The disciples were behaving like religious people who had not been with Jesus and seen Him miraculously feed crowds of 5,000 and 4,000 people.

Parable Point: God is all-sufficient and all-powerful. God is able and willing to work miracles for His people to supply their need. Our job is to believe Him, not to make demands of Him. We must be on guard against hardening our hearts to think that God is unable or unwilling to provide for us according to His purposes or refusing to believe unless He meets our demands for a sign.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus is the bread of God. (John 6:48,51.) Playing on bread/yeast, He is rebuking His disciples for not understanding who He is.

Further Considerations:

- i. Just before this, the Pharisees had demanded a sign to test Jesus. We test God through unbelief and making demands of Him to prove Himself. (See Psalm 78.)

Big Picture Context 4: In view of all that God has already done for us through giving His Son, we must be careful that our hearts do not become corrupted or hardened through unbelief, worldliness, or arrogant ignorance. If we do not become like a little child, we will not enter the Kingdom of God.

E. Context 5:

Jesus asked His disciples who they considered Him to be and they affirmed their belief that He is the Son of God and Messiah of Israel. From this point forward, Jesus told them that He must be rejected by the religious leaders and killed.

Mark 8:31-33 - 31 And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. 32 And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 33 But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."

1. **Take Up Your Cross – Instance #2** (Mark 8:34-9:1; Matthew 16:24-26; Luke 9:23-25.)

Instance #1 chronologically has not yet been covered.

Mark 8:34-9:1 - 34 And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 35 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. 36 For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? 37 For what can a man give in return for his soul? 38 For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." 9:1 And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power."

- a. The Matthew version of these events includes Jesus saying, "You are a hindrance to me." A hindrance is an offense or stumbling block, something that causes someone to stumble. Peter was offended at (stumbled over) the idea that Jesus thought God would allow Him to be crucified. Peter's offense created a potential stumbling block for Jesus through temptation to step off the path of suffering that God had ordained for Him.
- b. God's ways are not the ways of this world. (Isaiah 55.)
- c. Take up your cross. The cross was an instrument of torture and death. Chronologically, Jesus had previously instructed His disciples to take up their cross and follow Him as it pertained to loving God more than even the members of their own family. (Matthew 10:38.) Now that Jesus is predicting His own execution, this metaphor becomes more literal and pungent, including total self-denial and forsaking all the ways of men.
- d. Save/Lose Life. Fighting for life in this world is the path of death. (Proverbs 14:12.) Forsaking life in this world for Jesus and His Kingdom, is the way to eternal life.
- e. Gain World/Lose Soul. Covetousness, selfish ambition, and the love of money are the root of disorder and every kind of evil. (1 Timothy 6:10; James 3:16.)
- f. No man can pay a ransom to God for his own life. (Psalm 49.) Righteousness delivers from death. (Proverbs 10:2.)
- g. If we are ashamed of Jesus and His words/ways, we are unworthy to be His disciples.
- h. Those who believe Jesus and confess Him as Lord will not taste death because Jesus tasted death for us to give us life. (Hebrews 2:9.)

Parable Point: Jesus is worth following even unto death. Following Jesus will require absolute and total self-denial and surrender, forsaking the standard measures of success in this world, and letting go of our own expectations of what it means to follow God. If we, like Peter, think God will never require our total devotion to Him, our suffering for Him, even unto death, then we, like Peter have the mindset of Satan and this world.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus is demonstrating a life lived for God, not for self, and not for this world. For the joy set before Him, He is about to go to the cross, lose His life to gain it, and forfeit the world to gain the Kingdom for eternity.

Further Considerations:

- i. When God calls us to take up our cross, deny ourselves, and suffer for following Jesus, even our well-meaning friends can be a stumbling block for us, speaking for Satan and not for God.
- ii. We do not know what is truly in us until we are tested to the uttermost. As Peter would soon discover, his fleshly love and devotion to Jesus was not enough to prevent him from denying Jesus 3 times when the pressure was on and his life was in jeopardy. In that instance, Peter denied Jesus to save his own skin. But eventually, Peter was martyred for Jesus and insisted on being crucified upside down because he did not feel worthy to be executed in the same manner as the Lord.

Big Picture Context 5: Jesus was God in the flesh, born in a manger, lived a sinless life, and then allowed Himself to be killed on a cross out of obedience to God. As His followers, we must be equipped with the same mindset of self-denial and obedience to God, knowing that all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. (1 Peter 4:1; 2 Timothy 3:12.)

F. Context 6:

After the transfiguration, Jesus predicted His death a second time. His disciples still did not understand what He was saying to them and were afraid to ask Him. At Capernaum, the disciples argued about who was the greatest and then complained to Jesus about people who were using His name but not following Him with them.

Mark 9:38-41 - 38 John said to him, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us." 39 But Jesus said, "Do not stop him, for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. 40 For the one who is not against us is for us. 41 For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward.

1. **Millstone Around Your Neck** (Mark 9:42.)

This is a unique context.

Mark 9:42 - 42 "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea.

- a. A millstone was a very heavy stone used for grinding grain. The analogy of being tossed into the sea with a millstone is figuratively used by Jeremiah to describe God's judgment on Babylon. (Jeremiah 51:63-64.) The millstone is a symbol of the judgment of God's enemies.
- b. The context here is causing others to stumble due to false teaching or using Jesus' name but not following Him.

Parable Point: God will deal with those using/abusing His name but not adhering to His ways.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus is not judging now but leaving it to the day of judgment on the world.

Further Considerations:

- i. God does not want us focused on other people, denominations, or groups that are using His name but not doing what is correct. Those who are not against Him are for Him. Let them continue in prayerful hope that God will grant them revelation and they can come into alignment with the truth.
- ii. The day of judgment is coming when everyone's work will be tested for its purity of heart. Those who cause others to stumble into sin, lawlessness, or worldliness through their teaching will be judged and condemned.

2. **Cut it Off, Gouge it Out** (Mark 9:43-48.)

This is a unique context.

Mark 9:43, 45, 47-48 - 43 And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. ... 45 And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell. ... 47 And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, 48 'where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.'

- a. Hand, Foot, Eye. These are all members of the body which can cause us to sin. (See Romans 6:13-16.)
- b. The context here is being tempted to sin due to the misleading of those who are using Jesus' name but not following Him.
- c. In some versions, verses 44 & 46 repeat verse 48. This is a reference to eternal damnation:
Isaiah 66:24 - 24 "And they shall go out and look on the dead bodies of the men who have rebelled against me. For their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh."

Parable Point: Since God will judge those who use His name but do not follow Him, we must discipline ourselves not to fall into their same error. Otherwise, we will also be judged and suffer eternal torment.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus is living the perfect life of total self-denial for the glory of God. He is solely focused on fulfilling His purpose at any cost. His purpose was to live sinlessly for God and spread His message. Not defend His name from misuse.

Further Considerations:

- i. Jesus doesn't often want to talk about other people. He re-focuses on our own hearts. *If your hand, if your eye...* He is looking at our hearts and wants us pure for Him, regardless of what other people may or may not be doing.
- ii. Paul said he disciplined himself so that after preaching to others, he was not disqualified. (1 Corinthians 9:27.)
- iii. Even teachers leading thousands to Christ will be held to account for their own heart, lives, and actions, whether they have followed the Lord or carried out their own will in His name. Teachers will be judged by a stricter standard. (James 3:1.)
- iv. There is hope for those using Jesus' name. Pray that God grants them revelation to repent.

3. **Salted with Fire** (Mark 9:49-50.)

This parable is only in the Book of Mark.

Mark 9:49 - 49 For everyone will be salted with fire.

- a. On God's altar of sacrifice at the Tabernacle/Temple, salt was required with sacrifices. *Leviticus 2:13 - 13 You shall season all your grain offerings with salt. You shall not let the salt of the covenant with your God be missing from your grain offering; with all your offerings you shall offer salt.*
- b. Salt was used to seal covenants. It symbolized incorruptible, unchangeable terms of the covenant which, like salt, would be preserved and not putrefy. For example, God entered into a covenant of salt with David, promising the Messiah and His eternal kingdom would come through David's lineage. (2 Chronicles 13:5.) According to some sources, if a person broke the terms of a salt covenant, large quantities of salt would be poured on their fields to make them unusable for years as a consequence.
- c. "Salted by fire" means that the offering of ourselves to God must be accompanied by the fire of trials, persecutions, and suffering for following Jesus. A servant is not above their Master. Without this "salt" our offering is not complete. All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. (1 Peter 4:1; 2 Timothy 3:12.)
- d. Fire of tribulation, testing, and trials will come upon everyone in this world, including believers. These trials expose to the depths what we truly believe and if we are following God through self-denial (i.e. cutting/gouging) or following our own desires.
- e. The Messiah's coming is like a refiner's fire. (See Malachi 3:2.) The Lord tests our hearts like a refiner tests metals. (Proverbs 17:3.)

Parable Point: Everyone is going to be tested through trials, including the trial of false prophets, teachers, and messiah's using the name of Jesus but not adhering to His ways.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus is about to go to the cross and be tested to the uttermost by the fiery wrath of God poured out on Him in full measure. He is not concerned about those using or abusing His name. God will deal with them at the judgment.

Further Considerations:

- i. When Jesus' disciples asked about the signs of the end-times, Jesus explicitly warned them that many would come in His name to deceive the elect if possible. (Matthew 24:4-5, 11, 24; Mark 13:5-6, 22) Only those who truly follow Jesus and endure to the end will be saved.
 - ii. False prophets are a test from God to see if we are deceived into disobedience or if we will obey God and endure on the narrow way. (See Deuteronomy 13:1-11.)
4. **Salt not Salty** (Mark 9:50; Matthew 5:13; Luke 14:34-35.)

Mark 9:50 - 50 Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.

- a. Salt was a highly valuable commodity in the ancient world. Salt is a purifier and preservative of food. It is needed for life.
- b. If salt loses its purifying and preserving properties, it is good for nothing but the dump.
- c. Being at peace with other people includes not accusing them of wrongdoing or making it our objective to correct them. We are to take up our own crosses, not crucify other people.

Parable Point: Instead of focusing on what others are doing, even those who are abusing the name of Jesus, we are responsible for keeping ourselves salty through following Jesus and living out His teachings. We must continually keep a guard on our own doctrine without condemning others whom God will ultimately deal with.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus remains salty by not compromising or getting distracted by things, people, or desires that are not aligned with His mission.

Further Considerations:

- i. Jesus previously referred to His disciples as the salt of the world through living the Kingdom life described in the Sermon on the Mount. (Matthew 5:3-13.)
- ii. We must discipline our own lives in the ways of God and take up our cross to follow Him rather than crucifying others who are not following Him the way we think they should.

Big Picture Context 6: Everyone is going to stand before Jesus and give account for whether they have followed Him or not. Everyone will be tested by trials, including the trial of deception by false teachers, which will reveal the purity of their hearts. God will deal with those abusing His name. We are responsible only for ourselves and our own belief and conduct.

Unit Four: Unexpected Savior (Luke 7, 11-13)

What did you go out into the wilderness to see?
A reed shaken by the wind?

Luke 7:24

A. Context 1:

From prison, John the Baptist sent messengers to Jesus to ask if He was really the Messiah or if Israel was waiting for someone else. Jesus did not rebuke them or answer them directly but instead, told them to report to John the works He was doing and said, "Blessed is the one who is not offended by Me."

1. **Reed Shaken by Wind.** (Luke 7:24; Matthew 11:7.)

Luke 7:24 - 24 When John's messengers had gone, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?"

- a. Something flimsy, easily bent. Personified this would be a person who was uncertain or easily persuaded to other opinions.
- b. John the Baptist was not a wimp. He boldly declared the coming wrath of God to a brood of vipers and was ready for the Messiah to come with war. (Luke 3:7.)

2. **Man in Soft Clothing.** (Luke 7:25; Matthew 11:8.)

Luke 7:25 - 25 What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who are dressed in splendid clothing and live in luxury are in kings' courts.

- a. A man of luxurious lifestyle, unwilling to get dirty and unfamiliar with the needs of the common people.
- b. John the Baptist was not working in the palace to support and strengthen the government of the king or political leaders. Instead, he lived in the wilderness and rebuked the political leaders for their corruption and hypocrisy.

Context Continued:

Luke 7:26-30 - 26 What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. 27 This is he of whom it is written, "'Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.' 28 I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." 29 (When all the people heard this, and the tax collectors too, they declared God just, having been baptized with the baptism of John, 30 but the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him.)

3. **Children in Market, Calling to One Another.** (Luke 7:31-32; Matthew 11:16-17.)

Luke 7:31-32 - 31 "To what then shall I compare the people of this generation, and what are they like? 32 They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling to one another, "'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not weep.' 33 For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, 'He has a demon.' 34 The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' 35 Yet wisdom is justified by all her children."

- a. John the Baptist and Jesus were not what the people were expecting from the Messiah and His forerunner. They did not respond the way the crowds anticipated to the promptings, rituals, and shenanigans that the crowd performed to provoke their expected reaction.
- b. John the Baptist had come with an ascetic lifestyle (camel hair clothes and locust diet) and he was accused of having a demon.
- c. Jesus came with a non-ascetic lifestyle (dining and drinking with sinners) and was accused of being a drunkard and glutton.

Parables Point: Wisdom is proved right by her children. The long-term outcome of a person's choices reveals their wisdom, not just the small things that can be perceived with the eye.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus is walking in the wisdom of God. Whether anyone understood what He was doing or not, He would be justified in the end.

Further Considerations:

- i. The people and religious leaders did not know what to expect of the coming Messiah, His forerunner, or anything about His Kingdom. Therefore, when God's genuine messengers showed up, they were accused of evil and rejected.
- ii. We cannot be quick to judge based on what the eye sees of another person's life or approach to following God. Whether or not they have been serving God will be revealed by the larger outcome of their way of life. We should consider this. (Hebrews 13:7.)
- iii. Jesus said in this passage, "Blessed is the one who is not offended because of Me." (Luke 7:23.) Those who do not stumble over His ministry of mercy rather than judgment/war and His horrifying death in spite of His innocence/righteousness. These things cause offense/stumbling for those who cannot wrap their minds around the ways of God.

Context Continued:

From there, Jesus was invited to dine at the house of a Pharisee named Simon. A sinful woman washed Jesus' feet, wiped them with her tears, kissed them, and anointed them with expensive oil. The Pharisee was deeply offended that Jesus allowed this because of the type of woman she was.

4. **Parable of the Two Debtors Forgiven** (Luke 7:41-43.)

This parable is only in the Book of Luke.

Luke 7:41-43 - 41 "A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?" 43 Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt." And he said to him, "You have judged rightly."

The Parable Explained. (Luke 7:44-47.)

Luke 7:44-47 - 44 Then turning toward 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 wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. 45 You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. 46 You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. 47 Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven--for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little."

- a. A debtor who owes a great sum of money will be exceedingly thankful for the debt to be forgiven. A debtor who is forgiven a small sum will be thankful but not as exuberant about it.
- b. Simon the Pharisee did not consider that he needed much forgiveness because he had set himself to live a holy life. He did not grasp the depth of his own sin and need for forgiveness.
- c. Simon dined with Jesus as his host and equal, or at best as a student willing to learn from a teacher.
- d. The woman knelt as Jesus' servant, in absolute willingness to do the lowest and most despicable job for Him (washing His feet,) even dirtying her hair (a woman's glory) to serve Him. (1 Corinthians 11:15)

Parable Point: Those who are forgiven much, love much.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus is forgiving the sins of those who could never atone for their sins.

Further Considerations:

- i. The woman's act of devotion and love would have been regarded as salacious, provocative, and socially inappropriate. But Jesus knew it was an act of gratitude and devotion and responded to her with mercy.
- ii. The self-righteous feel very little need for God's mercy and instead feel like they have God where they want Him and know the ways to get God to respond to them. They have little actual love for God. They have little mercy for anyone else.
- iii. If we find it difficult to be thankful to God, it is because we are self-righteous, thinking that we have earned or deserved whatever life has brought us and fail to see God's mercy and lovingkindness to us.

Big Picture of Context 1: Jesus, His Kingdom, and the people He reaches out to are not what the world or religious people expect.

B. Context 2:

Jesus prayed by Himself and then His disciples asked Him to teach them to pray. Jesus proceeded to give them the Lord's prayer.

1. **Parable of the Friend at Midnight** (Luke 11:5-13.)

This parable is only in the Book of Luke.

Luke 11:5-8 - 5 And he said to them, "Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves, 6 for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; 7 and he will answer from within, 'Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything'? 8 I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs.

Parable continued/explained. (Luke 11:11-13; Matthew 7:9-11.)

Luke 11:9-13 - 9 And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 10 For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. 11 What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; 12 or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? 13 If 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!"

- a. A man had a guest and no bread so he went to ask his neighbor, even though it was night and not an appropriate time.
- b. The neighbor refused because it was not an appropriate request at such an hour.
- c. The neighbor finally gave him what he asked for because he was so persistent.
- d. Ask. Seek. Knock. Asking God means talking to Him in prayer. Seeking God means searching Him out in His Word and through prayer for what His will is in any given situation. Knocking to God means persisting in prayer and faith until it is opened according to God's will.
- e. The Luke version is clear that the Father gives the Holy Spirit whereas the Matthew version only mentions good gifts.

Parable Point: Ask, seek, knock. Be persistent in prayer. God is good and kind and loving and desires to give good gifts to His children.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus was praying to the Father in the same way that He taught His disciples to pray. He was praying persistently to the Father to give good gifts to those who believe, including the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Further Considerations:

- i. James 1:17 - 17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

- ii. God wants us to direct our requests for provision to Him rather than working things out for ourselves. He desires to give us the Kingdom and make it manifest in our lives.
- iii. The Lord's prayer includes prayer for forgiveness of sin. We should not be ashamed to ask God to forgive us for anything we have done, no matter how inappropriate the request may seem.
- iv. The Luke version specifies asking for the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is our deposit and guarantee of eternal life. We must persist in asking the Lord to give us the Holy Spirit until we know we have it. Our eternal life and salvation depends upon it. God gives us the Holy Spirit to strengthen us to resist sins that have ruled us in the past so that we may be like Him, as His children.
- v. Jesus encouraged persistence in prayer and not giving up until we see what He has promised.

Big Picture of Context 2: Within the framework of the Lord's prayer, we can persist in asking God for anything. Persistent prayer will guide us into His will and His way.

C. Context 3:

Crowds following Jesus grew larger. He denounced the generation as wicked for seeking a sign, but no sign would be given except the sign of Jonah. He spoke of the eye being good or evil, light or dark, and pronounced woes upon the scribes and Pharisees for their worldliness and hypocrisy. He warned His disciples to beware of the Leaven of their teaching. He told them not to fear those who can kill the body but to fear only God who has the authority to cast them into hell. Jesus adjured them to acknowledge Him publicly before men or else they will not be acknowledged before God. Then, someone in the crowd made a request.

Luke 12:13-15 - 13 Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." 14 But he said to him, "Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?" 15 And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

1. **Parable of the Rich Fool** (Luke 12:16-21.)

This parable is only in the Book of Luke.

Luke 12:16-21 - 16 And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man produced plentifully, 17 and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' 18 And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry." 20 But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' 21 So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."

- a. The rich man had so much that he could not contain it all. Instead of giving his excess to others, he decided to expand his holdings and store it all up for himself.
- b. He convinced his soul that this was the right thing to do because this was his security in life.

c. Unfortunately for him, he died before he could put his things to use.

Parable Point: Those who are storing up wealth on earth or enlarging their holdings in this world are not in alignment with God's priorities.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus is demanding the souls of men come into alignment with God.

Further Considerations:

- i. Rich people think that wealth is their security. (Proverbs 18:11.) However, it is the Lord who is the strong tower of ultimate and eternal security. (Proverbs 18:10.)
- ii. We are either laying up treasure on earth for ourselves or we are laying up treasure in heaven by giving away what we have for the things that God cares about. Those who give to the poor, lend to God, and will have more than enough. (Proverbs 19:17, 21:13, 28:37.)
- iii. The preceding context in Luke 11:33-36 speaks of the eye being evil if it is focused on money and things of this world rather than selfless generosity and trust in God. We cannot serve both God and money. (See also Matthew 6:22-23) If we are focused on this world, we will not have the right perspective about the things of God.

Context Continued.

Jesus proceeded to tell His disciples that they should not be anxious for anything because as long as they are seeking God's righteousness and Kingdom, God will provide everything they need. (Luke 12:22-34; Matthew 6:25-34.) Therefore, Jesus ordered them to give generously to the needy in order to lay up treasures in heaven rather than treasures on earth. Whether treasure is invested in earthly things or in God's priorities is an indication of the heart.

2. Dressed for Action, Lamps Burning, Servants Awake & Waiting for Master (Luke 12:35-38.)

Luke 12:35-36 - 35 Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning, 36 and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks.

- a. Dressed for action. In the original Passover exodus from Egypt, the Israelites were instructed to eat the feast dressed with their belt fastened and their staff in hand, so that they would be ready to move whenever God gave the command. (Exodus 12:11.)
- b. Lamp burning. As previously covered, our lamp is kept burning through continuing to live out His commands with hearts of faith which is demonstrated through our selflessness, generosity, and not testing God through demands or unbelief. This includes expectance for Him to return and fulfill the prophecies that remain.

Similar Parable.

Mark 13:34-37 - 34 It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. 35 Therefore stay awake--for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at

midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning-- 36 lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. 37 And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake."

Parable Point: We do not know when Jesus is coming. It may be at any time. We must maintain a vigilant expectancy of His return so that we do not grow slack in our devotion or service to Him. We must be ready to go at any time.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus is here now as the Master of the House. He is going away but will return to judge.

Further Considerations:

- i. The events in the Book of Revelation mirror the plagues in Egypt preceding the first Passover. The Passover was a night of watching and staying awake for the deliverance of God. (Exodus 12:24.) The Israelites departed from Egypt at midnight. This is a shadow of the level of expectancy and readiness God wants us to have for the return of Jesus.

3. **Master & Thief** (Luke 12:39-40; Matthew 24:45-50.)

To be covered in Unit Nine: End-Times Readiness. Given here for context.

Do not be anxious or focused on worldly things. Be ready for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

4. **Faithful & Wicked Servants** (Luke 12:42-48; Matthew 24:45-50.)

To be covered in Unit Nine: End-Times Readiness. Given here for context.

Peter asked, is this for us or for everyone?

The one who did what the Master ordered will be rewarded. The one who knew the Master's will and did not get ready or do according to the Master's will, will receive a severe beating. To whom much is given, much is required.

5. **Fire & Baptism** (Luke 12:49-50.)

This parable is only in the Book of Luke.

& Not Peace but a Sword (Luke 12:51-53; Matthew 10:34.)

Luke 12:49-53 - 49 "I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled! 50 I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished! 51 Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. 52 For from now on in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three. 53 They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."

- a. Jesus is the One appointed by God to judge the earth. He longs for the day of ultimate justice and vengeance against the adversaries of God. That day will be the day of the Lord, a day of fire on the whole earth. (2 Peter 3:7.)

- b. First, He must go to the cross to take the wrath of God upon Himself for the salvation of all who will believe in Him.
- c. Baptism was known to Jews as a mikveh, a ritual cleansing bath or submersion in water for consecration and purification. But the baptism Jesus was about to undergo was going to be His crucifixion and submersion into death to sanctify Himself. (Mark 10:38; John 17:19.) Jesus passed through water and fire for total purification. (See Numbers 31:21-23.)
- d. A sword cuts, divides, and kills. The sword of the Lord is a symbol of judgment. (Leviticus 26:25; Deuteronomy 32:41.) A sword blocks the way to the Tree of Life, meaning access to eternal life and the life of God. (Genesis 3:24.)
- e. Peace would not be attained through compromise or slackness. In spite of the fact that the Gospel message is peace with God through forgiveness of sin, truly following Jesus is the most divisive call in the world.
- f. We cannot love even our own family and closest friends more than we love Jesus. If they choose not to follow Jesus themselves or resist our pursuit of Jesus, we must choose Him over them.

Parable Point: Jesus was going to take the fire of God's wrath upon Himself. Following Him can be divisive, even between family members. His ministry divides people by their willingness to follow Him to the end.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus is about to go to the cross into the baptism of death.

Further Considerations:

- i. The Levites attained the honor of serving the Lord in the Tabernacle/Temple by being willing to choose the Lord, even over their own family, flesh, and blood. (See Exodus 32:26-29.)

Exodus 32:29 - 29 And Moses said, "Today you have been ordained for the service of the LORD, each one at the cost of his son and of his brother, so that he might bestow a blessing upon you this day."

Context Continued.

Jesus rebuked the crowds for the fact that even though they could discern the signs of the times. (Luke 12:54-56; Matthew 16:2-4.)

Luke 12:54-56 - 54 He also said to the crowds, "When you see a cloud rising in the west, you say at once, 'A shower is coming.' And so it happens. 55 And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, 'There will be scorching heat,' and it happens. 56 You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?"

6. Settle with Accuser (Luke 12:57-59.)

Luke 12:57-59 - 57 "And why do you not judge for yourselves what is right? 58 As you go with your accuser before the magistrate, make an effort to settle with him on the way, lest he drag you to the judge, and the judge hand you over to the officer, and the officer put you in prison. 59 I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the very last penny."

- a. God is the Magistrate or chief ruler. Jesus is the Judge with authority from God to cast into the prison of hell. Angels are the officers who will execute upon Jesus' judgment to separate the righteous from the unrighteous. (Matthew 13:41-42.)
- b. Accuser/Adversary. We are enemies of God and in recognition of the signs of His coming judgment, we need to settle our debts and get right with Him or we will suffer the eternal consequences.

Parable Point: While there is still time before the wrath of God is poured out in judgment on the earth, people must get right with God, or else they will face the penalty.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus, the Judge, was standing right before them, ready to judge on God's behalf and set fire to the world. But instead, warned them of the judgment to come and giving them an opportunity to settle accounts with God.

Further Considerations:

- i. All of us are guilty before God, whether under the Law or through violations of our own conscience. Unless we settle with the adversary by having our debts of sin paid in full through the shed blood of Jesus, we will be cast into Hell for eternity with no means of paying our own debts.
- ii. If the crowds understood the signs of the times, they would make haste to repent and settle their debts of sin to get right with God.
- c. Accuser. The evil one is called the accuser of the brethren. (Revelation 12:10.) Moses and the Law of God is the accuser of the Jewish people. (John 5:45-47.) They will be judged by the Law. (See Romans 2:12-13.) Gentiles will be judged apart from the Law but will be judged by our own words, either acquitted or condemned based on what we have uttered with our own mouths. (Matthew 12:36-37; Romans 2:13-16.)

Context Continued.

The crowds came and told Jesus of a tragedy that had happened. He told them that the people who the tragedy happened to were not worse sinners than they were. Unless they repented, they would also surely perish.

7. Parable of the Barren Fig Tree (Luke 13:6-9.)

This parable is only in the Book of Luke.

Luke 13:6-9 - 6 And he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. 7 And he said to the vinedresser, 'Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?' 8 And he answered him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. 9 Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"

- a. The fig tree had not produced good fruit and therefore, the owner was ready to have his servant chop the tree down because it was not bearing fruit.

- b. God is the owner, Jesus is His servant, the vinedresser. John the Baptist said the ax is at the root, ready to chop. (Matthew 3:10; Luke 3:9.)
- c. The vinedresser asked for mercy and time to fertilize the tree. If it bore fruit, it would live but if it did not bear fruit, it would be chopped down.

Parable Point: Jesus is the One appointed by God to bring judgment on Israel's lack of fruitfulness. He came to show mercy so that opportunity could be given to them to do things God's way. If they were unable to do this, judgment would come.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus is asking God for more time for the Jewish people to produce fruit.

Further Considerations:

- i. The fig tree is symbolic of Israel. The Prophet Jeremiah had a vision of the people of Israel as good figs or bad figs. (See Jeremiah 24:3.) The good figs would be preserved by God in exile in Babylon while the bad figs would be judged by God and destroyed.
- ii. Jesus had said that every tree that does not bear good fruit will be chopped down and thrown into the fire. (Matthew 7:19.)
- iii. Time is short, and could be over already, if Jesus had not asked for a window of mercy from God. The message is repent now or perish.

Context Continued.

Jesus traveled on His way to Jerusalem. He told the parable of the Mustard Seed and the Leaven. Someone asked if the number of those saved would be many or few.

Luke 13:22-23 - 22 He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem. 23 And someone said to him, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" And he said to them,

8. Narrow Door (Luke 13:24-30; Matthew 7:13-14, 21-23.)

Luke 13:24-30 - 24 "Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. 25 When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, open to us,' then he will answer you, 'I do not know where you come from.' 26 Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.' 27 But he will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!' 28 In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out. 29 And people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and recline at table in the kingdom of God. 30 And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last."

Similar Parable:

Matthew 7:13-14, 21-23 - 13 Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. 14 For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few... 21 "Not everyone who says to me,

'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' 23 And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

- a. A gate or door is an entry way. If you do not have passage through the gate, you cannot enter where you want to go. Jesus is the door/gate. (John 10:9.) There is no other name under heaven by which we must be saved. (Acts 4:12.)
- b. The broad way is the way of this world. Those who go this way will not enter the Kingdom of God.
- c. The narrow way is the will of God. Only those who do the will of God will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. The only way to do the will of God is to believe Jesus and obey His voice.
- d. Even those who have experienced His presence, blessings, and benefits might not enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Even those who have used the name of Jesus in spiritual power to work miracles might have been working their own will rather than God's.
- e. The Lord saying, "I never knew you" is total rejection and non-association. "Depart from me, workers of iniquity" is a quote of Psalm 6:8. Workers of evil/lawlessness/iniquity are those laboring for their own will and intents of their own heart rather than for the will of God.

Parable Point: Only those producing the fruit of the Spirit and do the will of God will enter into the Kingdom.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus is exhorting people to produce genuine fruit or they will face the consequences.

9. **Hen with Chicks** (Luke 13:31-35; Matthew 23:37.)

To be covered in Unit Six: Blind Guides. Given here for context.

Even though Jerusalem thought she was worshipping and serving God, she missed her day of visitation because she did not recognize the ways of God when they were on two feet in front of her. (See Luke 19:44.)

- a. Jesus made a way/door for people to be restored to God. But the very people who thought they were living for God missed it. Zeal, piety, and knowledge about God is not the same as producing fruit for Him. (Romans 10:2; Proverbs 19:2.)

Big Picture Context 3: God does not want us to be focused on the things of this world but to be ready and expectant for the return of Christ until the final day judgment of the world. We need to discern the times, repent of all worldliness and remain faithful to God unto the end, or else we will face judgment and eternal consequences. The way is narrow and few find it. Even people who considered themselves God's people would be shocked to discover that they would not enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

Unit Five: The Cost & the Lost (Luke 14-17)

For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?

Luke 14:28

A. Context 1:

While dining at a Pharisee's house on the Sabbath, there was a man with dropsy. Jesus asked the Pharisees if it was lawful to heal the man on the Sabbath. They could not answer. Jesus healed the man and sent him away. Then, Jesus asked the Pharisees if they had an animal who had fallen into a ditch on the Sabbath if they would get the animal out. They could not reply. Jesus was essentially asking if it was against the Law to show mercy. They were so bound up in legalism and religion that they could not answer.

1. **Parable of the Lowest Place** (Luke 14:7-11.)

This parable is only in the Book of Luke.

Luke 14:7-11 - 7 Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he noticed how they chose the places of honor, saying to them, 8 "When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him, 9 and he who invited you both will come and say to you, 'Give your place to this person,' and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place. 10 But when you are invited, go and sit in 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 table with you. 11 For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

- a. Jesus told this parable because the Pharisees wanted the best seats at the feast in order to receive honor from men. They were posturing for self-advancement and recognition among one another while disregarding the needs of the sick man.
- b. To be asked publicly to move from a place of honor to a lower place would be humiliating.
- c. Jesus was again referencing the Wedding Feast. All Israel was anticipating the Messiah and the Wedding Feast of God for His people. (See Unit 3 about the Bridegroom.)
- d. Those who were at the table thought that they were the ones who would be at the Messianic Wedding Feast with the seats of honor. But Jesus is indicating otherwise, and they might be humiliated, while others are let in. He was saying that they would be replaced by others.

Parable Point: Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and everyone who humbles himself will be exalted.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus was taking the lowest place of serving the lost, the sick, and the broken in contrast to the Pharisees who were exalting themselves by taking the highest place.

Further Considerations:

- i. This is actual application of wisdom from Proverbs 25:6-7.

Proverbs 25:6-7 - 6 Do not put yourself forward in the king's presence or stand in the place of the great, 7 for it is better to be told, "Come up here," than to be put lower in the presence of a noble.

- ii. Jesus took the lowest place. He is God but was born in a manger. He is Lord but came to serve, not to be served. (Matthew 20:28.)

Context Continued:

Jesus turned to the man who invited Him and instructed that instead of inviting his friends and those who can repay him, when he throws a banquet, he should invite the poor, lame, crippled, blind and those who can never repay him. Repayment will come at the resurrection.

Luke 14:12-14 - 12 He said also to the man who had invited him, "When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. 13 But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, 14 and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just."

Then, one of the people at the table with Jesus remarked, "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the Kingdom of God."

2. **Parable of the Wedding Feast** (Luke 14:16-24; Matthew 22:1-14.)

To be covered in Unit Eight. Given [here](#) for context.

Invited guests make excuses for why they cannot come, so the master ordered his servants to compel anyone to come into the feast so that his house would be full. None of those invited would be included.

- a. Jesus had referenced the Wedding Feast and the person picked up on His eternal reference.
- b. It was the general idea at the time that only good/righteous Jews would enter the Kingdom of God and enjoy the Wedding Feast. So, the people at the table thought they were it. They thought that Pharisees, religious people, and the wealthy were the earthly representation of what the Kingdom of God would be like. Instead, they were the invited guests who were so focused on worldly things that they made excuses and would be replaced with other people.
- c. Jesus' parable was told to rebuke his way of thinking. The ones that they looked down upon were the ones that were going to enter the Kingdom of God before them.
- d. In the Luke version of this parable, the specific excuses given for not coming to the banquet would all have been considered reasonable excuses and exclusions for soldiers going to war. (Deuteronomy 20:5-8.) They were focused on the things of this world, not the Kingdom of God.
- e. They failed to see that Jesus was inviting them to the Wedding Banquet and that they were turning down His invitation. Instead, the poor, crippled, blind, and lame were accepting His

invitation. Also, those in the highways and hedges is an indication that the Gentiles will also receive and accept His invitation.

3. **Take Up Your Cross – Instance #3** (Luke 14:26-27.)

This is a unique context. Instance #1 chronologically has not yet been covered.

Luke 14:25-27 - 25 Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, 26 "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. 27 Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

- a. Previously covered but this context is unique. The Pharisees were posturing for the best seat at the banquet and recognition from others. In contrast, Jesus presented the cost of following Him would be much greater than a good seat. It could even cost your whole life.
- b. In the context of the Parable of the Wedding Banquet, excuses for not following Jesus prove that we are not worthy to be His disciples.

4. **Count the Cost: Building a Tower & King at War** (Luke 14:28-33.)

This parable is only in the Book of Luke.

Luke 14:28-33 - 28 For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? 29 Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, 30 saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' 31 Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? 32 And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. 33 So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

- a. A wise builder would have everything needed to build before starting a project. A builder who was unable to complete their building project would be humiliated by an unfinished structure.
- b. The Pharisees thought that they could reach God through their own righteousness. Instead, it was just another form of a Tower of Babel that would be humiliated.
- c. A king at war with an enemy twice his size would do well to settle terms of peace. Though small armies do sometimes win against larger adversaries, it is an unlikely gamble to take.
- d. The Pharisees, thinking that they were the chosen of God, did not recognize that they were enemies of God who would be defeated by Him on the day of the Lord.

Parable Point: Therefore, anyone who does not renounce all for Jesus is not worthy of Him. We must recognize that nothing of this world has any eternal value. If we are an enemy of God, we would be wise to accept His invitation of peace before we are overthrown.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus is demonstrating the cost of obedience to God by taking the lowest place and forsaking even life itself by going to the cross.

Further Considerations:

- i. In the context of unacceptable excuses to serving the Lord, we are God's enemies unless we reconcile with Him. We are unable to build a tower high enough to reach Him through our own righteousness or worldly schemes of self-advancement. Those will all be humiliated.
 - ii. We are God's enemies if we do not accept Jesus' invitation to salvation. We are unable to defend ourselves from His wrath. On the final day, the Lord's army will bring vengeance against His enemies. So, we should come to terms of peace with Him. We do this by denying ourselves and our earthly agendas to take up our cross and follow Jesus.
 - iii. Therefore, anyone making worldly excuses or clinging to the things of this world is not worthy to be Jesus' disciple.
 - iv. Alternative view: Following Jesus and entering into His work is an unfinishable task and an unwinnable war. No generation has been able to complete it and it will not be completed until Jesus returns. It will cost us everything we have to follow Him. We must accept this before we even begin or we will be greatly confused and easily misdirected in our attempt to follow Him.
5. **Salt not Salty** (Luke 14:34-35; Matthew 5:13; Mark 9:50.)
Previously covered, given here for context.

Being willing to sacrifice everything of this world is what is required to be a disciple of Jesus. Excuses, complacency, and compromise will be judged.

- a. The Pharisees had become worldly and lukewarm about the things of God. They were about to be thrown out.

Context Continued:

Tax Collectors and sinners were gathering as a crowd around Jesus. Pharisees and scribes grumbled about how Jesus kept company with them. So he told a parable in their hearing.

6. **Parable of the Lost Sheep** (Luke 15:3-7; similar in Matthew 18:10-14.)

Luke 15:3-7 - 3 So he told them this parable: 4 "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? 5 And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. 6 And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' 7 Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

- a. A shepherd's sheep would be his livelihood and very valuable to him. Losing one would have a serious impact on his life and ability to provide for his family.
- b. Losing a sheep would be tragic for the shepherd and his family. Finding a lost sheep would be cause for great rejoicing.

Parable Point: Heaven rejoices over one sinner who repents, who was lost and is found. Just like finding a lost sheep would be extremely important and valuable to a shepherd, the lost are extremely important and valuable to God.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus is the Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep. (John 10:11; Ezekiel 34.) He is seeking and saving the lost.

Further Considerations:

- i. Jesus is telling this parable to Pharisees who think they are God's friends but do not actually have God's heart or priorities. Instead of rejoicing when sinners repent, they grumble.
- ii. This is a series parable, meant to be told together with the Parable of the Lost Coin and culminating in the Prodigal Son.

7. **Parable of the Lost Coin** (Luke 15:8-10.)

This parable is only in the Book of Luke.

Luke 15:8-10 - 8 "Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? 9 And when 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.' 10 Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

- a. Each silver coin would have been approximately the equivalent of a day's wage.
- b. Losing a day's wage would be cause for distress and searching. Finding a day's wage would be cause for rejoicing.

Parable Point: Heaven rejoices over one sinner who repents, who was lost and is found. Just like finding lost money would be valuable, the lost are valuable to God.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus is seeking out the lost because they are valuable to Him and to God.

Further Considerations:

- i. Jesus is telling this parable to Pharisees who loved money and would have sympathized with this parable. Instead of rejoicing when sinners repent, they grumble.
- ii. This is a series parable, preceded by the Parable of the Lost Sheep and culminating in the Prodigal Son.

8. **Parable of the Lost Son** (Luke 15:11-32.)

This parable is only in the Book of Luke.

Luke 15:11-32 – 11 And he said, "There was a man who had two sons. 12 And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.' And he divided his property between them. 13 Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. 14 And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. 15

So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. 16 And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything. 17 "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! 18 I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants."' 20 And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. 21 And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' 22 But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. 23 And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. 24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate. 25 "Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. 27 And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.' 28 But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, 29 but he answered his father, 'Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!' 31 And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. 32 It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'"

- a. The Prodigal Son wanted his earthly inheritance now, which was essentially communicating to his father that he wished he were already dead so that he could squander his money however he wanted rather than obey the rules of his father's house.
- b. By Law, the father could, and probably should have brought his son to the elders to have him stoned to death for rebellion and disobedience. (See Deuteronomy 21:18-21.) But the father loved the son, gave him his inheritance, and let him go. The father honored the son's free will to chose his own life for himself.
- c. The prodigal exchanged his father's goods for cash and squandered it all on licentious living. He went and became degenerate and degraded to the point of eating pig food – unclean in every possible way.
- d. The Prodigal wound himself up in a serious mess, surrounded by unclean animals, and longing for the comforts of his father's house. But in his lowly estate, he came to his senses and sought to return to his father's house, even if only as a servant. But he knew that he had so violated his father's household, name, and ways, that he could not expect to be received back at the same level or with the same privileges he had before because he had blown it.
- e. The father continued to wait and hope and expect the return of his son, but we do not know how long the son was gone. When the lost son was seen over the horizon, the father received him with great joy and he threw a feast to rejoice. The father running would have been culturally abnormal, as it was considered to be undignified, especially for an older man or property owner with servants.
- f. The Elder Brother stayed in the father's house but did not rejoice at his brother's return. In self-righteousness, he was jealous that a feast was thrown to celebrate. He grumbled and could not even acknowledge the prodigal as his brother but only as his father's son. He failed to

recognize the privilege and wealth he had as a member of his father's house and so, his heart was hard with stinginess and inability to show mercy to his brother who had gone astray.

Parable Point: It is fitting to celebrate when the lost get found. The Pharisees and scribes were complaining that Jesus was saving the lost, rejoicing, and dining with them. The grudge in their heart revealed their self-righteousness and disconnection from God's heart and purpose. If a sinner is willing to repent, God rejoices to receive them.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus is rebuking the Pharisees for grumbling about sinners who are repenting, like the older brother grumbled and did not accept the prodigal as his brother. Jesus is demonstrating the heart of God, the heavenly Father, showing mercy to those who have fallen into sin by their own bad choices. Jesus is not unaware of the Law and its requirements but is showing mercy and is rejoicing over sinners who repent and return to God.

Further Considerations:

- i. The Prodigal Son represents sinners who have rebelled against God and gone their own way, making a mess of their lives.
- ii. The Father represents God, who gives people free will but longs for them to return to Him.
- iii. The Elder Brother represents the Jewish leaders and Pharisees who were grumbling when sinners repented and returned to God rather than rejoicing at their restoration.
- iv. The Law may demand certain punishment for sin, but the mercy of God rejoices when one sinner repents.
- v. This is a series parable, culminating in the Prodigal Son. The value of a human being returning to God is much greater than a sheep or a coin.

Context Continued:

Turning to His disciples, Jesus shared more. Pharisees are still present and listening.

9. Parable of the Shrewd Manager (Luke 16:1-13. Only in Luke.)

This parable is only in the Book of Luke.

Luke 16:1-13 - 1 He also said to the disciples, "There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his possessions. 2 And he called him and said to him, "What is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your management, for you can no longer be manager." 3 And the manager said to himself, "What shall I do, since my master is taking the management away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. 4 I have decided what to do, so that when I am removed from management, people may receive me into their houses." 5 So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he said to the first, "How much do you owe my master?" 6 He said, "A hundred measures of oil." He said to him, "Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty." 7 Then he said to another, "And how much do you owe?" He said, "A hundred measures of wheat." He said to him, "Take your bill, and write eighty." 8 The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light. 9 And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you

into the eternal dwellings. 10 "One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. 11 If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? 12 And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? 13 No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money."

- a. A manager was a trusted servant appointed by a property owner to exercise authority in managing the estate, including the distribution of household goods. They were the agent designated by the master, able to execute all business transactions in the name of the master.
- b. This manager was wasting the owner's possessions and was going to be fired. So, to build relationships with people for his own benefit, he forgave the debts of his master's debtors. He used the techniques of networking to make friends for himself.
- c. The owner commended his shrewdness because the owner prioritized relationships with his customers more than demanding full payment of the bill. He is commending his tactics, not his dishonesty.
- d. Even though payment for the debts were rightfully due, showing mercy by forgiving the debt, even at a loss to himself, built the relationship with his debtors.
- e. Sons of this world are more shrewd: business people in this world know the value of networking and will spend lots of money building relationships with prospects and customers. We are supposed to use money to make friends for God for eternity – not for ourselves or our own interests.
- f. If we are faithful in using what little we have for God's purposes (i.e. seeking and saving the lost by showing mercy) then God can trust us with more, both in this world and the world to come.
- g. God and Money/Mammon. Mammon is a Chaldean/Babylonian term for the personification of money as a god. It expresses the idolization of money and the power it has over people's lives whose eye/focus is on it rather than God.

Parable Point: Make friends for yourself by your worldly wealth so that you will be received by them into the Kingdom of Heaven. Whatever we have here on earth should be used for eternal purposes to make friends for ourselves in heaven. We cannot serve both God and money.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus is the Shrewd Manager, forgiving debts to make friends for Himself in Heaven. Jesus is being faithful with small matters on earth because He will one day be entrusted to steward the full riches of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Further Considerations:

- i. This is NOT a parable about money management of worldly resources for worldly gain or being good stewards by investing in the things of this world. In fact, this parable is clear that we cannot serve both God and money. In God's sight, it is a waste for us to build up treasures for ourselves on earth and hoard resources for ourselves. If we cling to money in this world for our own security, advancement, or purposes, we have missed God's heart.

- ii. In the context of the Parables of the Lost Sheep, Coin, and Son, this is about spending our resources to seek and save the lost because of their great value in the sight of God. All we have is God's. If we truly serve God and not money, we will spend all we have for His priorities.
- iii. The Pharisees were offended because payment for sin was rightfully due according to the Law. But Jesus was prioritizing mercy for the sake of the relationship and restoration of the offender to God. Jesus was loving others as Himself. Jesus was loving prodigals as the Father does.
- iv. True riches & that which is your own: This also ties in with the parable of the Minas in Luke 19:11-27, where the reward for good stewardship with earthly resources in this world is ruling over cities for eternity in the world to come. Our inheritance in the world to come is true riches. But if we are not faithful with the little that we have here on earth, how can God trust us with true riches in heaven? If we are not willing to do things God's way now, how can we be qualified to rule cities in the world to come?

Context Continued:

The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, ridiculed Jesus for what He said about God and money. Their grumbling about the Tax Collectors and sinners has now degraded further into ridicule.

Luke 16:14 - 14 The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things, and they ridiculed him.

10. Adultery to the Law & Prophets (Luke 16:15-18.)

This parable is only in the Book of Luke.

Luke 16:15-18 - 15 And he said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God. 16 "The Law and the Prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone forces his way into it. 17 But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one dot of the Law to become void. 18 "Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery.

- a. The Pharisees loved money and being successful in the eyes of others. They were exalted in their own sight by their obedience to their religious codes. They also thought that their wealth was the evidence of God's blessing. Instead, their self-exaltation was an abomination to God.
- b. The Law & Prophets was proclaimed until John the Baptist. The Old Covenant Law demands full payment for sins committed.
- c. Starting with John the Baptist, the Kingdom of God was proclaimed. In the New Covenant, God does not hold sins against us but forgives all sins and remembers them no more. (See Jeremiah 31:31-34; 2 Corinthians 5:19.)
- d. "Everyone forces his way into it," or "the violent take it by force." People flocked to John the Baptist to confess their sins in radical repentance in order to be ready for the coming Messiah and His Kingdom. Jesus commands a violence towards self by saying, "cut off your hand, your foot, gouge out your eye... take up your cross." The violent are the ones asking, seeking, and knocking persistently to do God's will and to be let into God's Kingdom at any expense to themselves or their prior way of life.

- e. Jesus reiterates that the Law will not be nullified. As stated in the promise of the New Covenant, the Law and its requirements will remain until heaven and earth pass away. The Kingdom of God does not negate the need for the Law to be fulfilled.
- f. Adultery is when a husband or wife has sexual relations with someone other than their spouse. Divorce and marrying another is adultery in the sight of God because in God's sight, the person is still married to the first spouse.
- g. In the same way as divorce and remarriage, it is impossible to be in the Old Covenant and the New Covenant at the same time. It is spiritual adultery. The only escape from the marriage covenant is death. We must take up our cross and be dead to ourselves and the things of this world, including the Law, in order to live completely for Jesus and His Kingdom.

Parable Point: We must be completely dead to the Law and any legalistic way of thinking. (See Galatians 2:19-20.)

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus is proclaiming the Kingdom of God: the New Covenant, not the Old Covenant. He is not nullifying the Law but fulfilling it.

Further Considerations:

- i. The Law demanded strict adherence and full payment for sins. Jesus did not negate the Law but fulfilled it by loving God with all His heart as demonstrated by His own personal obedience and righteousness to the depths of His heart, AND by loving His neighbor as Himself by showing mercy to the lost, poor, hurting, and broken. This is the true heart of God. God's ultimate purpose for the Law for His people to bring the light of His holiness, purity, goodness, and love to all the world.
- ii. Jesus came to fulfill the Law and did so through His perfect righteousness. (Matthew 5:17-20.) He also stated that unless our righteousness exceeds that of the Pharisees. The Pharisees righteousness was outward and for show. The righteousness Jesus demands is from the heart. Even if our outward actions may seem similar to the Pharisees, God is looking at the heart.
- iii. The Apostle Paul explains more about God not negating the Law but fulfilling it in Christ.

Romans 3:21-27 - 21 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it-- 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. 26 It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. 27 Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith.

- iv. The Apostle Paul explains more about divorce, adultery, and death to the Old Covenant in order to participate in the New Covenant.

Romans 7:1-6 - 1 Or do you not know, brothers--for I am speaking to those who know the law--that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives? 2 For a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of

marriage. 3 Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress. 4 Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. 5 For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. 6 But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.

11. **Parable of the Rich Man & Lazarus** (Luke 16:19-31.)

This parable is only in the Book of Luke.

Luke 16:19-31 - 19 "There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. 20 And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, 21 who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. 22 The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried, 23 and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. 24 And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.' 25 But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. 26 And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.' 27 And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house-- 28 for I have five brothers--so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.' 29 But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' 30 And he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' 31 He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.'"

- a. The Rich Man (who had no name) had the finest clothes and abundant food. He kept it all to himself and was eating, drinking, and making merry in this life for his own enjoyment.
- b. Lazarus (whose name means "whom God helps") was a poor beggar, covered with sores, and longed for a morsel from the Rich Man's table. The dogs were not domesticated but wild street dogs, smelling his sores and licking the blood. Total uncleanness and degradation.
- c. Lazarus went to Abraham's bosom, a term for the place of the righteous dead before Jesus opened heaven. The Rich Man went to Hades, the term for the place of the unrighteous dead, facing eternal fires of torment.
- d. The Rich Man recognized Lazarus and knew his name, even though he had ignored him during his lifetime. The merciless now wanted to receive mercy. He also still regarded Lazarus as lower than him and as one who should serve his need.
- e. Abraham called the Rich Man, "child" because he was his biological descendant. But even though the rich man was a biological son of Abraham, he was not Abraham's offspring and did not go to Abraham's bosom with the righteous.
- f. The chasm between Hades and the place of the righteous cannot be crossed for all eternity once it has been determined. People die once and then face judgement. (Hebrews 9:27.)

- g. The Rich Man begged for Lazarus to be sent to his brothers to tell them. His brothers were most likely living the same lifestyle that Lazarus was living. Note: Necromancy is forbidden in the Law. (Leviticus 20:27; Deuteronomy 18:11.)
- h. Abraham points to the Law and the Prophets. If they understood the Law & Prophets, they would show mercy to the poor, the sick, the outcast, and to all people. But their hearts were so hard that even if someone was raised from the dead, (which is also in the Law & Prophets) they would not believe.

Parable Point: If people do not understand that the Law and the Prophets reveal and command mercy and love to all people as God's representatives, their hearts will be too hard to believe in the resurrection.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus is perfectly fulfilling the Law and Prophets by showing mercy to ones whom the Pharisees think should be excluded from relationship with God. Pharisees think that their biological descent from Abraham is their entryway into the Kingdom of God. But Jesus is predicting that they will continue in unbelief even after He is raised from the dead.

Further Considerations:

- i. The Rich Man considered himself a man of God, under the Law, but he went to Hades. He was regarded as disobedient to the Law because he failed to show mercy to Lazarus. The Law repeatedly commands open-handed, unbegrudging generosity to the poor, especially fellow Israelites. The Prophets repeatedly echo these commands. (See Leviticus 25:35; Deuteronomy 15:7-11; Amos 5:11, etc. etc.) If the Rich Man were truly a man of God, obedient to the Law of God, he would have known these things and put them into practice.
- ii. Judgment will be merciless to those who have not shown mercy. (James 2:13.) Those failing to show mercy demonstrate through their actions that they do not know God at all. They will receive no mercy from Him on the day of judgement, but He will say, "I never knew you."
- iii. This is a continuation of the series of parables that began with the Parable of the Lost Sheep, Coin, Son, and Shrewd Manager. Jesus is making the point that God is here to be restored with people through showing mercy.

Context Continued:

Jesus turned to His disciples and continued. Pharisees are still present and listening.

12. **Millstone** (Luke 17:1-4.)

This is a unique context.

Luke 17:1-4 - 1 And he said to his disciples, "Temptations to sin are sure to come, but woe to the one through whom they come! 2 It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were cast into the sea than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin. 3 Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, 4 and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' you must forgive him."

- a. As previously covered, the Millstone is a symbol of the permanent judgment of Babylon and this world.
- b. Woe. Temptations to worldliness, luxury, and selfishness, being like the Manager who was fired or the Rich Man who wasted their resources on themselves, is what Babylon emphasizes and presents as the way of life.
- c. Pay attention to yourselves! Jesus focuses in on the disciples hearts and their temptations.
- d. If your brother sins. Sin cannot be overlooked or made light of but must be rebuked so that it can be repented of. Jesus' proclamation of the Gospel was not of pardon but of repentance.
- e. It was considered honorable in Jewish culture to forgive someone three times. After that, it was acceptable to dismiss them.
- f. Jesus saying seven, the number of completion, is His way of saying, "even if they completely sin against you." Even deep and hurtful sins must be forgiven if the person repents.

Context Continued:

The disciples beg for Jesus to increase their faith.

Luke 17:5 - 5 The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!"

13. Faith like Mustard Seed (Luke 17:6.)

This is a unique context.

Luke 17:6 - 6 And the Lord said, "If you had faith like a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you.

- a. As previously discussed, a mustard seed is very small.
- b. A mulberry tree's root system is spread wide and is therefore difficult to uproot.
- c. If we truly understood for even a second what Jesus has done for us in forgiving our sins and reaching down to us in our poverty, it does not take much faith or large faith to forgive those who have sinned against us. Even though it may seem impossible, or the offense is as deeply rooted in us as a mulberry tree, through understanding of the Gospel and God's mercy for us, we will be able to forgive those who hurt us, and show mercy to the poor and needy.

14. Parable of the Dutiful/Unworthy Servants (Luke 14:7-10.)

This parable is only in the Book of Luke.

Luke 17:7-10 - 7 "Will any one of you who has a servant plowing or keeping sheep say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and recline at table'? 8 Will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare supper for me, and dress properly, and serve me while I eat and drink, and afterward you will eat and drink'? 9 Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded? 10 So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.'"

- a. One kind of servant would be the property of the owner by purchase or by birth into slavery in the owner's household. Another kind was through indentured servitude, where the servant was indebted to the Master. Instead of the Master throwing the servant into debtors' prison until they could repay the debt, the Master took them into their own home to work off their debt. This was part of the merciful nature of the Law of God. (Leviticus 25:35-36.)
- b. A servant/slave does not expect additional compensation or recognition for doing what is expected of them. A servant's role is to serve.

Parable Point: It is our duty to forgive freely those who have sinned against God and against us. It is what Jesus, our Master, has commanded us. We should not expect recognition for this.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus is merely executing the commands of the Father, the Law & Prophets by showing mercy. He is commanding His disciples to do the same.

Further Considerations:

- i. The disciples asked for more faith so that they could "master" the mercy of God. Jesus tells the parable in the form of them having a servant to get their attention. Then, he makes clear that they are the servants who must do what God requires of them, without expecting exceptional reward for fulfilling their duty. God is not their servant. They are God's servants.
- ii. If we truly understand what Jesus has done for us by forgiving our sins against Him, we will freely forgive others and not think highly of ourselves for doing so.

Big Picture of Context 1: Following Jesus is going to cost us a lot more than giving up a good seat. People are valuable to God. Forgiveness is like release from a debt. Jesus forgives liberally and spent all He had, including His own life, to make friends for eternity. We must show mercy. Following in His footsteps to forgive others is the least we can do. It is our duty as His followers who obey His commandments.

Unit Six: Blind Guides (Matthew 15, 23; Luke 10-11)

Let them alone; they are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit.

Matthew 15:14

A. Context 1:

The Pharisees came to Jesus asking why His disciples break the traditions of the elders by not washing their hands before eating. He rebuked them for using their traditions to break the commandments of God by quoting from Isaiah 29 that they draw near to God with their lips but their hearts are far from Him and teach the commands of men rather than God.

1. **Not Planted by God** (Matthew 15:12-13)

Matthew 15:12-13 - 12 Then the disciples came and said to him, "Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?" 13 He answered, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up.

- a. Uprooting is different than chopping down. Chopping down leaves hope for regrowth. Uprooting removes the tree's entire system of support and nourishment.

Parable Point: Those not planted and rooted by God will lose their footing, either in this world, or the world to come.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus is planted by God. Jesus is uprooting the teachings of men which are not an accurate view of God's purpose, holiness, or perspective.

Further Considerations:

- i. The Pharisees were not planted by God. The root of their tree were the teachings of men, not of God. Therefore, they were offended that Jesus did not follow the commands of their elders and their traditional religious observances for ritual cleanliness.
- ii. All religion will be uprooted, and even the Old Covenant Law will pass away. All knowledge of good and evil will be removed. Only childlike faith will remain in God's Kingdom.
- iii. Anyone whose foundation of faith relies upon the teachings of men will be offended at the pure teaching of God. What is needed is personal knowledge and revelation of God.
- iv. Paul chastised the Corinthians for being worldly because they were following teachers rather than following Christ. (1 Corinthians 3:3.) In the same way, if we are following teachers without knowing Christ for ourselves, we will be uprooted.

2. **Blind Guides – Instance #1** (Matthew 15:14; similar to Luke 6:39 and John 9:39.)

Matthew 15:14 - 14 Let them alone; they are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit."

John 9:39-41 - 39 Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind." 40 Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, "Are we also blind?" 41 Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains.

- a. A blind person cannot see to be able to lead anyone else. If a blind person is guided by another blind person, neither one of them knows where they are going or what obstacles they may encounter, including falling into a pit.
- b. Like a blind person, the Pharisees could not see where they were going. They did not know the way for themselves and were subject to following the direction of others (traditions of men, rules, regulations, etc.) to guide them on their path.
- c. There was no need to argue with them or judge their ways. They would fall into a pit of their own making.
- d. Those who are know that they are blind (literally and spiritually) are receiving mercy from God to have their eyes opened to see. Those who do not know they are blind (spiritually) don't think they need any help and therefore, don't receive any.

Parable Point: Jesus says to ignore those who are rooted in the teachings of men rather than true knowledge of God. If we follow anyone other than Jesus, we are likely to fall in a pit.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus is leaving the Pharisees to themselves to fall into their own pit.

Further Considerations:

- i. The Pharisees offended hearts were unable to receive the word of the Kingdom of God. If the seed of the Kingdom is not planted by the Father in our hearts, we are unable to produce any good fruit and will be uprooted and thrown into the fire. (John 15:1-6.)
- ii. As leaders who did not have the word of God in their own hearts, they were helpless to lead anyone else into the ways of God.
- iii. Even the best teachers in the world are only following Jesus. Paul said follow me as I follow Christ, meaning imitate his example of how he inwardly follows Jesus and is devoted to Him in every aspect of his life – NOT imitating the outward form of how Paul did things.
- iv. The Pharisees were blinded by arrogance in thinking that they knew it all. Therefore, Jesus held them to the standard they claimed to have attained. God has mercy for ignorance but not for arrogant defiance. (Acts 3:17; 1 Timothy 1:13; 1 Corinthians 14:38.) If the Pharisees had humbled themselves, they would not have been guilty.

3. **What Comes Out of the Mouth** (Matthew 15:10-11, 18-19; Mark 7:15.)

Matthew 15:10-11 - 10 And he called the people to him and said to them, "Hear and understand: 11 it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person."

The Parable Explained. (Matthew 15:20; Mark 7:17-22.)

Note: #2 and #3 are in between this parable and its explanation.

Matthew 15:15-20 - 15 But Peter said to him, "Explain the parable to us." 16 And he said, "Are you also still without understanding? 17 Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled? 18 But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. 19 For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. 20 These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone."

- a. There are laws about clean and unclean foods and the Pharisees observed these diligently. (Leviticus 11.) The Pharisees also added to the commands of God in their own attempts to maintain holiness and purity by requiring the washing of hands before eating.
- b. Food goes into the mouth and into the stomach before it is expelled as waste.
- c. Words come out of the mouth and reveal the uncleanness of the heart. (Luke 6:45.)

Parable Point. Defilement is about the heart. Holiness is about the heart. People are made unclean by sin and iniquity, not outward dirtiness.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus is pure in heart. And He is leading His disciples in purity from the heart towards God, not in regulations of man.

Further Considerations:

- i. Jesus' teachings brought sin to the level of the heart and evil thoughts. Even thinking about evil things defiles us before God. No amount of external washing or religious observance can ever clean us of this. Only the blood of Jesus.
- ii. The Mark version of this notes that through this parable, Jesus declared all foods to be clean.
 01. Mark was Peter's scribe and it was Peter who had the vision confirming that all foods had been made clean. Through this vision, Peter understood that even unclean heathens (Gentiles) could be included in the New Covenant. (Acts 10.)
- iii. The Apostle Paul also made clear that food is not what justifies us in the sight of God. (Romans 14:14; 1 Corinthians 8:8.)

Romans 14:17 - 17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Context Continued:

Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. There, in contrast to the Pharisees hard-hearted blindness, a Gentile woman came to see Jesus in faith for her daughter's healing. She called Him the Son of David, acknowledging Him as the King of Israel and the whole world.

4. **Children's Bread for Dogs** (Matthew 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-29)

Matthew 15:26-28 - 26 And he answered, "It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." 27 She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." 28 Then Jesus answered her, "O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire." And her daughter was healed instantly.

- a. For the most part, dogs were not domesticated but wild, unless they had been tamed as guard dogs for a master (only in Roman culture, not Jewish.) Dogs were regarded by Jews as the filthiest of creatures, as street mongers who eat trash.
- b. It was common for Jews to refer to Gentiles/heathens as dogs.
- c. Women were regarded as a lower social status and even property in Jewish culture at that time. Part of the daily prayer included, "Thank you God, that I am not Gentile, a slave, or a woman."
- d. Jesus at first ignored the woman but then, referred to her as a dog. It was a huge insult, highlighting her exclusion from God's covenant with Israel (as a Gentile) and low social status (as a woman.)
- e. The woman did not deny her uncleanness or unworthiness. She appealed to Jesus' mercy and compassion on all creatures.
- f. Jesus marveled at her faith and healed her daughter.

Parable Point. God is not judging by outward appearances, ethnicity, nationality, or sex. What He marvels at is genuine faith from the heart. It is by faith that we enter into His Kingdom, no matter how unclean we may seem by outward appearances, Jew & Gentile, men & women.

What Jesus is Doing: Even though Jesus' earthly mission was only to the Jews (Matthew 15:24) Jesus was sharing it with select Gentiles.

Further Considerations:

- i. The unclean woman requested unclean bread (off the floor.) She was the one who was clean in the sight of God and Jesus commended her faith. Those who thought they were clean, showed no faith and received nothing.
- ii. All boundaries of culture, ethnicity, and gender have been broken down by the Gospel of the Kingdom. Those of faith are the real offspring of Abraham.

Galatians 3:28-29 - 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

Big Picture Context 1: God is not looking for outward observances or professions/confessions from the mouth which are inauthentic or trying to obtain blessing. He is looking for hearts that draw near to Him in sincerity and faith in His power, nature, and merciful character. The ones who thought they were clean by following religious rules were actually defiled by sin, blind, and offended. The one who was as dirty as a dog was clean through the faith in her heart.

B. Context 2:

Matthew Context: Jesus is in Jerusalem, having already entered in the Triumphal procession, days before His crucifixion. The enraged Pharisees and Sadducees tried to trap Jesus in His words pertaining to paying taxes to Caesar, the resurrection from the dead, and the greatest commandment. In return, Jesus challenged them with a question from Scripture they were unable to answer. They lacked eternal perspective and had missed the ways and heart of God entirely. Therefore, Jesus pronounced curses on them for their many errors.

1. **Woe to Hypocrites** (Matthew 23:13-33; Luke 11:42-48, 52.)

Word Study: Woe. In Scripture, when the God pronounces woe to someone or something through His prophets, it was cursed for destruction.

Definition: Hypocrite. (Strong's G5273-Greek: *hypokrites*.) One who answers or interprets. An actor or stage player or pretender. An actor under an assumed character.

a. **Tie Heavy Burdens.**

Matthew 23:1-4 - 1 Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, 2 "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, 3 so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice. 4 They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger.

- i. The seat of Moses indicates that the Pharisees were the successors of Moses, applying and adjudicating the Law of Moses. They were in positions of God appointed authority and therefore, must be submitted to. However, they did not put into practice what they told other people to do.
- ii. The law is a burden and yoke of bondage that no one could bear. (Acts 15:10.) Rather than showing compassion and mercy to lighten the burden of the Law, the Pharisees increased to burden by adding their own rules on top of the Law.
- iii. Jesus goes on to say that they tie their phylacteries or tefillin, small boxes tied to their head and hand by a leather strap, in which were the commands of God and scriptures which were recited during their prayers. The rules for this were very strict. They literally tied burdens on people.

b. Shut the Kingdom.

Matthew 23:13 - 13 "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in.

- i. This conveys the image of a doorkeeper who was put in charge of a Master's property or home and who would have the authority to let people in or keep them out.
- ii. Note: The Luke version says they have taken away the key of knowledge. A key is what locks or unlocks the way to something. They were supposed to be making a way for people to know God but instead, locked God up with their impossible requirements.
- iii. Rather than making a way into the Kingdom of heaven through mercy and forgiveness of sin, they shut people out of the Kingdom with rules and regulations.
- iv. They were unable to fulfill the righteous requirement of God and they discouraged, judged, and persecuted those who were trusting God and calling upon His mercy. They referred to the people as ignorant even though they were the ones who were supposed to be teaching them. (John 7:49; 9:34,40.)

c. Twice the Child of Hell.

Matthew 23:15 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves.

- i. Pharisees were eager to make converts to Judaism from the Gentiles through the Jews who were in diaspora. (Especially the school of Hillel.) It was their way of fulfilling bringing light to the Gentiles according to the Scripture.
 01. Note: Since the 300's, Jews do not try to convert people to Judaism as part of their backlash response to Christian evangelism and forced conversions.
- ii. The Pharisees worked very hard to get others to obey the God of Israel by keeping the Law. But then they taught the new converts their own traditions and observances rather than the justice, character, and mercy of God.
- iii. A "child of hell" is a person who is going there. In John, Jesus referred to people following these customs as sons of their father the devil. (John 8:44.)

d. Blind Guides/Fools – Instance #2.

This expression is used throughout out these woes.

Matthew 23:16 "Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'If anyone swears by the temple, it is nothing, but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath.' 17 You blind fools! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that has made the gold sacred? 18 And you say, 'If anyone swears by the altar, it is nothing, but if anyone swears by the gift that is on the altar, he is bound by his oath.' 19 You blind men! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that makes the gift sacred? 20 So whoever swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. 21 And whoever swears by the temple swears by it and by him who dwells in it. 22 And whoever swears by heaven swears by the throne of God and by him who sits upon it.

- i. A blind person cannot see where they are going and so, they cannot rightly lead anyone else to their intended destination.
- ii. The Pharisees lacked the proper perspective and had lost touch with reality. Their priorities were on what men consider important in this world rather than on what God considers important. (i.e. gold vs. Temple; gift vs. altar.) They were full of greed and materialism rather than honor, righteousness, and justice. Therefore, their own gift or sacrifice was more significant in their sight than God and His holiness.
- iii. By that time, it was forbidden by Jewish custom to say the name of God out loud out of reverence for His holiness. So, people refrained from taking oaths in His name and instead took oaths by swearing by other things. In their earnest attempt to honor God, they honored lesser things and dishonored God.
- iv. The Temple is more important than gold. The altar is more significant than the offering. The Temple is the house of God. Heaven is the place of God Almighty who rules and reigns over all the earth.
- v. The very ones who were supposed to be set apart for God in order to guide people to Him were completely misrepresenting Him. They were the blind leading the blind.
- vi. In a way, they were propagating the prosperity gospel of the day. They were more focused on people swearing by gold and gifts and being held to account by their offerings as if God needs offerings to fulfill His plans. (Psalm 50:12-14; Isaiah 1:11-13.)
- vii. Jesus said not to take vows at all. As people of God, our integrity should be such that everything that comes out of our mouth is what we do. (Psalm 15:4; Matthew 5:33-37.)
- viii. Swearing on oath with integrity before an Almighty God and bringing sacrifices to atone for sin and maintain peace with God was a secondary issue.

e. Strain Out a Gnat, Swallow a Camel.

Matthew 23:23 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. 24 You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!"

- i. Liquid would be strained through a sieve to remove its impurities and make it clean for the drinker so that the drinker would not be made unclean.
- ii. A gnat is a very small bug. A gnat was considered by Pharisees to be exempt from the laws of uncleanness because it was so small (smaller than a lentil) that it was difficult to strain out. A camel is a very large and unclean animal. (Leviticus 11:4.) To have a camel in the liquid makes the drink and the drinker of it unclean. To strain out a bug is good. To leave in a camel is problematic.
- iii. The Pharisees obsessed enough about their religious obedience to tithe their spices, little things. This was right for them to do. However, in their fixation over small things, they missed the larger perspective of God and what was truly important to Him.

- iv. What God is looking for is faith in the heart and the fear of the Lord which prompts turning from evil to do right, show mercy, and be faithful to Him for the right reasons. Not religious obsession and observance to traditions of men.

f. **Outside & Inside of the Cup and Plate.**

Matthew 23:25 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. 26 You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean."

- i. To clean the outside of the cup makes it look good in appearances. To leave the inside of the cup and plate unclean would cause the drinker/eater to become unclean by it.
- ii. The cup and plate represent our lives and what others experience when they engage with us. The outside is the show we put on for others to see. The inside is our heart and character. Whatever is on the inside of the cup and plate is what people "ingest" from our behavior.
- iii. The Pharisees put on a good show outwardly but were inwardly selfish, greedy, and indulgent.
- iv. God wanted His people to be His representatives, offering an open invitation to eat and drink freely from Him (Isaiah 55:1) but the Pharisees serving utensils were filthy and polluted by their flesh and worldly ways.

g. **Whitewashed Tombs.**

Matthew 23:27 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. 28 So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness."

- i. Whitewash is plaster of limestone painted over old structures to "freshen them up" without truly cleaning it. Like a coat of paint over a wall full of mold.
- ii. Coming in contact with a dead body would make a person ritually unclean for seven days. (Numbers 19:11.)
- iii. In Jesus' day, the religious leaders whitewashed the exterior of actual tombs in order to prevent the defilement of those passing by. People would walk by a dead body and be defiled in God's sight but not know it because the wall looked clean because it had been painted over.
- iv. Ezekiel rebuked false prophets for whitewashing the people like a wall that was doomed to fall down by proclaiming "peace, peace" and treating their sin lightly so that they were not drawn to repentance but remained assured in their position before God by a false security. (Ezekiel 13:10-16, 22:28.) Unlike Ezekiel, Jesus did not compare the religious leader to whitewashers but said that they were like the whitewashed

tombs. Looking holy, safe, and sanctified on the outside but full of death on the inside through lawlessness and hypocrisy.

h. Serpents & Brood of Vipers – Instance #2.

Chronologically, Brood of Vipers Instance # 1 was when Jesus was accused of working for Satan and said to make the tree good, preceding the Parable of the Sower. (Matthew 12:34.)

Matthew 23:29 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the monuments of the righteous, 30 saying, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.' 31 Thus you witness against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. 32 Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers. 33 You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell?"

- i. The Scriptures recall how the people of Israel have historically mocked, ridiculed and martyred the prophets sent to them by God.

2 Chronicles 36:15-16 - 15 The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent persistently to them by his messengers, because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place. 16 But they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words and scoffing at his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD rose against his people, until there was no remedy.

- ii. In Jesus' day, the religious leaders honored the prophets who had been martyred for speaking for God. Nevertheless, they behaved exactly like their ancestors and were the direct descendants, or sons, of the people who had killed them. By Law, the curse/punishment for this should carry through the generations to them.

Biblical Concept: *Fill Up Measure.* When sin and wickedness have exceeded God's ability to show mercy, the measure of sin is filled up. For example, in the days of Noah, God was unwilling to contend/strive with man anymore. (Genesis 6:3.) In the days of Abraham, the sin of the Amorites would not be at full measure for another 400 years. (Genesis 15:16.) This pattern is revealed throughout Scripture.

- iii. They were self-deceived, believing that they would not have participated in killing God's servants. But in truth, they were about to crucify Jesus, the Son of God.
- iv. Building monuments to celebrate God's faithful servants from the past is not an indication of a right heart before God.
- v. The serpent is the most subtle, cunning, crafty, and wise of any creature. A serpent is what originally deceived Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and deceived them into disobedience leading to death. A viper is a venomous snake or serpent. A venomous snake bites to kill and destroy.
- vi. Jesus compared the Pharisees to cunning serpents who were deceiving people and a brood of vipers who struck people with poison that could kill them. Just like their ancestors, they rejected God's messengers and misled people into error and rebellion against God through misrepresenting God's character.
- vii. For their error and causing others to stumble into error, God's judgment upon them would be justified.

Parable Point. The religious leaders were supposed to be inviting people to God's wedding feast but instead were blocking people from entering God's Kingdom through their man-made religious regulations. Their fruit was evil, not good. Through these woes, Jesus is cursing and denouncing them to eternal punishment.

i. **Luke Context for Woes to Hypocrites:**

Luke Context, Pre-Woes:

Chronologically, the Luke version is much earlier, and possibly in Galilee around the time that Jesus was accused of working for Beelzebul. As the crowd grew around Jesus, He denounced this generation as wicked for demanding a sign and stated that no sign would be given except that of Jonah. Then, He spoke of the eye being good or evil, full or light or darkness. Then, a Pharisee invited Jesus to dine with him, and was offended when Jesus did not wash His hands.

Luke Context, Woes:

Luke 11:37-38 - 37 While Jesus was speaking, a Pharisee asked him to dine with him, so he went in and reclined at table. 38 The Pharisee was astonished to see that he did not first wash before dinner.

i. Inside/Outside of Cup:

Luke 11:39-40 - 39 And the Lord said to him, "Now you Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. 40 You fools! Did not he who made the outside make the inside also? 41 But give as alms those things that are within, and behold, everything is clean for you.

ii. Tithe vs. Justice (Strain out Gnat)

Luke 11: 42 - 42 "But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.

iii. Love the Best Seat, Unmarked Graves

Luke 11:43-44 - 43 Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seat in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces. 44 Woe to you! For you are like unmarked graves, and people walk over them without knowing it."

01. Walking over an unmarked grave would make someone unclean without them know it.

iv. Tie Heavy Burdens

Luke 11:45-46 - 45 One of the lawyers answered him, "Teacher, in saying these things you insult us also." 46 And he said, "Woe to you lawyers also! For you load people with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers.

v. Build Tombs of the Prophets

Luke 11:47-51 - 47 Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets whom your fathers killed. 48 So you are witnesses and you consent to the deeds of your fathers, for they killed them, and you build their tombs. 49 Therefore also the Wisdom of God said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute,' 50 so that the blood of all the prophets, shed from the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation, 51 from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who

perished between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, it will be required of this generation.

vi. Taken Away Key of Knowledge, Shut the Kingdom

Luke 11:52 - 52 Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter yourselves, and you hindered those who were entering."

Luke Context, Post-Woes:

Jesus went away from that place and the Pharisees and scribes continued to test Him with hard questions to try to trap Him in His words. Jesus warned His disciples about the leaven/yeast of the Pharisees and Scribes: their hypocrisy. He warned not to fear man but only to fear God. Then someone from the crowd asked about his inheritance. (Parable of Rich Fool - See Unit 4.C.1.)

Matthew Context Continued:

Immediately after pronouncing these woes, Jesus proclaims that He will send prophets, apostles, wise men, and scribes whom they will persecute and kill so that their guilt and rebellion against God would be completely exposed, warranting the wrath and judgment of God.

2. **Hen with Chicks.** (Luke 13:31-35.)

Previously mentioned.

Matthew 23:37 - 37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!

- a. Hens gather their chicks under their wings for their protection while they rest. Predators (i.e. wolves) cannot see the chicks while they are under the wings of the mother hen so a mother hen would gather her chicks if she saw a predator coming.
- b. In the same way, Jesus wanted to gather Israel to Himself. He said, "Come to me and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28-29.) Jesus saw the day of destruction coming and wanted to gather His people under His wings for protection.
- c. The people refused to come to Him. Instead, they were going to kill Him. He also said of the religious leaders that they search the Scriptures for eternal life but refuse to come to Him to have life. (John 5:39-40.) They preferred their rules and religious hypocrisy to the life of God.

Parable Point. God wants us to come to Him, to turn to Him, and is always ready and wanting to show mercy to us when we are willing to repent and return to Him. We retain free will to obey God or not and to turn to Him or not.

Context Continued:

Immediately following this, Jesus pronounced that the Temple will be completely destroyed and that He would not return to Jerusalem until they said, "Blessed by the one who comes in the name of the Lord."

Big Picture Context 2: The Pharisees as blind guides are completely blind and have completely missed the point of God's heart. Instead of setting people free through the mercy of God, they have bound people up with religious requirements. They are unable to see that the works Jesus is doing confirm Him as the Messiah and Son of God, demonstrating God's mercy rather than their religious regulations. They cannot see and do not have the right perspective because their eyes are evil.

C. Context 3:

Jesus sent out the 72 and they returned with rejoicing. Jesus rejoiced that God had revealed it to babes and not to the wise. He told the disciples how blessed they were to see all of this because many righteous people had longed to see what they were seeing. Then, a lawyer stood up to test Jesus.

Luke 10:25-29 - 25 And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" 26 He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" 27 And he 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." 28 And he said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live." 29 But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

1. **Parable of the Good Samaritan** (Luke 10:30-37.)

This parable is only in the Book of Luke.

Luke 10:30-37 - 30 Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. 31 Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. 32 So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. 34 He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. 35 And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' 36 Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" 37 He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."

- a. The traveler was robbed and abused and left for dead.
- b. A Priest and a Levite were both servants of God who should have known the Law and shown mercy to this poor ransacked man.
 - i. If the man was Jewish, they should have shown deep concern for their brother and nursed him back to health. (Leviticus 25:41.)
 - ii. If the man was Gentile, they should have shown concern for the foreigner in their land and cared for him as a brother so as to be a witness of God's goodness in Israel. (Leviticus 19:10, 34.)
 - iii. The Law's standard is to not hide yourself even if you see your neighbor's animal lost or fallen down. (Deuteronomy 22:4.)
- c. Samaritans were considered half-breeds based on their ancestry and continued form of worship. (See 2 Kings 17:24-41.) They were not considered genuine Jews.

d. The Law commands loving your neighbor as yourself.

Biblical Concept: Neighbor: Hebrew-H7453: *rea*: 1. Friend, companion, fellow, another person. 2. A fellow person or citizen (in a weaker sense.)

Leviticus 19:18 - You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but **you shall love your neighbor as yourself**: I am the LORD.

Matthew 7:12 - So **whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them**, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

e. The Samaritan cared for the man the way that the Priest and Levite should have done. He went above and beyond to make sure that the traveler was well cared for until he was made totally well.

Parable Point: The one who was a good "neighbor" was the one who showed mercy. Followers of God should do likewise.

What Jesus is Doing: Like the Good Samaritan, Jesus was despised but was the one fulfilling the Law of God by showing mercy.

Further Considerations:

- i. God desires mercy. Love God and love your neighbor are the two great commandments which summarize the Old Covenant, the Law and the Prophets.
- ii. The New Covenant command of Jesus is to love one another as He loved us. (John 13:33-34, 15:12, 17; 1 John 3:11,23, .)

Big Picture of Context 3: Those who submissively went out to spread the mercy of God came back with great rejoicing at the glory of God. However, religious people raised questions and objections which stunted their ability to see and experience the glory of God. God desires for us to be on a mission of mercy.

Unit Seven: God's Laborers (Matthew 10, 18-20)

Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest

Matthew 9:37-38

A. Context 1:

Jesus had completed the Sermon on the Mount and had traveled throughout Galilee proclaiming the Kingdom of God, healing the sick, and casting out demons.

Matthew 9:35 - 35 And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction.

1. **Sheep w/out Shepherd** (Matthew 9:36; Mark 6:34.)

Matthew 9:36 - 36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

Sheep without a Shepherd: Numbers 27:16-17 - "Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in, **that the congregation of the LORD may not be as sheep that have no shepherd.**"

Evil Shepherds: Ezekiel 34:2-10 – "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy, and say to them, even to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord GOD: Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? **You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep.** The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them. **So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the wild beasts.** My sheep were scattered; they wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. My sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth, with none to search or seek for them. "Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: As I live, declares the Lord GOD, surely because my sheep have become a prey, and my sheep have become food for all the wild beasts, **since there was no shepherd, and because my shepherds have not searched for my sheep, but the shepherds have fed themselves, and have not fed my sheep,** therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: Thus says the Lord GOD, Behold, **I am against the shepherds,** and I will require my sheep at their hand and put a stop to their feeding the sheep. No longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, that they may not be food for them.

The Good Shepherd: Ezekiel 34:15-16 - **I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep,** and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord GOD. I will seek the lost, and

I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd: John 10:11-15 - **I am the good shepherd**. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. **I am the good shepherd**. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.

1 Peter 2:25 - 25 For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the **Shepherd and Overseer of your souls**.

- a. Sheep are prone to wander aimlessly and can get themselves into a lot of danger and trouble if they do not have the care of a shepherd.
- b. Sheep are prey animals and predator animals will attack sheep that wander away from safety.

Parable Point: God is full of mercy and compassion for people. He realizes that they have been abused through the deceptions of the evil one and the negligence of those in authority. He came to gather His sheep and tend to them with mercy and salvation.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus has compassion for the lost and wandering.

Further Considerations:

- i. The people of Israel are the sheep of God.

Ezekiel 34:31 - 31 And you are my sheep, human sheep of my pasture, and I am your God, declares the Lord GOD

- ii. As crowds gathered to Jesus to be healed, delivered, and receive mercy from Him, he was filled with compassion for them.
- iii. The religious leaders who were supposed to be guiding people into the mercy of God were instead abusing people and using them for their own selfish gain and self-advancement.
- iv. Jesus is the Good Shepherd, the Son of David, sent by God to gather the lost sheep of God's flock and be their Shepherd forever. (Psalm 23.)
- v. Jesus sends His disciples out to feed and tend His sheep the way He demonstrated.

Feed My Sheep: John 21:15-17 - 15 When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, **do you love me more than these?**" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "**Feed my lambs.**" 16 He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, **do you love me?**" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "**Tend my sheep.**" 17 He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "**Do you love me?**" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "**Feed my sheep.**"

2. **Harvest/Laborers** (Matthew 9:37; Luke 10:2.)

Matthew 9:37-38 - 37 Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; 38 therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

- a. A harvest field is where a crop grows until it is ready to be harvested.
- b. Laborers are those who work in the field to help the crop develop properly and to harvest it when it is ready.
- c. The whole world is God's harvest field. There is plenty of work to be done. God needs laborers to work His harvest.
- d. The harvest God is looking for is for eternal life.

The Harvest of God: John 4:35-38 - 35 Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, then comes the harvest'? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest. 36 Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering **fruit for eternal life**, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. 37 For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' 38 I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor."

- e. The real laborers are few. Many people want God's benefits but do not want to labor for Him.
- f. Jesus instructed His disciples to pray for real laborers to work for God's harvest.

Parable Point: Continuing in the prior context, the whole world is full of sheep without a shepherd, meaning people wandering aimlessly and getting themselves into a mess. Jesus is looking for those who will help Him in His work of gathering God's flock and caring for them.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus was laboring in God's field and recruiting others to do the same.

Further Considerations:

- i. It is not God's will that any should perish but that all should come to know Him through repentance and knowledge of the truth. (2 Peter 3:9; 1 Timothy 2:4; Ezekiel 33:11.)
- ii. No one has wandered so far that God's mercy is not great enough for them.

Context Continued:

After recognizing and declaring the need for laborers, Jesus gathered His disciples to send them out into the harvest field.

3. **Sending Out Laborers** (Matthew 10:5-39; Mark 6:7-13; Luke 9:1-6, 10:1-20.)

a. **Lost Sheep of Israel.**

Matthew 10:5-6 - 5 These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, "Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, 6 but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

- i. God's own people, Israel, had become like sheep without a shepherd and needed to be found.
 - ii. The focus on Jesus' earthly ministry was strictly to Israel, the Jews. The majority of His first followers were Jewish and this did not shift to Gentiles until many years later.
 - iii. Jesus is sending laborers out to be like Him, as a shepherd finding lost sheep.
- b. **Shake off Dust.**

Matthew 10:14-15 - 14 And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town. 15 Truly, I say to you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town.

- i. Literally, shaking the dust off the feet was a practice of cleansing the feet and sandals from the dirt and dust that had accumulated on them by walking in the world from place to place.
 - ii. Shaking the dust off of the feet was also a figure of speech for something that Jews did when they returned from travel in Gentile nations. It was figurative of shaking off their pagan practices and beliefs so as to disassociate themselves from the Gentiles completely and leave them to the wrath of God.
 - iii. This means that the disciples were being instructed by Jesus that those who do not receive the Gospel of the Kingdom will be left to the wrath of God. Shaking the dust off the feet is a testimony against them and should not be treated lightly.
- c. **Sheep Among Wolves.**

Matthew 10:16a - 16 Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves...

- i. Sheep are non-violent grazing animals. They are prey animals.
 - ii. Wolves are predators who eat sheep.
 - iii. The world is full of wolves, seeking to dominate and devour anyone they can.
- d. **Wise as Serpents, Harmless as Doves.**

Matthew 10:16b – 16b ... so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.

- i. The first word used to describe a serpent in the Bible is "crafty or subtle." The serpent was cunning and clever in his approach to accomplishing his objective.
- ii. Doves are simple and harmless birds. They are creatures of peace. The first reference to a dove in the Bible is the dove sent out from Noah's Ark who brought back the olive branch as an indication that God had re-established peace in the earth through His judgment by the flood.
- iii. Those sent by Jesus must be both of these combined together, not outwitted by the evil one's schemes while bringing the message of peace and reconciliation with God.

e. **Disciple/Teacher, Servant/Master.**

Matthew 10:24-25 - 24 A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. 25 It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household.

- i. The objective of teaching is to be like the teacher. Therefore, what the teacher experiences, the student will experience.
- ii. The Master of a house is more valuable than the servant. If an enemy has no regard for the Master, they will have even less regard for a servant.
- iii. Jesus was about to be crucified. His laborers will also face persecution.

f. **Worth More than Sparrows.**

Matthew 10:29-31 - 29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. 30 But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.

- i. Two sparrows are worth a portion of a day's wage and God cares for them. How much more does God care for His laborers doing His work.

g. **Peace/Sword.** *Previously covered, given here for context.*

Matthew 10:34 - 34 "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.

- i. Following Jesus can be divisive, even among the members of families.
- ii. Disciples should not be confused to think that everyone is going to respond positively to their offer of peace with God.

h. **Take Up Your Cross – Instance #1** (Matthew 10:38.)

Matthew 10:38 - 38 And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

- i. This is the first time that Jesus used crucifixion or taking up one's cross as an image for following Him. Anything less than willingness to die for Him is less than He deserves
- ii. Jesus had not yet revealed to His disciples that He was going to be crucified and put to death as God's laborer in God's harvest field. However, because crucifixion was a common death penalty in the Roman Empire, it still would be understood as martyrdom. Criminals would be tortured and then forced to carry their cross from the place of their torture to the place of their execution.

i. **Hand to Plow.** (Luke 9:62.)

Luke 9:62 - 62 Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

- i. Putting your hand to the plow means going to work, becoming a laborer in the field.
- ii. Anyone who professes their willingness to follow Jesus, obey His commands, and labor in His field but who then turns back to look at the world or its priorities is not giving Him what He deserves.

Big Picture Context 1: Jesus had demonstrated to His disciples His approach to ministry and the proclamation of the Kingdom of God. Now, He was sending them out to do things the way that He did, proclaiming the Kingdom the way they had seen/heard Him proclaim it and working miracles the way that they had seen Him do.

B. Context 2:

By this time, Jesus had predicted His death a second time, to the disciple's distress. When they arrived at Capernaum, Jesus willingly paid the Temple tax even though as the Son of God, He was not obligated to pay tax to Himself in His own house.

1. Sons of Kings

Matthew 17:24-27 - 24 When they came to Capernaum, the collectors of the two-drachma tax went up to Peter and said, "Does your teacher not pay the tax?" 25 He said, "Yes." And when he came into the house, Jesus spoke to him first, saying, "What do you think, Simon? From whom do kings of the earth take toll or tax? From their sons or from others?" 26 And when he said, "From others," Jesus said to him, "Then the sons are free. 27 However, not to give offense to them, go to the sea and cast a hook and take the first fish that comes up, and when you open its mouth you will find a shekel. Take that and give it to them for me and for yourself."

- a. A king would not charge his own son a tax for living in his house. He would charge others.
- b. Jesus is the Son of God and does not need to pay the tax.
- c. But in order to not give offense, He paid the tax.

Parable Point: Jesus is the Son of God. He did not live to glorify Himself but gave consideration to others and what might disrupt or upset their faith.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus is speaking about Himself as the Son of God. Yet, He honored and paid the Temple Tax so as not to upset the faith and duty of others, or prompt any form of confusion or rebellion.

Further Considerations:

- i. In context, Jesus could have refused to pay the Temple tax and Lorded over the Temple keepers as the Son of God. Instead, in order not to cause them to stumble, He paid it without controversy, trusting God to advance, promote, and reveal His identity at the right time.
- ii. We must not pick unnecessary battles that will hinder other's devotion or walk of faith based on the level of knowledge that they have. (Romans 14; 1 Corinthians 8; Galatians 5:13.)

Context continued:

Jesus disciples came to Him and asked who was the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Matthew 18:1 - 1 At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

2. **Become Like Child – Instance #1** (Matthew 18:1-4; Luke 9:47)

Matthew 18:2-6 - 2 And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them 3 and said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. 5 "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, 6 but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.

- a. Attributes of children and childlikeness:
 - i. Children are totally dependent on their caretaker, and vulnerable without protection
 - ii. Children are innocent in their lack of knowledge, curious but unassuming
 - iii. Children are incapable of advancing their own cause or agenda
 - iv. Children are quick to forgive and forget ways that others abuse or misuse them
- b. The Law clearly states not to mistreat the widow or the orphan, which are examples of the totally vulnerable. If we do mistreat them, and they cry out to God against us, we will be guilty of sin. (Exodus 22:22-23.)
- c. As previously covered, the millstone is symbolic of God's judgment on His enemies.

Parable Point: Those who are the greatest in the Kingdom of God are the ones who are the most dependent on God, relying on Him for everything rather than advancing their own cause in their own strength like the rest of the world does.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus is demonstrating total childlike trust in God through unassuming, non-domineering meekness and total surrender to the will of God.

Further Considerations:

- i. In order to become like children, we must humble ourselves to a position of total dependence and vulnerability in the hands of God as our Father and caretaker.
- ii. If we cause those who are like children to stumble off the path of God for them, we will face the judgment of God.
- iii. God demonstrates His strength and power through those who trust Him like a child.
 01. *Psalm 8:2 - 2 Out of the mouth of babies and infants, you have established strength because of your foes, to still the enemy and the avenger.*
 02. *Psalm 8:2 NLT - 2 You have taught children and infants to tell of your strength, silencing your enemies and all who oppose you.*

3. **Cut it Off, Gouge it Out** (Matthew 18:6-8; Luke 17:2.)

Different context than Mark 9 3.F.2

Matthew 18:7-10 - 7 Woe to the world for temptations to sin! For it is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the one by whom the temptation comes! 8 And if your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire. 9 And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell of fire. 10 See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven.

- a. Woe. The world is already under a curse and is condemned to eternal judgment.
- b. The way of the world is self-advancement, selfish ambition, covetousness and Lording over people for position. (1 John 2:16.) The way of the world is survival of the fittest with very little regard or care for the vulnerable.
- c. Hand, Foot, Eye. These are all members of the body which can cause us to sin and indulge selfishness, lust, or selfish ambition. (See Romans 6:13-16.) We need to guard our own lives from sin and also from walking in a way that might cause others to stumble so that we are not judged with the world.
- d. Despise little ones. It is particularly important not to give way to the temptation of regarding the vulnerable the same way that the world does, thinking little of them and even disdain them.
- e. Despising little ones. To despise means to treat lightly or show little regard. Little ones are also those who are living by childlike faith in God and His care.
- f. Angels are ministering spirits who work on God's behalf for the benefit of those who have put their faith in Him. God is always aware of what is happening in the lives of His children.
Hebrews 1:13-14 - 13 And to which of the angels has he ever said, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet"? 14 Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

Parable Point. Instead of indulging our fleshly lusts and worldly desires, we must recognize them as sin and eradicate them from our lives, doing whatever is necessary to stay in step with God.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus is living the perfect life of total self-denial without condemnation or superiority towards others.

Further Considerations:

- i. Consider Paul's teachings on the weaker brother. (Romans 14; 1 Corinthians 8, etc.) We live for God but not only for ourselves. We must also consider the consciences of others so that we do not cause them to stumble in their faith and walk with God.

Romans 14:10-12 - 10 Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; 11 for it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." 12 So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.

4. **Parable of the Lost Sheep** (Matthew 18:10-14 unique context.)
Previously covered. Given here for context.

Matthew 18:12-14 - 12 What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? 13 And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. 14 So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

- a. In this context, Jesus is emphasizing that instead of despising the vulnerable as the world does, we must seek them out like lost sheep for the Kingdom of God.
- b. This version includes: So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.
- c. The lost and vulnerable need God's mercy. To receive it, they need to be found.

Context continued:

After telling the Parable of the Lost Sheep, Jesus instructed His disciples in resolving conflict with other brothers or wayward disciples by going to them and telling them their fault directly. He gave them authority as His representatives to bind or loose, meaning to forgive sins or hold sins against others. When His disciples asked how many times it was necessary to forgive, Jesus response indicated total and complete forgiveness and innumerable number of times.

5. Parable of the Unmerciful Servant (Matthew 18:23-35.)

Matthew 18:23-35 - 23 "Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. 24 When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. 25 And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. 26 So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' 27 And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. 28 But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, 'Pay what you owe.' 29 So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' 30 He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. 31 When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. 32 Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. 33 And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' 34 And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. 35 So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.'

- a. A King collecting debts had the right to be paid in full but was merciful to the servant who humbled himself. The worth of ten thousand talents was the equivalent of twenty years wages for a common laborer.
- b. The servant then lorded over another servant demanding to be paid. The worth of one hundred denarii was twenty weeks of common labor.
- c. Other servants reported this injustice to the King. The King turned the unmerciful servant over to the jailers until he could pay his unpayable debt, meaning forever.

Parable Point: If we do not genuinely forgive others the way He has forgiven us, we will face God's judgment.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus came to confront everyone who had sinned against Him. He is forgiving everyone their great and unpayable debts to God.

Further Considerations:

- i. If we fail to remember the way that God has had mercy on us, we will be tempted to be unmerciful to those whom God wants us to show mercy.
- ii. Some translations call the jailers "tormentors" or "torturers." A vivid picture of hell and its torment.
- iii. As Jesus' followers, we have been given the ministry of reconciliation. Reconciling people to God by not counting their sins against them. (2 Corinthians 5:18-19.)
- iv. To bind and loose are legal terms of forbidding and permitting actions by law. To bind is to cause someone to be bound by law to fulfill a certain duty. To loose is to free someone from obligation. Jesus' disciples have a duty to forgive but also authority to withhold forgiveness and cut unrepentant people out of the covenant.
- v. Example: Paul turned a man Corinthian man over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh in hope that he would repent and would ultimately be saved. (1 Corinthians 5:5.)

Big Picture Context 2: Jesus humbled Himself in life and even to the point of death to redeem those who deserved death – all of us and even the ones that the world most looks down upon. As His co-laborers, our job is to find the lost and wayward, not counting sin against them but showing God's mercy to them.

C. Context 3:

After Jesus finished teaching on forgiving others, Pharisees came to test Him in His views on divorce. Jesus' responded by disallowing divorce almost entirely and calling remarriage adultery in the sight of God. His disciples concluded it would be better not to marry.

1. **Become Like a Child – Instance #2** (Matthew 19:13-14; Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15-17)
Previously discussed, mentioned here for new context.
 - a. Childlike forgiveness is necessary to sustain marital covenants between man and wife.
 - b. Even more so, to remain spiritually right with God through receiving His mercy and forgiving others their sins against us.
 - c. The Luke version is immediately preceded by the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector about a religious person's superiority and regarding others as less than themselves. But the one in need of mercy was the one God had regard for.

Context Continued:

A Rich young ruler came to Jesus asking the way to eternal life. Jesus told him to keep the commandments of God and he asserted that he had done so his whole life. Jesus told him to sell all he had and give to the poor and follow Him. The ruler went away sad.

2. **Camel through Needle** (Matthew 19:23-25; Mark 10:25; Luke 18:25.)

Matthew 19:23-26 - 23 And Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. 24 Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." 25 When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?" 26 But Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

- a. There is some speculation about this figure of speech.
 - i. A literal camel passing through a literal sewing needle. Of course, this is impossible.
 - ii. The Eye of the Needle was a very low and narrow city gate designed for keeping out invaders. Though possible, it would be very challenging for a tall and wide camel (and its rider) to pass through such a gate.
 - iii. It has been proposed that "camel" has been misinterpreted in the original text because the word for "camel" and the word for "rope" are very similar. It is possible for a rope to pass through the eye of a sewing needle, but only if it is first unraveled to its threads.
- b. Under the Law and teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees, who loved money, wealth was regarded as the blessing of God. For it to be challenging for the wealthy to enter the Kingdom was a complete reversal of the commonly accepted notion of God's blessing. The reaction of the disciples indicates something like: If the "blessed" rich could not enter, then how could the "cursed" poor?

Parable Point: It is difficult for the rich to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

What Jesus Doing: Jesus is doing the hard thing. Jesus did not settle into satisfaction in His perfect righteousness and position of power. Instead, He gave up the riches of heaven to be perfect in obedience to God. He passed through death to receive eternal life and the Kingdom of God.

Further Considerations:

- i. It is hard for the wealthy who trust in their wealth to become like a child through dependency on God.
- ii. It is hard for the self-righteous who do not think that they need to receive mercy from God to show mercy to others whom they think are not doing as well as they are.

Context Continued:

Peter comments that they have left everything to follow Him and wants to know what they will receive as their reward for it.

Matthew 19:27-30 - 27 Then Peter said in reply, "See, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?" 28 Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man

will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. 29 And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life. 30 But many who are first will be last, and the last first.

3. **Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard** (Matthew 20:1-6.)

This parable is only in the Book of Matthew.

Matthew 20:1-16 - 1 "For the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. 2 After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. 3 And going out about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, 4 and to them he said, 'You go into the vineyard too, and whatever is right I will give you.' 5 So they went. Going out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, he did the same. 6 And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing. And he said to them, 'Why do you stand here idle all day?' 7 They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You go into the vineyard too.' 8 And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first.' 9 And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius. 10 Now when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more, but each of them also received a denarius. 11 And on receiving it they grumbled at the master of the house, 12 saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.' 13 But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? 14 Take what belongs to you and go. I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you. 15 Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?' 16 So the last will be first, and the first last."

- a. The Master needed laborers to work for him and went out to hire workers, agreeing to pay them a fair wage. At various points of the day, he continued to hire more laborers.
- b. When it came time to pay the laborers, the master paid them all the same amount, even though some had worked much longer and in harder conditions than others.
- c. Laborers who felt jilted complained. But they had received fair pay.
- d. The Master warned the laborers not to begrudge his generosity towards them. His finances were none of their business.
- e. The Master had paid them a fair wage that they otherwise would not have earned at all.
- f. It is the right of the Master, not the laborers, to determine the appropriate pay. All laborers should be thankful for being included in the Master's work and receiving a day's wage at all.

Parable Point: Those who are last will be first and the first will be last. It is difficult for those who think they have been laboring for God to desire for others to come in ahead of them who have not been laboring as long and receive the same rewards.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus is hiring new laborers, even though it is late in the day of God's eternal redemptive plan.

Further Considerations:

- i. The payment for all laborers of God is to receive eternal life and dwell with Him forever in the world to come. We do not deserve it. It is because of His generosity.
- ii. The Pharisees, the rich ruler, and the disciples thought they deserved first place and a better wage from God because they had been working for Him for longer. The wayward, sick, and oppressed were receiving blessing from God before them and it angered them.
- iii. The Jews have been laboring for God for centuries since Abraham. It was commonly believed that they would receive higher rewards at the judgment whereas any Gentiles included would receive smaller rewards because of their more recent inclusion.
- iv. According to Scripture, the fullness of the Gentiles will come in before there is a major softening of Jewish hearts to receive the Good News of Messiah. (Romans 11:25.) History has shown that in large part and for many centuries, the heathen have been first to receive the Kingdom of God. The Jews, who were first, will be last.

Big Picture Context 3: Entering the Kingdom of Heaven is difficult, and few are able to find it and endure in it to the end. The stumbling block for the self-righteous is that the reward of eternal life is the same for everyone. Eternal life is a free gift to all who come to it through faith in Jesus, whether they have been good or bad, worked long or short.

Unit Eight: Fig Tree & Wedding Feast (Matthew 21-22)

The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son.

Matthew 22:2

Note: All of the parables in this unit were told on the same day. Matthew and Mark sequence these events slightly differently but both wrapped around the cleansing of the Temple.

A. Context 1:

The day before these were told, Jesus entered Jerusalem in the Triumphal Entry and cleansed the Temple from marketplace activities. Then, He left Jerusalem for the night. On the way back into Jerusalem the next day, Jesus became hungry and approached a fig tree to eat its fruit, but it had none.

Matthew 21:18-19 - 18 In the morning, as he was returning to the city, he became hungry. 19 And seeing a fig tree by the wayside, he went to it and found nothing on it but only leaves. And he said to it, "May no fruit ever come from you again!" And the fig tree withered at once.

1. **Withered Fig Tree** (Matthew 21:20-22; Mark 11:12-25.)

Matthew 21:20-22 - 20 When the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying, "How did the fig tree wither at once?" 21 And Jesus answered them, "Truly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' it will happen. 22 And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith."

- a. The Mark version makes clear that the tree had no fruit because it was not the season for fruit. However, fig trees with leaves in that season should have buds which are edible in bud form and which grow to produce the full fig in its season. This tree had no buds. The leaves put on a good show but there was nothing on the tree that was capable of becoming fruit.
- b. The fig tree represents Israel. Before God brought judgment on Judah in 586 BC, He showed Jeremiah a vision of good figs and bad figs, representing the people. (Jeremiah 24:1-10.) Before God brought judgment on Israel in 722 BC, He referred to the ancestors of Israel as early fruit on the fig tree. (See Hosea 9:10)
- c. Jesus was looking for early fruit on the fig tree. But He found none. The Old Covenant Law had not produced even the smallest bud of fruit in the hearts of God's people. Instead, they thrived on religious rules, traditions of men, and knowledge of good and evil.

Consider: The first reference to figs in the Bible occurs when Adam and Eve used fig leaves to cover their nakedness and shame after they had eaten from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

- d. The mountain Jesus is referring to is the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, the very mountain of God on which stood the Temple. The Temple system represents the Old Covenant and the Law of Moses.
- e. The Old Covenant Law had caused God's people to be fruitless like the Fig Tree and so, Jesus came to fulfill the requirements of the Old Covenant in order to establish the New Covenant, making the Old Covenant obsolete. (Hebrews 8:13.)

Parable Point. What God is looking for is the fruit of FAITH like the ancestors (i.e. Abraham) had and righteous conduct which results from the fear of the Lord. With the smallest amount of faith, the impossible can be done – the mountain of religion can be removed so that true fruit can be produced.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus is cursing the Temple to destruction and condemning Israel for their lack of fruitfulness. He is making the old way obsolete. (See Hebrews 8:13.)

Further Considerations:

- i. God's Holy Temple was defiled through compromise, worldliness, and marketplace activities. Jesus declared its imminent destruction and it was destroyed in 70 AD.

Mark 13:1-2 - 1 And as he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!" 2 And Jesus said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."

- ii. The context of the withered fig tree is centered around the religious leaders challenging Jesus' authority. As God's Son, Jesus had authority greater than the authority of Moses and the Law. Therefore, He had the right to cleanse the Temple and even to declare it to be defiled, cursed, withered, fruitless, and obsolete.
- iii. The Mark version makes clear that as we stand in faith praying, we must forgive anyone who has trespassed against us so that God will also forgive our trespasses.
 - 01. James states it that we are no longer under the royal law (Law of Moses) but the perfect law that gives liberty and therefore we must show mercy. (James 2:8-13.)
 - 02. When we believe Jesus, we die to the Law in order to receive grace as a free gift. (Romans 7:4; Galatians 2:19.)

Context Continued:

When Jesus entered the Temple, the religious leaders challenged Jesus' authority to overturn the tables the way He had the day before and to teach what He was teaching. Jesus turned it back on them by asking where John the Baptist received his authority. They did not know.

2. Parable of the Two Sons (Matthew 21:28-32.)

This parable is only in the Book of Matthew.

Matthew 21:28-32 - 28 "What do you think? A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' 29 And he answered, 'I will not,' but afterward he

changed his mind and went. 30 And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, 'I go, sir,' but did not go. 31 Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you. 32 For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him.

- a. Both sons were called to work in the vineyard. The first son said no at first but went to work. The second son agreed to go but did not go to work.
- b. The first son represents those living in sin and error who had rejected or said, "no" to God. (i.e. tax collectors and prostitutes, etc.) They changed their minds through repentance and faith.
- c. The second son represents the religious people who outwardly say that they agree with God, but their actions prove that they are not actually serving Him.

Parable Point. The religious leaders claimed to work for God but did not. Moreover, when they saw others responding correctly to God's call, they still refused to change their minds.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus is calling people to produce fruit for God.

Further Considerations:

- i. What we truly believe is revealed not just by what we say but by what we DO. Faith without actions is self-deception and dead faith. (James 1:22, 2:17-20.)
- ii. Religious leaders should have been delighted and rejoicing to see sinners repenting of their sins and returning to God. It should have been evidence of Messiah as the representative of God's merciful heart. Instead, they grumbled.
- iii. God knows when we have seen others responding correctly to His grace and invitation. We will give account for what we know and what we have seen.

Context Continued:

This parable immediately follows the parable of the Two Sons. It is prominently featured in three gospels as the turning point at which the religious leaders began to seek a way to put Jesus to death because they perceived that this parable was told against them.

3. Parable of the Wicked Tenants (Matthew 21:33-44; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-17.)

Matthew 21:33-43 - 33 "Hear another parable. There was a master of a house who planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a winepress in it and built a tower and leased it to tenants, and went into another country. 34 When the season for fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to get his fruit. 35 And the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. 36 Again he sent other servants, more than the first. And they did the same to them. 37 Finally he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' 38 But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.' 39 And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. 40 When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" 41 They said to him,

"He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons." 42 Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes"? 43 Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits. 44 And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him."

- a. The Master is God. He owns the whole world and chose Israel to be fruitful and multiply for Him so that the whole world could be saved through Israel. That is God's redemptive plan for Israel that started at the call of Abraham.
- b. The tenants are the religious leaders with priestly authority. Historically, they have rejected and killed God's servants, the prophets, whom God sent to rebuke them for their sin and exhort them to repentance and righteousness.
- c. The servants are the prophets of God who had been persecuted by God's people.
- d. Jesus is God's Son who was sent to collect fruit and was murdered.
- e. The tenants refuse to produce fruit for the Master and therefore, are deposed from duty so that the vineyard can be given to those who will produce the fruit the Master desires.
- f. Israel is the vineyard of God. Jesus uses this as the basis for this parable.

Symbolism: In Scripture, the vineyard represents God's highest purpose for Israel.

Isaiah 5:1-7 - Let me sing for my beloved **my love song concerning his vineyard**: My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. He dug it and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines; he built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it; and he looked for it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. What more was there to do for my vineyard, that I have not done in it? When I looked for it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes? And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured; I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. I will make it a waste; it shall not be pruned or hoed, and briars and thorns shall grow up; I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. **For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are his pleasant planting**; and he looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; for righteousness, but behold, an outcry!

(See also Isaiah 27:2-6; Psalm 80; Jeremiah 12:10; Hosea 10:1, etc.)

Jesus is the True Vine: He fulfills God's plan. We only bear fruit if we remain in Him.

John 15:1, 5 - **I am the true vine**, and my Father is the vinedresser. ... **I am the vine**; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. (See John 15:1-17.)

Consider: The fruit God is looking for is the fruit of His likeness: righteousness, justice, and mercy generated from a right relationship with Him. The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. (Galatians 5:22-23.)

- g. In the Luke version, the religious leaders are horrified to consider that authority would be taken from them and given to someone else. It was completely unthinkable that the Kingdom of God would be taken away from them and given to anyone else, like sinful heathen Gentiles. *Luke 20:15-16 NIV - 15 So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. "What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? 16 He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others." When the people heard this, they said, "God forbid!"*

Parable Point. The religious leaders, like their ancestors, had not responded correctly to God's servants and even God's Son. Therefore, God is taking away their right to govern His people and is giving authority to others.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus came to collect fruit for the Father, but instead they will kill Him.

Further Considerations:

- i. Remember that this parable was told in response to their demand for proof of Jesus' authority. Jesus is rebuking them for the fact that their authority produced no fruit except violence against God. By killing Jesus, they prove their wickedness and animosity towards God. Their hearts were selfish, wanting the inheritance and glory for themselves. This is the heart behind Lucifer's rebellion, not the heart of God.
- ii. Since God was the one who gave them their authority, He also has the right to revoke their authority and give it to others. Jesus is prophesying this very thing.
- iii. Jesus is predicting His own death through this parable. To His disciples He speaks plainly about His suffering and death but here He tells in parable form that these religious leaders are going to kill Him.
- iv. God did not replace Israel with the Church. Jesus fulfilled God's purpose for Israel, which Israel's leaders throughout history were unable to do. Jews and Gentiles are included in the New Covenant by faith in Jesus who fulfills God's redemptive plan. The unfruitful were replaced with the fruitful from every nation, tribe, and tongue, including Israel and the Jewish people.

Context Continued:

This statement is made in the midst of the Parable of the Wicked Tenants.

4. Stumbling Block is the Cornerstone (Matthew 21:42-44; Luke 20:18.)

Matthew 21:42-44 – 42 Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes"? 43 Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits. 44 And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him."

- a. Jesus is quoting Psalm 118:22-23 and other Scriptures about God's tested stone for Zion..

Symbolism: Cornerstone/Tested Stone:

Psalm 118:22 - 22 The stone that the builders rejected has become the **cornerstone**. This is the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.

Isaiah 28:14-16 - Therefore hear the word of the LORD, you scoffers, who rule this people in Jerusalem! Because you have said, "We have made a covenant with death, and with Sheol we have an agreement, when the overwhelming whip passes through it will not come to us, for we have made lies our refuge, and in falsehood we have taken shelter"; therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, **a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation**: 'Whoever believes will not be in haste.'"

Isaiah 8:13-15 - But the LORD of hosts, him you shall honor as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And he will become a sanctuary and **a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling** to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many shall stumble on it. They shall fall and be broken; they shall be snared and taken."

- b. Jesus is God's cornerstone of the New Temple, which is His Body. He produced perfect fruit for God and gives the Holy Spirit to His followers to produce fruit for God. The New Testament continues to refer to Jesus as the cornerstone of God's Temple.

Jesus as the Cornerstone:

John 2:19-22 - Jesus answered them, "**Destroy this temple**, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" **But he was speaking about the temple of his body**. When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

Acts 4:11 - **This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you**, the builders, which has become the **cornerstone**.

Ephesians 2:19-21 - So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, **Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone**, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

1 Peter 2:4-8 - As you come to him, **a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious**, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in Scripture: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, **a cornerstone chosen and precious**, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame." So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected **has become the cornerstone**," and "**A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense**." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

Romans 9:30-33 - What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. **They have stumbled over the stumbling stone**, as it is written, "Behold, I am laying in Zion **a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense**"; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."

- c. A cornerstone is the foundational stone that grounds and plumbs the building for its whole structure. It is the first stone laid in buildings made of stone. Everything else is based on that.

- d. The religious leaders are the builders of the old Temple, the building on God's mountain, which is about to be destroyed. They are the ones who reject Him.
- e. They fall on the stone because they cannot grasp the mercy of God to make a way of salvation for sinners who had violated the Law and its commands.
- f. They are crushed by the stone falling on them because without the righteousness of Christ by faith, the wrath of God will come upon them.
- g. The stone falling on them is probably also an allusion to Daniel 2:34 & 44, Nebuchadnezzar's vision of a stone, not cut by human hands, crushing all earthly kingdoms. This represents God's Kingdom crushing all kingdoms of this world.

Parable Point & What Jesus is Doing. Jesus is the stumbling block and the cornerstone. Religious people are stumbling over Him because even though they know a lot about God, they do not know Him and therefore do not recognize Him in the person of Jesus. By rejecting Jesus, they will be crushed on the day of judgment.

Further Considerations:

- i. It is marvelous in God's eyes because by rejecting Jesus, they fulfilled the Scriptures and God worked the salvation of the world, including even the Gentiles. (Isaiah 53; Romans 11:15.)
- ii. Self-righteous and selfishly ambitious people will be too offended at God's offer of total mercy through faith in His Son, Jesus. They stumble over the concept of freely given grace. Self-righteousness becomes their destruction because they can never measure up to God's perfect standard through their own efforts.
- iii. Those who reject Jesus' offer of salvation will be crushed in the final judgment, on the day when His Kingdom is established for eternity.

Context Continued:

Same day, same people, same sequence. (The Luke version of this parable is told in a different context at a Shabbat meal at a Pharisee's house.)

5. Parable of the Wedding Feast (Matthew 22:1-14; similar to Luke 14:15-24.)

Matthew 22:1-14 - 1 And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, 2 "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, 3 and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come. 4 Again he sent other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, "See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast."' 5 But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, 6 while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. 7 The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. 8 Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. 9 Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.' 10 And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests. 11 "But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding

garment. 12 And he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. 13 Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' 14 For many are called, but few are chosen."

- a. A king or wealthy person holding a feast could/might invite the whole city to participate in the festivities. Wedding feasts typically lasted seven days, so it required a commitment of time for anyone who accepted the invitation. This time commitment could be challenging for peasant farmers needing to work their land, but this should be outweighed by the honor of being invited by the King, and the duty of a subject to respond to their King appropriately.
- b. A King giving a banquet would expect his invitation to be received. It would be a great insult to the King and His authority to not accept his invitation.
- c. Servants were sent to invite the guests, but the guests would not come.
- d. So, the merciful King sent servants a second time, but the invited guests gave excuses for why they were unable to attend. Tending to their own interests was more important than the interests of the King and the wedding of the King's son.
- e. In the Luke version, the invited guests give excuses that would have been valid under Mosaic Law for not going to war. (i.e. Bought a field, purchased new oxen, recently married. See Deuteronomy 20:5-8.) But these are not valid excuses for not attending the feast of the King.

Luke 14:18-20 - 18 But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.' 19 And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.' 20 And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.'

- f. The invited guests mistreated and abused the messengers of the King. The heralds were the King's representatives. To abuse them would have been regarded as rebellion and treason against the King.
- g. The King was angry and destroyed the village. This would have been an appropriate and expectable response to the treason and treachery against the King's messengers.
- h. It would be a great embarrassment to have a feast that was not well attended. It would be considered a dishonor to the Son (or guest of honor) that not enough people were interested in attending. Therefore, the King sends more messengers to extend the invitation to lower class people to include commoners rather than have an empty feast.
- i. In the Luke version, the servants are given more urgency to compel people to come to the feast, even from the highways and hedges. The high class or "worthy" invitees proved unworthy, so worthiness is redefined to include anyone who will accept the invitation.
- j. The man who attended and entered the feast but was not properly dressed was thrown out. It would have been very disrespectful, even for a common peasant, to attend a King's feast without proper attire, or at least clean attire. Even peasants would have known better than to disrespect the King by showing up in their dirty work clothes.

- k. Outer darkness is an image of hell, the place where demons are imprisoned. Gnashing teeth is what the wicked do when the righteous are exalted instead of them. (Psalm 112:10.)

Parable Point. Many are called, few are chosen. Because of Israel's rejection of Jesus, God has extended the invitation to the Kingdom of God to everyone, not just Israel. Everyone must respond to the invitation, not just with verbal agreement but with actions that demonstrate their sincerity. (Consider the parallel with the Parable of the Two Sons.)

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus is inviting guests to His wedding feast, to be His Bride forever. He is pointing out that not all those who think they will attend will actually be at the feast.

Further Considerations:

- i. As previously covered, all of Israel anticipated the Messianic feast of God, the marriage of God to His people when God would usher in His Kingdom, destroy all heathen enemies, and abolish death as His people entered into eternal life. Jesus is using this as the basis for this parable.

Isaiah 25:6-8 - On this mountain **the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined**. And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken.

See also Isaiah 25:6-9, 54:5, 61:10, 62:4-5.

- ii. The people of Israel were the ones chosen by God to attend the Feast and had been set apart from the rest of the world for this purpose. However, they had a long history of rejecting God's messengers, the Prophets. Their city (Jerusalem and the Temple) was about to be destroyed for their rebellion and treason against God.
- iii. Including the common people, good and bad, and compelling them in from the highways and hedges, represents the Gentiles who were not the people of God but would now be invited because of Israel's treasonous response to the King's invitation.
- iv. Everyone, including Jews and Gentiles from every nation, is invited to the Wedding Feast in the Kingdom of God through faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. The right response is to accept the invitation.
- v. Even those who respond correctly to the invitation by faith must demonstrate their faith through repentance, consecration, and holiness. We put on the white linen wedding garment through acts of righteousness which confirm our profession of faith.

Wedding Garment: We must be clothed in righteousness to participate in the marriage feast.

Revelation 19:7-8: Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"-- **for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints**.

Isaiah 61:10 - I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God, for **he has clothed me with the garments of salvation**; he has covered me with the robe of

righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and **as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.**

Zephaniah 1:7-9 - Be silent before the Lord GOD! For the day of the LORD is near; the LORD has prepared a sacrifice and **consecrated his guests.** And on the day of the LORD's sacrifice-- "I will punish the officials and the king's sons and all who **array themselves in foreign attire.** On that day I will punish everyone who **leaps over the threshold,** and those who fill their master's house with violence and fraud.

vi. We will be judged by what we do.

Judged by What We Do: Even though true believers will be judged as washed by the blood of Jesus for our sins, our words and deeds will be judged for whether or not they demonstrate that our faith is genuine.

Matthew 16:27 - For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then **he will repay each person according to what he has done.**

Revelation 20:13 - And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and **they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done.**

vii. Many are called, few are chosen. Peter said to confirm our calling and election by growing in fruit of the spirit and righteous, godly character.

*2 Peter 1:5-10 - 5 For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, 6 and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, 7 and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. 8 For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. 10 Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to **confirm your calling and election,** for if you practice these qualities you will never fall.*

viii. As God's servants, He sends us out to gather more guests for the Wedding Feast.

Big Picture Context 1: Although the religious leaders were challenging Jesus' authority, it was their authority which was in question. Jesus is God in the flesh who could grant authority or take it away. Sinners recognized His authority and repented. Religious leaders claimed to submit to God's authority but their actions, excuses, and teachings proved otherwise. Religious rules and outward observances are not what God is looking for. He desires a heart that comes to Him in faith. The right response to God is revealed both by our words and by our actions. God makes Himself available to us and waits for us to turn to Him. When we turn to Him, He returns to us.

Unit Nine: End-Times Readiness (Matthew 24-25)

Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

Matthew 24:44

Note: All of these parables are told on the same day and it is still the same day as Unit Eight.

A. Context 1:

Jesus is on the Mount of Olives and His disciples ask Him about the signs of the end times. He describes the series of events which will precede the coming of the Son of Man.

1. **Budding Fig Tree.** (Matthew 24:32-35; Mark 13:28-31; Luke 21:29-33.)

Matthew 24:32-35 - 32 From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. 33 So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates. 34 Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. 35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

- a. The fig tree puts out leaves and buds in the spring. Then in the summer, it becomes ripe for early harvest. In autumn, it is fully ripe and harvested.
- b. When the signs Jesus described occur in the world, we know His return is near.
- c. This generation. Although the Temple was destroyed and some of the events described by Jesus came to pass in 70 AD and years following, "all these things" have not happened yet. Therefore, "this generation" cannot be the timeframe/lifespan of those He was speaking to.

Evil Generation: The sons of Adam, the rebellious one with his sinful nature, living lives of sin, perversion, and rebellion against God. *Selection of Scriptures*

Proverbs 30:11-14 NKJV - There is **a generation** that curses its father, And does not bless its mother. There is **a generation** that is pure in its own eyes, Yet is not washed from its filthiness. There is **a generation**--oh, how lofty are their eyes! And their eyelids are lifted up. There is **a generation** whose teeth are like swords, And whose fangs are like knives, To devour the poor from off the earth, And the needy from among men.

Luke 11:29 - When the crowds were increasing, he began to say, "This generation is **an evil generation**. It seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah.

Mark 8:38 - For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words **in this adulterous and sinful generation**, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

Mark 9:19 - 19 And he answered them, "**O faithless generation**, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me."

Acts 2:40 - 40 And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "**Save yourselves from this crooked generation.**"

The New Generation: Birthed through resurrection, reborn by the power of the Holy Spirit, a generation chosen and adopted by God.

Psalms 14:5 - There they are in great terror, for God is with **the generation** of the righteous.

Psalms 22:30-31 - Posterity shall serve him; it shall be told of the Lord to **the coming generation**; they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people **yet unborn**, that he has done it.

Psalms 24:6 - Such is **the generation** of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob. Selah

Psalms 102:18 - Let this be recorded for **a generation to come**, so that a people yet to be created may praise the LORD:

John 1:12 - But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to **become children of God**,

Romans 8:14 - 14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are **sons of God**.

John 3:3-8 - Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, **unless one is born again** he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is **born of water and the Spirit**, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, '**You must be born again.**' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is **born of the Spirit.**"

Ephesians 2:15 NIV - by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself **one new humanity** out of the two, thus making peace,

1 Peter 2:9 NKJV - But you are a **chosen generation**, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

- d. This present world, the heavens, and the earth will all be destroyed. We must stand on the word of God until God ushers in the age to come with the new heavens and the new earth.
- e. My words will not pass away. Jesus is claiming to be God. Only God's word is eternal.

Psalms 119:89 NIV - 89 Your word, LORD, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens.

Isaiah 40:6-8 - 6 A voice says, "Cry!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" All flesh is grass, and all its beauty is like the flower of the field. 7 The grass withers, the flower fades when the breath of the LORD blows on it; surely the people are grass. 8 The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.

1 Peter 1:22-25 - 22 Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, 23 since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; 24 for "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, 25 but the word of the Lord remains forever." And this word is the good news that was preached to you.

Parable Point. Know the words of Jesus pertaining to world events and watch events in the world for how they align with Jesus words so that you are ready for His return.

Context Continued:

Same day, same people, same sequence. Jesus tells them that no one knows the day or the hour of His return: including Him. People will be carrying on with normal life and Jesus will return at an hour that is unexpected. Therefore, Jesus encouraged His disciples to stay alert. The Luke version includes a preamble that we covered in Unit Four.

Luke 12:35-38 - 35 "Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning, 36 and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks. 37 Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them. 38 If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them awake, blessed are those servants!

2. **Master of House & Thief.** (Matthew 24:43-44; similar to Mark 13:34-37; Luke 12:35-40.)

Matthew 24:43-44 - 43 But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. 44 Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

- a. Watches of the night are the structure of telling time. Jewish watches were four hours long (sunset to 10pm, 10pm-2am, 2am-6am.) Roman watches were three hours long (6-9pm, 9pm-12am, 12am-3am, 3am-6am.) Guards would have responsibility to guard during their assigned "watch" of the day or night.
- b. A thief comes at night so as to not be detected. If a homeowner knew a thief was coming, they would take precautions accordingly.
- c. We must be ready at all times because Jesus is coming like a thief in the night.

The Lord will come like a Thief in the Night: Like the days of Noah and the flood, when people were carrying on with their lives, the flood came unexpectedly and destroyed all but eight people.

2 Peter 3:3-10 - knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation." For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, and that by means of these the world that then existed

was deluged with water and perished. But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. **But the day of the Lord will come like a thief**, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

1 Thessalonians 5:2 - For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of **the Lord will come like a thief in the night**.

- d. Those who are awake and ready for the Master will dine with Him in the Messianic Banquet. Those who were asleep will not.

Stay Awake! Wake Up! Vs. Being Asleep: Not just looking for the return of Christ while continuing in worldly ways, but actively fulfilling the commands of Jesus and doing His work. Being asleep is symbolic for spiritual disengagement, spiritual deadness, moral decline into desertion of God and being cut off from Him as the source of life.

1 Thessalonians 5:4-7 - But you are not in darkness, brothers, **for that day to surprise you like a thief**. For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. So then **let us not sleep**, as others do, but let us **keep awake** and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night.

1 Corinthians 15:30-34 - Why are we in danger every hour? I protest, brothers, by my pride in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die every day! What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? If the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals." **Wake up from your drunken stupor**, as is right, and do not go on sinning. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame.

Revelation 3:1-4 - "And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: 'The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.' "I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead. **Wake up**, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent. **If you will not wake up**, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you. Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments, and they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy.

Parable Point. Nobody knows when Jesus will return. Instead, we must remain ready at all times in case today is the day.

Further Considerations:

- i. Since the end of all things is at hand, we should commit ourselves to godliness, holiness, and the love of God, being ready until the day of the Lord comes.

1 Peter 4:7-8 - 7 The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. 8 Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.

2 Peter 3:11-13 - 11 Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, 12 waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! 13 But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

Context Note: In the Luke version, Peter inserts a question between these parables.

Luke 12:41 - 41 Peter said, "Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for all?"

3. **Faithful and Wicked Servants.** (Matthew 24:45-51; similar to Mark 13:34-37 Luke 12:42-48.)

Matthew 24:45-51 - 45 "Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? 46 Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. 47 Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. 48 But if that wicked servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed,' 49 and begins to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards, 50 the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know 51 and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

- a. Wealthy Masters would often put their trusted servants in charge while they went away on a journey. It would be a great honor for a servant to put in charge of all of His possessions.
- b. A faithful servant is whoever is doing what the Master ordered to be done, cares for and feeds the other servants, and will be rewarded by the Master upon His return.
- c. An unfaithful servant grows tired of waiting and departs from the way of righteousness. He beats the other servants, keeps wrong company and/or indulges in lawlessness at the Master's expense. He has slipped from the honor of the Master's service back into a degraded lifestyle.
- d. Unfaithful servants will be doomed like the hypocrites to the place of eternal torment.
- e. In the Luke version, Jesus gives this parable in response to Peter asking whether the parable of the Master and Thief was only for disciples or for everyone. Jesus also explains that the servant who knew the Master's will but did not do it would be more severely beaten than the servant who did not know the Master's will.

Luke 12:47-48 - 47 And that servant who knew his master's will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating. 48 But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating. Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.

Parable Point. To whom much is given much required. Jesus answered Peter's question. If you know what He wants, do it. If you don't, there will be eternal consequences.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus is setting servants over His house and going away. It is an honor to be a servant in God's House.

Further Considerations:

- i. Note that the servants in the Master's House begin to beat the other servants. This indicates persecution from people claiming to be God's servants but denying Him by their actions. Jesus said that false teachers will increase in the end-times. Sometimes religious people are the ones "beating up" the true followers of Jesus.
- ii. This gives similar affirmation to Jesus' promise of our own inheritance in the world to come if we have been faithful in serving Him in this world.
- iii. This parable makes clear that servants will be judged individually. This may have been a sharp contrast to the Jewish expectation of national atonement or national redemption for Israel through the Messiah.

4. **Parable of the Ten Virgins** (Matthew 25:1-13.)

This parable is only in the Book of Matthew.

Matthew 25:1-13 - 1 "Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. 2 Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. 3 For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, 4 but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. 5 As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. 6 But at midnight there was a cry, 'Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' 7 Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. 8 And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' 9 But the wise answered, saying, 'Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.' 10 And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. 11 Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' 12 But he answered, 'Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.' 13 Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

- a. Virgins are those who have kept themselves pure. They have abstained from all uncleanness and whoredom to remain chaste. It would have been a great honor to be chosen as a Bridesmaid.
- b. The lamps in this parable would have been torches carrying a flame lit on oil soaked rags. The torches would not last indefinitely but would only burn as long as the oil remained. The torches would light the way in the wedding procession from the groom to His Bride and would have to stay lit through the entire procession. Therefore, wise bridesmaids must bring ample oil to last the entire procession.
- c. Trimmed their lamps. Trimming a lamp is a process of lighting the lamp with fresh rags full of oil.

Definition: *Trim.* (Strong's G2885-Greek: *kosmeo.*) To arrange, make ready or prepare, to ornament or adorn, to embellish with honor. It is the same word used to describe women preparing for their husbands.

Revelation 21:2 - And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, **prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.**

1 Peter 3:5 - For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to **adorn** themselves, by submitting to their own husbands,

1 Timothy 2:9 - likewise also that women should **adorn** themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire,

- d. Five foolish virgins brought no oil. Five wise virgins had sufficient oil. The wise would not share their oil with the foolish. Sharing oil that the wise Bridesmaids had among all the torches would most likely cause all of the torches to not last through the whole procession, which would ruin the wedding ceremony.
- e. The foolish had to scramble for oil while the wise went into the procession and into the feast. Their failure to take their duty seriously would be an insult to the host and the bridal party.
- f. Once the procession arrived, the door would be locked for security purposes, keeping the guests safe inside while keeping unwanted visitors out.
- g. "I do not know you." This could be a deliberate refusal to acknowledge someone that was known as a way to deny knowing them. Like one would say, "You are dead to me." Because they had insulted the host by not taking their responsibility seriously, they were now being insulted.
- h. Watch. We must stay active, growing in our faith, and continuing in faithfulness.

Definition: Watch. (Strong's G1127-Greek: *gregoreo*.) 1. Watch. 2. Give strict attention to, be cautious, active. 3. Be vigilant. 4. Stay awake. 5. To take heed, lest through remission and indolence, some destructive calamity suddenly overtake one.

Acts 20:29-31 - I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. **Therefore be alert**, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears.

1 Corinthians 16:13 - **Be watchful**, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.

Colossians 4:2 - Continue steadfastly in prayer, **being watchful** in it with thanksgiving.

1 Peter 5:8 - **Be sober-minded; be watchful**. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

Revelation 16:15 NKJV - "Behold, I am coming as a thief. **Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments**, lest he walk naked and they see his shame."

Parable Point. Watch therefore, for you do not know the hour. We must keep ourselves in a state of readiness and holiness for the Master's return, continuing to function by the power of the Holy Spirit and not by our flesh or own way of thinking.

Further Considerations:

- i. This parable is about expectancy. This parable immediately follows the parable of the Faithful and Wicked Servants in the same discourse. The wicked servant becomes wicked when his heart ceases to believe in the Master's imminent return. It is because of this that he starts to go astray and disobey.
- ii. As previously covered, a lamp represents God's Word, commands, and teachings being lived out in a person's life.

- iii. Our lamp also represents our eye being on God (the eye is the lamp of the body) our faith in God, as it is revealed through selflessness, generosity, and faith rather than testing God through demands and unbelief. When we lose our focus on Christ (i.e. the eye is the lamp of the body) and our hope in the world to come, our eye turns to temporal things for satisfying our own desires rather than persevering in obedience to God's service.
- iv. Jesus' example of a burning and shining lamp was John the Baptist, the most expectant human being in history, preparing for the coming Messiah through absolute devotion, selfless obedience, and proclaiming repentance confirmed by righteous deeds. An active hope in Jesus' imminent return keeps our lamps shining.
- v. Oil represents consecration to God, the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and God's presence.

Anointing Oil as Consecration: Old Testament Scripture Selection

Exodus 27:20: You shall command the people of Israel that they bring to you **pure beaten olive oil for the light, that a lamp may regularly be set up to burn;**

Exodus 30:25-32: And you shall **make of these a sacred anointing oil** blended as by the perfumer; **it shall be a holy anointing oil.** With it you shall **anoint the tent** of meeting and the ark of the testimony, and the table and all its utensils, and the lampstand and its utensils, and the altar of incense, and the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils and the basin and its stand. **You shall consecrate them,** that they may be most holy. Whatever touches them will become holy. **You shall anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that they may serve me as priests.** And you shall say to the people of Israel, **'This shall be my holy anointing oil** throughout your generations. It shall not be poured on the body of an ordinary person, and you shall make no other like it in composition. It is holy, and it shall be holy to you.

Anointing as the Holy Spirit: New Testament Scripture Selection

Luke 4:18-19 - **"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me** to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

1 John 2:20, 27 - **But you have been anointed** by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. ... **But the anointing that you received from him abides in you,** and you have no need that anyone should teach you. **But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true,** and is no lie--just as it has taught you, abide in him.

- vi. Only those with the Holy Spirit will go on to the wedding feast of the Lamb. If we have no oil, or no righteous deeds produced by the Holy Spirit in us, we will have nothing to adorn ourselves with for the Bridegroom when He comes.
- vii. The oil of the Holy Spirit and the lamp obeying the commands of the Lord cannot be shared from person to person. Each person must individually be full of the Holy Spirit and putting the commands of Jesus into practice for themselves.
- viii. Those who are truly Jesus' disciples are known by Him.

John 10:14 - 14 I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me,

- ix. BUT, those who use His name or claim to know Him but do not do His will, He will deny knowing. *Matthew 7:21-23 - 21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' 23 And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'*

Luke 13:24-30 - 24 "Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. 25 When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, open to us,' then he will answer you, 'I do not know where you come from.' 26 Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.' 27 But he will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!' 28 In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out. 29 And people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and recline at table in the kingdom of God. 30 And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last."

- x. In the Book of Revelation, the church at Ephesus is warned of having their lampstand removed because they had lost their first love and were not doing the works they had at first.
- xi. Again, this parable makes clear that we will each be judged individually and are individually responsible for whether we have made ourselves ready or not.

5. **Parable of the Talents** (Matthew 25:14-30; similar to Luke 12:42-48.)

Matthew 25:14-30 - 14 "For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. 15 To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. 16 He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. 17 So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. 18 But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. 19 Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. 20 And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here, I have made five talents more.' 21 His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.' 22 And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me two talents; here, I have made two talents more.' 23 His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.' 24 He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, 25 so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here, you have what is yours.' 26 But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? 27 Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. 28 So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. 29 For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. 30 And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

- a. The Master is leaving his delegated servants in charge of his estate while he goes away.
- b. Each servant is given something to work with, according to their ability. Some are given more than others and more is expected of them. (Luke 12:48.)
- c. A talent may have been worth the equivalent of twenty years day laborer's wages. This would only be a small sum for a very rich Master. It is totally sufficient for doing his work in his absence.
- d. The good servants used what they were given to make more and bring back to the Master what the Master desired. They were rewarded by being given greater responsibility to manage even more for Him.
- e. The bad servant was afraid of the Master and therefore, did not do anything of value with what He was given. He buried it in the ground. This was an ancient way of protecting money but it gave no profit. Burying it in the ground showed the servant's lack of care for the Master's property and priorities.
 - i. The going interest rate in Rome at that time was 12%. If the bad servant had invested it with any care whatsoever, they could have brought something back for the Master.
- f. The bad servant's talent was given to the good servant who produced the most because the Master knew the good servant would use it wisely and according to His purposes.
- g. The good servants were welcomed into the Master's joy and were told, "Well done good and faithful servant."
- h. The bad servant was thrown out as worthless to the place of eternal torment.

Parable Point. To everyone who has, more will be given, but the one who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. Those who know the Master's will and do it will be rewarded. Those who do not will be punished.

Further Considerations:

- i. Everything is God's property. We are stewards of what God gives us to work with.
- ii. Each of us have been given "talents" and resources in differing capacities. They are given by God for God's purposes, not our own.
- iii. Each of us must keep working, fulfilling the commands of Jesus and the Great Commission, until He returns in order to maximize what we are able to present to Him. This is about producing fruit and righteous deeds for God through faithfulness and good works.
- iv. Our view of God's character deeply impacts our heart condition and willingness to serve Him. If we know Him as a merciful heavenly Father, His commands will not be burdensome to us. (1 John 5:3.) But if we think of Him as harsh, His commands will seem impossible.
- v. Burying our "talent" in the dirt. Man was made from dirt. The earth and this world are dirt. If we invest our time, talent, and treasure into the things of this world or of man, we are burying our talent in the dirt.
- vi. A third time, emphasis is placed on individual judgment, not collective.

6. **Parable of the Sheep & Goats** (Matthew 25:31-46.)

This parable is only in the Book of Matthew.

Matthew 25:31-46 - 31 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. 32 Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. 34 Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, 36 I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' 37 Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? 38 And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? 39 And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' 40 And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.' 41 "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. 42 For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' 44 Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' 45 Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' 46 And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

- a. The Son of Man seated for judgment is a reference to the Book of Daniel.

Daniel 7:13-14 - 13 "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. 14 And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed."

- b. Nations is a term used for Gentiles, meaning all non-Jewish born people in the world. This does not mean that individual nations will be judged nation-by-nation but that Gentiles will be judged individually by what they have done. It is sheep by sheep, not flock by flock.

Word Study: *Nations.* Unless a nation is specifically named by name "the nations" refers to Gentiles, pagans, heathens, including all non-Jews. Ethnos, from which we get our word ethnicity, includes all ethnicities of all people all over the world.

Biblical Concept: Before Jesus, the only nation with a covenant relationship with the Most High God, Maker of Heaven and Earth, was Israel. For a Gentile to be in relationship with the God of Israel, they had to be circumcised and obey the Law of Moses. Jews anticipated that Gentiles would unilaterally be judged as heathens outside the covenant of God.

- c. The Kingdom was anticipated by Israel and it was believed that the Kingdom was prepared exclusively for Israel. (i.e. Seeing Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the Prophets in the Kingdom of heaven...)
- d. Shepherds would often graze sheep and goats together during the day but would separate them at night.

- e. Sheep are submissive followers of a shepherd. Goats are stubborn and refuse to follow without being dragged or prodded.
- f. Caring for the hungry, thirsty, sick, naked, and stranger were all commanded by Law and were supposed to be part of Israel's witness to the world in their care for one another and foreigners.
- g. Least of these, my brothers. There is some speculation about the meaning of Jesus' brethren.
 - i. His biological brethren: Israel or the Jewish people. (Matthew 1:1; Romans 9:5.)
 - ii. Those who do the will of God are His brothers and sisters. (Mark 3:35.)
 - iii. The general poor, destitute, and neglected.
- h. Eternal fire is the image of hell. This was created for the devil and his angels but was enlarged to include people who like Satan, rebel against God. "Where the worm never dies and the fire is never quenched." (Mark 9:48) "Where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Luke 13:28.) "Sheol/hell has opened/enlarged its mouth." (Isaiah 5:14.)
- i. Eternal punishment or eternal life at the resurrection. Another Daniel reference.

Daniel 12:2 - 1 "At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. 2 And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

- j. We will be judged by what we do.

Revelation 20:11-15 - Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. **And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done.** And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, **and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done.** Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. **This is the second death, the lake of fire.** And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was **thrown into the lake of fire.**

Parable Point. Jesus will judge both Jews and Gentiles individually, like sheep or goats, based on what we have done or not done. Our actions demonstrate our character and prove what we believe.

Further Considerations:

- i. Our heart and actions toward the least and the lost (i.e. the hungry, thirsty, stranger, naked, sick, prisoners) indicates of our heart condition towards God and our willingness to serve Him. We will be judged both by what we do and what we fail to do.
- ii. After the resurrection, Jesus' response to Peter's profession of devotion was, "Feed by lambs." Caring for His lambs is how we show our love for God. Not caring for them is how we show our hate, disdain, or arrogance towards God. Love God & love your neighbor is the sum of the Law and the Prophets and what is important to God.

- iii. Eternal fire and punishment. The destiny of those who have not demonstrated faith in Jesus through righteous works.
- iv. Inherit the Kingdom. Through faith and obedience, we inherit the promise. (Hebrews 6:12.) We do not earn it. Our deeds demonstrate our faith. Our faith proves our worthiness for the Kingdom of God. (2 Thessalonians 1:5.)
- v. Eternal life was always God's design for mankind. Jesus obtained it through perfect obedience. We obtain it through faith in Him and obedience which demonstrates our faith.

Big Picture Context 1: These are all given in response to the disciples questions about the signs of the end of the age and the final judgment. Jesus tells us to remain watchful and faithful in service to Him and His commands up to the very end. We must keep guard in our hearts of growing impatient or becoming callous because He has not yet returned. When He does return, He will judge each of us individually, whether we have remained faithful or not. We will be rewarded or condemned based on what we have done.

Unit Ten: Endurance & Reward (Luke 18-22)

And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.

Luke 18:1

All of these parables took place on Jesus' way to and in Jerusalem, knowing that He was going to be crucified. In these chapters, He answers both Pharisees and disciples about the signs of the coming of the Kingdom of God.

A. Context 1.

In Luke 17, Jesus was asked by Pharisees about when the Kingdom of God would come. His answer was different to them than it was to His disciples. (Contrast Luke 22; Mark 13; Matthew 24.) In His explanation to Pharisees, Jesus warned not to look for the Kingdom by obvious outward signs because the Kingdom was already within them (or among them.) He warned that it would come suddenly, referencing the days of Noah and the days of Lot as examples. In this same discourse, He proceeded to tell these parables.

Luke 18:1 - 1 And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.

1. **Parable of the Persistent Widow** (Luke 18:1-8.)

This parable is only in the Book of Luke.

Luke 18:2-8 - 2 He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. 3 And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.' 4 For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor respect man, 5 yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.'" 6 And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says. 7 And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? 8 I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

- a. The unjust judge is a human contrast to God who is a just judge.
- b. The widow pleads for justice. She has been unjustly treated by her enemy. Note: She is not crying out for something she wants or needs. She is crying out for something that is right and that she is entitled to from the judge: justice.
- c. Throughout Scripture, widows are known for being close to God's heart because they have no other means of support except to cry out to God. (Exodus 22:22; Deuteronomy 10:18; Psalm 68:5, 146:9; Proverbs 15:25, etc.) They are vulnerable and truly cry out to God for the answer to their prayers. (See 1 Timothy 5:5.)
- d. Even though the unjust judge cared nothing for the widow or her cause, her persistence in crying out for justice annoys him and ultimately compels him to rule in her favor.

Parable Point: God will avenge His people who cry out to Him as their only source of vindication against cruel oppressors in this world. But will His people remain faithful to Him when treated unjustly by enemies? Will they fall away from the faith in the time of testing or continually set their hope on Him alone for justice and redemption?

What Jesus is Doing: In His time, the Jews had been seeking God for justice and release from their Roman oppressors but when their deliverer came, they had no faith in Him. When He returns, will it be the same?

Further Considerations:

- i. The Pharisees who inquired of Jesus knew the Scriptures about the coming Kingdom of God and that there would be a time of intense persecution against God's people before His eternal Kingdom would be established. They had been oppressed by Gentiles for over five hundred years and were eager (like a mistreated widow) for Messiah to come and give them justice from their adversaries. But did they believe God in the flesh when He was standing right in front of them?
- ii. When the ultimate day of the Lord is at hand, the time of great tribulation and persecution against God's people will be fulfilled completely. Jesus said that if those days were not cut short, no one would be saved but that only those who endure to the end will be saved. When Jesus returns to establish His eternal Kingdom on earth, will we be standing in faith for His vindication and justice or will we bend our knee to the antichrist/beast?

Daniel 7:19-28 - "Then I desired to know the truth about the fourth beast, which was different from all the rest, exceedingly terrifying, with its teeth of iron and claws of bronze, and which devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet, and about the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn that came up and before which three of them fell, the horn that had eyes and a mouth that spoke great things, and that seemed greater than its companions. As I looked, **this horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them**, until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom. "Thus he said: 'As for the fourth beast, there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all the kingdoms, and it shall devour the whole earth, and trample it down, and break it to pieces. As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings shall arise, and another shall arise after them; he shall be different from the former ones, and shall put down three kings. **He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High**, and shall think to change the times and the law; **and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time**. But the court shall sit in judgment, and his dominion shall be taken away, to be consumed and destroyed to the end. And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; his kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.' "Here is the end of the matter. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly alarmed me, and my color changed, but I kept the matter in my heart."

Revelation 13:1-10 - And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads. And the beast that I saw was like a leopard; its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great

authority. One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth marveled as they followed the beast. And they worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?" And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven. **Also, it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them.** And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation, and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain. **If anyone has an ear, let him hear: If anyone is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if anyone is to be slain with the sword, with the sword must he be slain. Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.**

Matthew 24:9-14, 21-25 - **'Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake.** And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.... **For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.** And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!' do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, **so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.** See, I have told you beforehand.

2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 - The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, **because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.** Therefore, **God sends them a strong delusion,** so that they may believe what is false, in order that **all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.**

- iii. Will we stand and endure by faith in the truth and promise of eternal life or will we cave in unbelief in the trials of the end-times? Will we be like Noah, faithfully building the boat until the day of the flood? God is a just judge and He will ultimately condemn all unrighteousness and vindicate all persecution and violence done against His people. Do we believe that?

2. **Parable of the Pharisee & Tax Collector** (Luke 18:9-14.)

This parable is only in the Book of Luke.

Luke 18:9-14 - 9 He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: 10 "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' 13 But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

- a. The Pharisee considered himself to be righteous based on his religious superiority while looking down upon the Tax Collector and others he deemed as sinners. He exalted himself by outward appearances and through comparison to others.
- b. The Tax Collector humbled himself before God as a sinner in need of mercy.

Parable Point: Those who consider themselves worthy on their own merits will not inherit the Kingdom of God. Only those who humble themselves in need of God. Blessed are the poor in spirit.

What Jesus is Doing: Jesus is looking for those who will humble themselves before Him and ask for mercy so that they may receive it.

Further Considerations:

- i. The Pharisees presumed that they were safe because of their outward obedience to God's Word. But their very application of it revealed that their view of God was distorted and as such, their view of themselves was also terribly off. They were self-willed, arrogant, and selfishly ambitious rather than kind and merciful. No faith is required in the heart if righteousness was obtainable through their own efforts.
- ii. The Tax Collector knew his place before God in genuine self-abasement, contrition, and humility. He knew he deserved nothing from God and asked for mercy from a forgiving Savior. It takes faith to ask for what we don't deserve.
- iii. In the context of the Persistent Widow, the Pharisees had missed the point of persevering in faith in spite of outward appearances to the contrary. Instead, they twisted God's word to create religious rules which disqualified them and others from entering into God's blessings.
- iv. Matthew 5:3, 5 - 3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ... 5 "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

3. **Become Like a Child - Instance #3** (Luke 18:15-17.)

Luke 18:15-17 - 15 Now they were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them. And when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. 16 But Jesus called them to him, saying, "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. 17 Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it."

- a. As previously covered, Jesus used children as an example of total dependence and trust.

Parable Point & What Jesus is Doing: Similar to the widow who had not one else to cry out to, we must become like children in our dependence upon and trust in God. Jesus is looking for those who will become like children and trust God.

4. **Rich Ruler & Camel through Needle** (Luke 18:18-30)

Previously covered, given here for context.

- a. As previously covered, it is difficult for those who trust in their own righteousness or self-sufficiency to truly and fully surrender to childlike following of a merciful God.

Big Picture of Context 1: The end times are coming upon the face of the whole world, like the days of Noah and Lot. Believers who cry out to God as their only source of justice will be heard and vindicated by God in the day of judgment. Those who justify themselves will not be justified but only those who recognize and rely upon God's mercy. Those who become like children in absolute dependence on God will receive the Kingdom of Heaven but not those who trust in their own strength or provision.

Context Continued:

Immediately following this, Jesus told His disciples for the third time about how He would suffer, be rejected and crucified, but raised on the third day. They did not understand Him.

B. Context 2:

Jesus enters Jericho and notices Zacchaeus in the tree. When Zacchaeus recognizes Jesus as the Messiah, he promises to give away half of all that he owns to the poor and to repay all those he has extorted. Jesus acknowledged this as signs that salvation had truly come to his heart.

Luke 19:11 – 11 As they heard these things, he proceeded to tell a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately.

1. **Parable of the Ten Minas** (Luke 19:11-27; similar to Matthew 25:14-30.)

Luke 19:12-27 - 12 He said therefore, "A nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return. 13 Calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten minas, and said to them, 'Engage in business until I come.' 14 But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We do not want this man to reign over us.' 15 When he returned, having received the kingdom, he ordered these servants to whom he had given the money to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by doing business. 16 The first came before him, saying, 'Lord, your mina has made ten minas more.' 17 And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.' 18 And the second came, saying, 'Lord, your mina has made five minas.' 19 And he said to him, 'And you are to be over five cities.' 20 Then another came, saying, 'Lord, here is your mina, which I kept laid away in a handkerchief; 21 for I was afraid of you, because you are a severe man. You take what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.' 22 He said to him, 'I will condemn you with your own words, you wicked servant! You knew that I was a severe man, taking what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow? 23 Why then did you not put my money in the bank, and at my coming I might have collected it with interest?' 24 And he said to those who stood by, 'Take the mina from him, and give it to the one who has the ten minas.' 25 And they said to him, 'Lord, he has ten minas!' 26 'I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. 27 But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me.'"

- a. A nobleman went away to receive a Kingdom and commanded his servants to do business.
- b. Ten minas to ten servants. One mina each. In the Matthew version, the servants are given different amounts, according to their ability. Here, each servant is given the same amount to work with.
 - i. One mina was worth approximately one hundred days wages of a day laborer.

- c. "Engage in business..." The word for business used here means "to be occupied with or to carry on business like a trader or banker." The nobleman wants a return on his money.
- d. The citizens hated the nobleman and did not want the nobleman to rule over them, but the servants were still commanded to work on His behalf.
- e. "Gained by trading." The word literally translates as "what business they had done" or "what they had thoroughly occupied themselves with."
- f. One servant produced ten minas with one mina. Another produced five minas with one mina. The last servant brought back the original mina he had been given.
- g. Wrapping the nobleman's money in a perishable and flimsy handkerchief shows the utmost lack of care and concern for the nobleman's resources and priorities. The servant did not consider putting it into a safe, the bank, with lenders, or any other profitable endeavor. It showed his total lack of care for the nobleman, that he agreed with those who did not want the nobleman to rule over him.
- h. Authority over cities. The nobleman had received a Kingdom and was now assigning roles and responsibilities in his Kingdom to the servants who had proved capable of managing his resources profitably according to his interests.
- i. "Severe man, taking what you did not deposit, reaping what you did not sow." This indicates that the servant's refusal to acknowledge the Master's ownership of everything. He did not want to work for the Master and considered the Master to be a thief. As in, "why sow if someone else is going to reap?" To Him, working for the master seemed like a curse.
- j. "Your own words..." The servant who did nothing with his resources because of his harsh view of the nobleman would be judged according to his own words about him. What he had was taken from him and given to the one who had produced.
- k. The one who was producing the most received more, even what was taken away from the one who was not producing anything.
- l. Enemies slaughtered. Those who hated him and refused his rule over them were punished while his servants were rewarded.

Parable Point: Those who use what they have for God's Kingdom will be rewarded and receive authority in the world to come. Anyone who rejects the Lordship of Jesus will suffer condemnation.

Further Considerations:

- i. Jesus told them this parable because they thought the Kingdom of God was coming right away. Instead, He was receiving the Kingdom and giving them an assignment.
- ii. Consider the context of the Rich Young Ruler and Zacchaeus. This parable calls disciples to use all we have for God's Kingdom.
- iii. To receive a Kingdom and return. Jesus is the only one worthy to receive the Kingdom from God. After His ascension, He received it by being seated at the right hand of God with all power and authority. He is returning to see what we have done with His commands.

- iv. We have each been given the same access to God and His blessings, the same authority in His name and the same assignment/work to do. What we do with that will be revealed on the day of judgement and we will receive our rewards accordingly.
- v. This is NOT about earthly stewardship of finances according to the pattern of this world or being successful in business that is not God's works.
- vi. "Engage in business." If Jesus is ruling over us, we will be occupied with using all we have to do His work. If we do not use what God has given us for His Kingdom, we demonstrate a failure to acknowledge Jesus as our rightful King or a misunderstanding of His character.
 - 01. His work is to proclaim repentance and forgiveness of sins to all the earth. (Luke 24:47.)
 - 02. His work is to reconcile men to God. (2 Corinthians 5:18-19.)
 - 03. His work is to make disciples. (Matthew 28:19-20.)
 - 04. His work is to present everyone mature in Christ. (Colossians 1:28.)
 - 05. His work is to feed His lambs (John 21:15.)
 - 06. His work is to go fishing for men. (Matthew 4:19.)
- vii. Authority over cities. Faithfulness in stewarding our worldly resources for God's purposes will be rewarded with ruling over cities in the world to come.
 - 01. Revelation 2:26-27 - 26 The one who conquers and who **keeps my works** until the end, to him **I will give authority over the nations**, 27 and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father
- viii. "Your own words..." The servant who did nothing with his resources because of his harsh view of God would be judged harshly by God, according to his own words about Him.
- ix. More will be given to those who have. If we are using what God has given us well, God will give us more. If we are not using what God has given us, He will take it away.

C. Context 3:

Going on from there, Jesus enters Jerusalem in the Triumphal Entry. He weeps over how Jerusalem does not know the things which make for peace and how judgment will come upon the city because her citizens failed to recognize the day of visitation. Jesus enters the Temple and drives out the merchants as a den of thieves. After this, while He is teaching in the Temple, the chief priests and scribes and elders come to challenge His authority. He challenges them with a question about John the Baptist's authority, refusing to answer their question directly. (Luke 19:28-20:8.)

1. **Parable of the Wicked Tenants.**

Previously covered, given here for context.

Tenants who refuse to produce fruit and kill the servants and son sent by the owner to collect fruit.

2. **Rejected Cornerstone.**

Previously covered, given here for context.

Jesus is a stumbling block and will crush all those who do not receive Him.

3. **Budding Fig Tree.**

Previously covered, given here for context.

Signs of the times of His return.

D. Context 4:

At the Passover Feast, Satan enters into Judas and betrays Jesus to the religious authorities. Meanwhile, the disciples remaining with Jesus argue over who is the greatest among them. Jesus rebukes them and points to the way of servanthood. He also commends them for staying with Him through His trials up to this point but warns that another trial is coming.

1. **Satan Asked to Sift.**

Luke 22:31-32 - 31 "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, 32 but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."

Matthew 26:30-35 - 30 And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. 31 Then Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' 32 But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee." 33 Peter answered him, "Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away." 34 Jesus said to him, "Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times." 35 Peter said to him, "Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!" And all the disciples said the same.

- a. Satan is the adversary of God and all God's children.
- b. Sifting wheat. This is similar to what John the Baptist said of the Messiah's work in a person's life.
 - i. Matthew 3:12 - 12 His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."
- c. Wheat is sifted through a two-step process of threshing and winnowing.
 - i. First, threshing is beating or crushing the grain out of the outer protective shell.
 - ii. Next, winnowing is lifting the threshed grain and chaff into the breeze so that the chaff is blown away into the wind and the grain falls to the ground for collection and consumption.
- d. You. The use of "you" in verse 31 is singular, meaning Peter. The use of "you" in verse 32 is plural, meaning all of the disciples.

Parable Point: In the events which followed, the adversary tested Peter through Jesus' arrest and trial. Peter denied Jesus three times and was crushed.

Further Considerations:

- i. Peter was still presumptuous in thinking that following the Messiah and Son of God would mean a problem-free, supernatural victory-filled life. Remember get behind me Satan when Peter

told Jesus that suffering and death at the hands of the leaders would never happen to Him. (Matthew 16:22.)

- ii. Peter had made bold proclamations that even if all the other disciples denied Jesus, that he would never do so. (Mark 14:29.) Only the sifting of Satan would reveal Peter to himself.
- iii. Peter was still self-assured and thinking in a worldly way. He thought his fleshly faith was sufficient for the trials of Jesus but he was self-deceived because his faith failed in the day of trial.
- iv. Our faith cannot even be in our own faith. Our faith must purely be in Jesus Christ and Him crucified. We must discern and understand the ways of God and not see things from a carnal or worldly point of view. Thankfully, Jesus lives to intercede for us. (Hebrews 7:25.)
- v. We will ALL go through siftings of our faith in the end-times.
 01. Those with violence still in our hearts will try to rise up and be sifted by failure.
 02. Those who are in fleshly faith will be seduced by the flatteries of the world leader to violate the covenant of God.
 03. Even the wise will be sifted by persecution, imprisonment, and death. Some of the wise will fall in order that they may be purified/sifted for eternity.

Scripture: Daniel 11:14, 32-35 – “In those times many shall rise against the king of the south, and the violent among your own people shall lift themselves up in order to fulfill the vision, but **they shall fail**. ... He shall seduce with flattery those who violate the covenant, but the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action. And the wise among the people shall make many understand, though for some days **they shall stumble** by sword and flame, by captivity and plunder. When they stumble, they shall receive a little help. And many shall join themselves to them with flattery, and **some of the wise shall stumble**, so that they may be refined, purified, and made white, until the time of the end, for it still awaits the appointed time.

Luke 21:16-19 - **You will be delivered up** even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and **some of you they will put to death. You will be hated by all for my name's sake**. But not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your lives.

Mark 13:19-20 - For in those days there will be **such tribulation as has not been from the beginning of the creation** that God created until now, and never will be. And if the Lord had not cut short the days, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he shortened the days.

- vi. The process of following Jesus and being made ready as wheat for the day of His winnowing fork is done through the testings, trials, and siftings of Satan. Like Peter's trial, siftings expose us to ourselves so that we move out of presumption and fleshly faith and self-seeking devotion to genuine faith and true devotion to our crucified King.

1 Peter 1:6-9 - In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith--more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire--may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Big Picture of Context 2-4: Those who know their God will continue working for Him and His Kingdom according to His Word and His ways up to the very end. Like the wicked tenants, those who do not produce fruit for God will persecute those who do and will ultimately deny the real Jesus. There will be a falling away as believers are sifted like wheat by the adversary in the end-times. Many will stumble over the ways of God and lack of comprehension of the suffering of Jesus and the requirement of disciples to take up their own cross for Him. We must endure to the end to be saved and receive our rewards in eternity.



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