

Jesus teaches us by using earthly stories with heavenly meanings

The Parables of Jesus

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Level 1, Book 23



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Getting Started

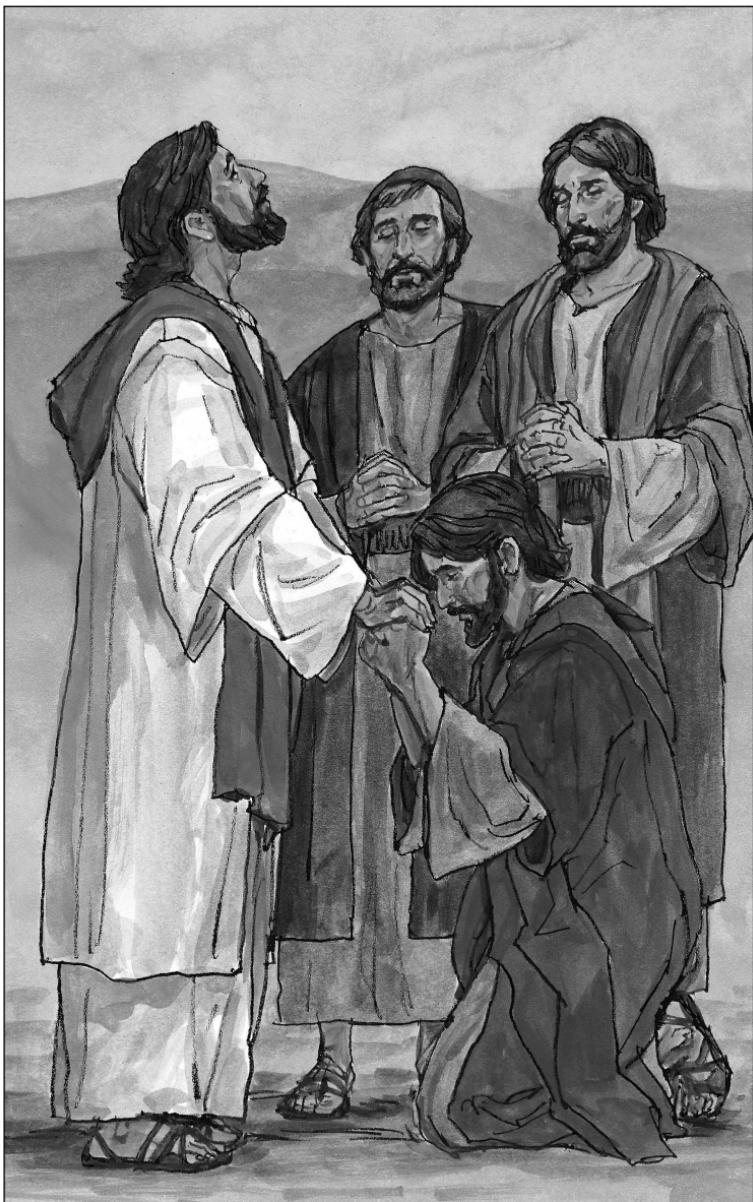
This book will teach you about many of the parables used by Jesus in teaching his disciples and other people who listened to his preaching. These simple parables have much to teach every one of us about how we should live our Christian lives and how we should see that heaven is the most important goal in our lives.

Each chapter begins with goals marked with a small star (*). These goals will tell you what you will learn in each chapter. Then you will read a few lines and answer some questions. At the end of each chapter there is a short test. The test questions cover only what you have read in the chapter and the questions you have answered.

When you have answered a group of questions you will be given a page number where you can turn to check your answers. Check your answers before reading any further.

At the end of the book there is a final test. Before you answer the questions in this final test, go back and review the chapter tests. When you have completed the final test you can either give the test to the person who gave you this book or you can mail it to the address found on the back cover of this book.

As you study the parables of Jesus, we hope you will learn and be thankful for God's blessings you receive from the study of his Word.



Jesus teaches his disciples to pray.



Chapter One

JESUS TEACHES US BY USING PARABLES

Jesus is a very good teacher. Many times, in order to make what he was teaching his disciples and the people easily understood, he used parables. In Matthew 13:34 the Gospel writer tells us, “Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd by using stories (parables). He did not say anything to them without telling them a story (parable).” Therefore, in this chapter we will learn:

* What a parable is, and

* How to study a parable.

What is a parable?

A parable is an earthly story from everyday life that has a heavenly meaning. Please remember this definition of a parable and you will understand better what Jesus is teaching you.

Let us use an example. If you lose some money in your house, what do you do? You probably will look hard in your house and ask your family and friends to help you look for the money. And when someone finds the money and gives it to you, how do you feel? You are happy. You are filled with joy and say, "I am so happy that I found this money!" That is what may happen in our everyday lives. Jesus taught a parable like this in Luke 15: verses 8 through 10. A woman lost some silver coins. She lit a lamp and swept her house. When she found the coins she called her neighbors and friends together and said, "Be joyful with me." Then Jesus says, "I tell you, it is the same in heaven over one sinner who turns away from sin." In other words, Jesus used an earthly story from everyday life of the lost coin to teach a heavenly truth that there is joy in heaven over every person who is sorry for his or her sins and believes that Jesus is the Savior from sin. Just as we rejoice when we find something that is lost, so God is happy when we

turn away from sin. This is the meaning of this parable. Remember that each parable has only one meaning.

People enjoy and understand the parables of Jesus because they are stories from our lives that we can easily understand. Many people like to read such stories. That is why Jesus taught many parables that we read about in the Bible.

1. A parable is an _____ story from everyday life that has a _____ meaning.
2. Each parable has only _____ meaning.

Answers to these questions are found on page 10.

Above all, we need to remember that the parables of Jesus are not myths or fables, but the teachings of Jesus Christ, Son of God, and Savior of the world, for us to study.

How are we to study a parable?

A very good way to begin the study of a parable of Jesus is to read the parable carefully several times so you know exactly what Jesus said. It is also

good to read the sentences before and after the parable because in some instances Jesus tells us why he spoke the parable or what the parable means.

An example of why Jesus spoke a parable is found in Luke 10:25-29. In these words a man asks what he should do to have eternal life. When Jesus asks the man what the Law of God says, he replied, “Love God and love your neighbor.” Then the man asks, “Who is my neighbor?” It is then that Jesus tells the parable of the Good Samaritan that we will study later in this book. In other words the parable of the Good Samaritan is the answer to the question, “Who is my neighbor?”

Another reason for reading the sentences after Jesus teaches a parable is that sometimes Jesus explains what a parable means. In Luke 8:4-8 Jesus tells the parable of a farmer sowing seed in a field. When Jesus finished telling the parable the disciples of Jesus wanted to know what the parable meant. It is then that Jesus explained the parable in Luke 8:11-15. We will also learn more about this parable in another chapter of this book.

From these two examples we learn that it is important to read the sentences before and after

each parable because those sentences may tell us why Jesus told the parable, or the sentences tell us the meaning of the parable. However, in many of the parables the surrounding sentences do not tell us why Jesus spoke the parable or what the parable means. In studying those parables we need the Holy Spirit to guide us so we understand what Jesus is teaching us.

3. We should read a parable of Jesus _____ times so we know exactly what Jesus _____.

4. In some instances Jesus tells us _____ he spoke the parable or what the parable _____.

5. What parable did Jesus tell in order to answer the question “Who is my neighbor?”

6. What parable did Jesus tell and then explain what the parable means?

Answers to these questions are found on page 10.

In each parable we need to find the main point of what the parable teaches us. In Matthew 20:1-15 Jesus tells the parable of workmen hired to work in a man's vineyard. There are many details in this parable that are not important. What is important is that the owner of the vineyard pays all the workers the same amount of wages whether they worked all day, half a day, or only one hour. The point of the parable is that no matter when we come to faith in Jesus, whether it is as a child, as a middle aged person, or shortly before we die, we all receive the same eternal life in heaven as a gift of God's undeserved love. This parable then is important for us in our life. Whatever our age we should learn about Jesus and believe in him so we receive the blessed gift of eternal life in heaven.

7. In each parable we need to find the _____ of what the parable teaches us.

8. In the parable of the workmen in a man's vineyard it is important to know that the owner pays all the workmen the _____ amount of wages whether they worked all day, half a day, or only one hour.

9. The main point of this parable is that no matter when we come to _____ in _____ whether it is as a child, as a middle aged person, or shortly before we die, we all receive the same _____ _____ as a gift of God's undeserved _____.

Answers to these questions are found on page 10.

Review of Chapter One

The study of the parables of Jesus is very important in our study of God's Word. By using an earthly story from everyday life Jesus wishes to teach us something about God and our relationship with God. Jesus knows that many people like to read stories and as a good teacher Jesus uses such stories to teach us about the Kingdom of God. The parables of Jesus are not myths or fables but the teachings of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and our Savior, for us to study.

To study a parable we should read it several times to understand it. We also need to read the sentences before and after a parable because sometimes Jesus tells us why he told a parable or the meaning of a parable. Many of the parables,

however, are not explained to us. Then we need the Holy Spirit to guide us so we understand what Jesus is teaching us. Each of the parables of Jesus is important for our faith and our life on earth and in heaven.

Answers to the questions in Chapter One:

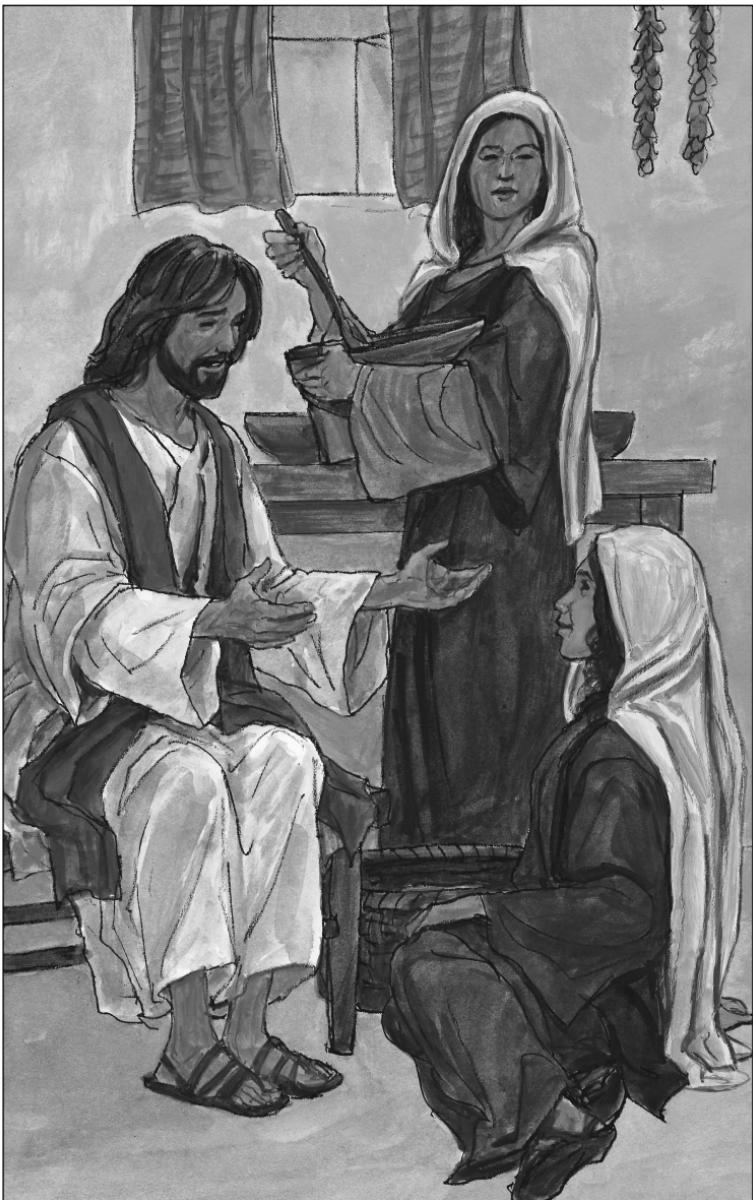
1. earthly, heavenly; 2. one; 3, several, said; 4. why, means;
5. The Good Samaritan; 6. The workmen in a man's vineyard;
7. main point; 8. same; 9. faith, Jesus, eternal life, love.

Chapter One Test

1. A parable is an _____ story from everyday life that has a _____ meaning.
2. Each parable has only _____ meaning.
3. In some instances Jesus tells us _____ he spoke a parable or what the parable _____.
4. What parable did Jesus tell in order to answer the question “Who is my neighbor?”

5. In each parable we need to find the _____ of what the parable teaches us.

Answers to these questions can be found on page 99.



Jesus teaches Mary about the one thing that is needful.



Chapter Two

JESUS TEACHES US ABOUT WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT IN OUR LIVES

In this chapter we will study three of Jesus' parables to learn it is most important to build our lives on God's Word and our faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus teaches us this in the parables of:

- * The Wise and Foolish Builders,
- * The Hidden Treasure, and
- * The Pearl of Great Price.

In the first chapter of this book you learned that a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. As you study a parable you do not apply every thought but you apply the main spiritual thought of the parable.

What is the most important thing in your life? Is it your family? Or is it your house or farm? Jesus, in the three parables we study, teaches us what should be most important in our lives. It is most important to build our lives on God's Word and our faith in Jesus.



Prayer: *Dear heavenly Father, thank you for all that you give us in our lives: our family, our food, our home, our clothes, and everything else we need for our body and our lives. We pray that you will teach us that there is something even more important for us. Show us that faith in Jesus Christ, our Savior that we learn about in the Bible, God's Word, is the most important thing in our lives. We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen.*

THE PARABLE OF THE WISE AND FOOLISH BUILDERS

God's Word - Matthew 7:24-27

²⁴ “So then, everyone who hears my words and puts them into practice is like a wise man. He builds his house on the rock. ²⁵ The rain comes down. The water rises. The winds blow and beat against the house. But it does not fall. It is built on the rock. ²⁶ But everyone who hears my voice and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man. He builds his house on sand. ²⁷ The rain comes down. The water rises. The winds blow and beat against the house. And it falls with a loud crash.”

Explanation of the Parable

This parable shows us that it is good to read what is written before or after a parable. Jesus just finished preaching his Sermon on the Mount written in Matthew chapters 5, 6 and 7. He now tells this parable to point out that we should not just hear or read what he said, but we are to do what he has told us. When we study the parable of the wise and foolish builders we learn that there are two kinds of people living in this world. The wise people are those who build their lives on the rock of faith in Jesus that comes through study of God's Word, the Bible. Troubles come into the lives

of the wise people as pictured in the parable by the rain, the flood and the wind. When troubles come into the lives of those who are wise, including the final trial of our life, our death, the wise place their trust in Jesus and seek his help through God's Word. We hear God's Word. Then everything depends on whether we follow what God's Word teaches us. The foolish people are those who build their lives on their own thinking and strength. Those who are foolish hear God's Word with their ears only but do not obey it. Then when troubles come into their lives foolish people are swept away by the storms of life. Without faith in Jesus the foolish will die most miserably.

1. The two kinds of people spoken of in this parable are those who _____ in Jesus and those who do _____
_____ in Jesus.
2. The rock on which we should build our lives is our _____ in Jesus.
3. Name some of the troubles that come into your life.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____

4. Foolish people _____ God's Word but do not _____ what God tells them.
5. Without faith in Jesus the _____ people will die most miserably.

Answers to these questions can be found on page 23.

Jesus, in this parable, teaches us what is most important in our lives. He teaches us that our lives are to be built on our faith in Jesus. Faith comes to us through God's Word. We not only hear God's Word, but we do what God's Word tells us. Then we are wise. Then we have built our lives on a firm foundation. 1 Corinthians 3:11 tells us, "No one can lay any other foundation than the one that has already been laid. That foundation is Jesus Christ." In a hymn we sing, "On Christ the solid rock I stand. All other ground is sinking sand." (CW 382)

THE PARABLE OF THE HIDDEN TREASURE

God's Word - Matthew 13:44

"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure found in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again. He was very happy. So he went and sold everything he had. And he bought that field."

Explanation of the Parable

In ancient times rich people often buried some of their money or precious jewels in the ground. They wanted to protect their treasure from being stolen in times of war or change of government. If that person died before digging up the treasure, it remained hidden in a field. Later someone would find it. Jesus, in this parable, has a very specific field in mind. The field is the Bible, the Holy Scriptures. Jesus said in John 5:39, “You study the Scriptures carefully. You study them because you think they will give you eternal life. The Scriptures you study give witness about me.” The great

treasure in the parable is the
Scriptures that we can read and study.

In the Scriptures we find Jesus as our Savior from sin. When Jesus brings us to faith in him as our Savior, we enter into the kingdom of heaven. Through Jesus we inherit eternal life. The point of the parable is that the kingdom of heaven is of greater value than anything else in our lives.

1. True or False: The greatest treasure in the parable is the Scriptures.
2. The Scriptures are so important because they show us Jesus who is our _____ from _____.

3. Through faith in Jesus we enter into the _____ of _____.

Answers to these questions can be found on page 23.

In this parable Jesus teaches us what is most important in our lives. God's Word. The Bible tells us about Jesus and everything he has done for us. God's Word is more valuable than anything else in our lives. We may have a home, a farm, a business. We may have much money. But these earthly possessions can be used only while we live here on earth. The heavenly treasure of being with Jesus forever in heaven is worth more than our possessions in this world.

In one of our hymns we sing, "Jesus priceless treasure." (CW 349) We give up all the things of this life in order to know the way to heaven through Jesus. During his Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6:33 Jesus tells us, "Put God's kingdom first. Do what he wants you to do. Then all of those things (food, clothing) will also be given to you."

THE PARABLE OF THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

God's Word - Matthew 13:45,46

⁴⁵ Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a trader who was looking for fine pearls. ⁴⁶ He found one that was very valuable. So he went away and sold everything he had. And he bought the pearl.”

Explanation of the Parable

This parable of the pearl of great price and the one we studied before, the treasure in the field, may seem to teach the same thing. But there is a small difference. In the parable of the treasure in the field



the man finds this treasure as a great surprise. In the parable of the pearl of great price the man, after much searching, gives up everything else to

obtain the pearl. In this parable we again learn that the glory and beauty of God's mercy found in the gospel is so great that other things are not important. Salvation in Jesus is priceless. The people who know about this most priceless gift will give up anything in life to obtain it. In ancient times merchants would pay large amounts of money to buy excellent pearls. God lets people who look for good things in this world to find Jesus. Some people find Jesus but do not follow him. We may

have earthly possessions but the good news about Jesus in God's Word and in the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are more valuable than anything else in our lives.

1. In this parable the man gives up _____ to obtain the pearl.
2. In this parable we again learn that the glory and beauty of God's _____ found in the _____ is priceless.
3. The good news about Jesus in God's _____ and in the Sacraments of _____ and the Lord's _____ are more valuable than anything else in our lives.

Answers to these questions can be found on page 23.

Jesus and our salvation through faith in him are more valuable than anything we have during our life on earth. And this is the truth. In one of Jesus' prayers to God the Father he said, "Use the truth to make them holy. Your word is truth" (John 17:17).

We have studied three parables of Jesus that teach us what is most important in our lives. The

study of the Bible is more important than anything else because it leads us to Jesus and everlasting life in heaven. We cannot and do not keep the law of God. But in the gospel we learn that God the Father sent Jesus into our world. Jesus kept the law perfectly for us. He died on the cross, in our place, to bear the punishment for our sins. This good news is a priceless treasure and a pearl of great price. We will endure the lack of good things in our lives. We will face ridicule and persecution in order to follow what Jesus teaches us in Scripture. Then by faith in Jesus we have the blessed hope of eternal life. At the end of our lives we will live with Jesus in heaven. All praise and glory to God!

4. The study of the Bible is more important than anything else because it _____ us to _____.
5. The good news that Jesus bore the punishment for our sins is a _____
_____ and a pearl of great price.
6. We will face ridicule and persecution in order to follow what _____ teaches us in _____.

Answers to these questions can be found on page 23.



Prayer: Dear Father in heaven, thank you for preserving your Word found in the Bible through all the years since the time of Moses. Thank you for using that Word to bring me to faith in Jesus, my Savior. Help me to treasure your Word and to read and study it so my faith will remain strong and so I can do your will in all my life. I ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Answers to the questions in Chapter Two:

The Parable of the Wise and Foolish Builders – 1. believe, not believe; 2. faith; 3. sickness, death, no money; 4. hear, follow; 5. foolish.

The Parable of the Hidden Treasure – 1. True; 2. Savior, sin; 3. kingdom, heaven.

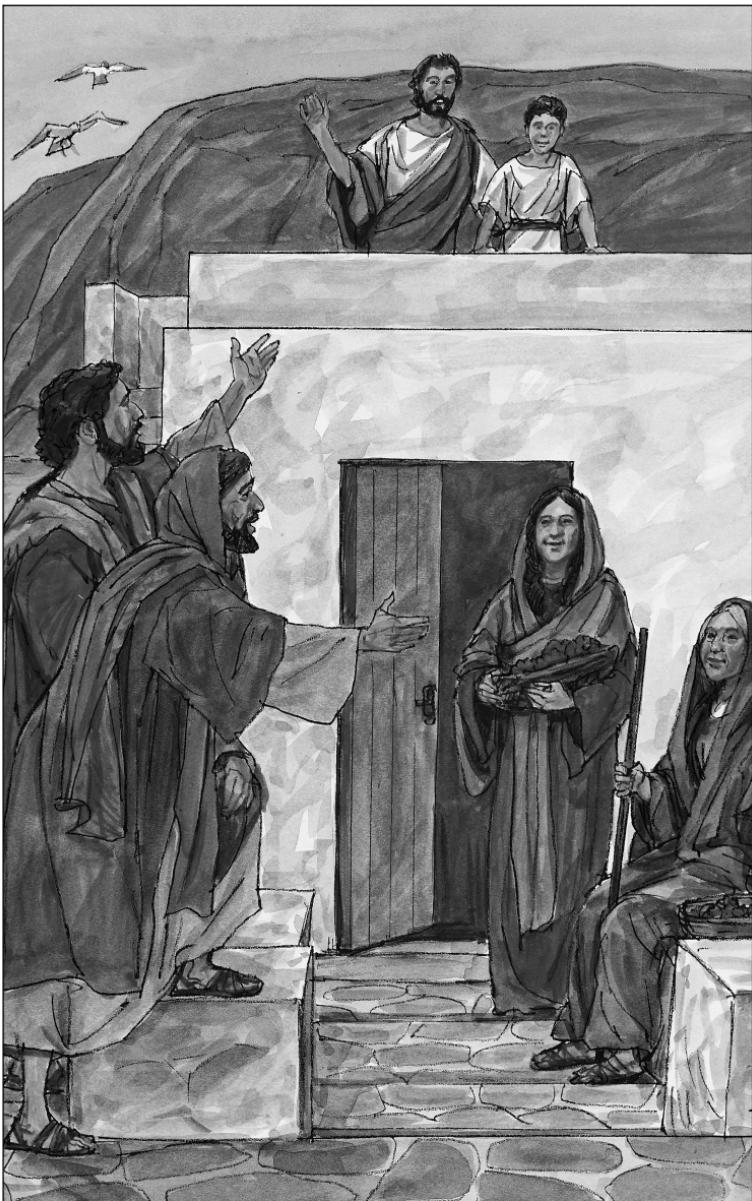
The Parable of the Pearl of Great Price – 1. everything; 2. mercy, gospel; 3. Word, Baptism, Supper. 4. leads, Jesus; 5. priceless treasure; 6. Jesus, Scripture.

Chapter Two Test

1. The two kinds of people spoken of in the parable of the wise and foolish builders are those who _____ in Jesus and those who do _____ in Jesus.
2. The rock on which we should build our lives is our _____ in Jesus Christ.
3. In the parable, the troubles that come into our lives are compared to the _____, the _____, and the _____.
4. The foolish people _____ God's Word but do not _____ what God tells them.
5. Without faith in Jesus the _____ people will die most miserably.
6. True or False: The great treasure in the parable of the hidden treasure is the Scriptures.
7. The Scriptures are so important because they show us Jesus who is our _____ from _____.

8. Through faith in Jesus we enter the _____ of _____.
9. The good news that Jesus bore the punishment of our sins is a _____
_____ and a pearl of great price.
10. We will face ridicule and persecution in order to follow what _____ teaches us in _____.

Answers to these questions can be found on page 99.



The Holy Christian Church grows.



Chapter Three

JESUS TEACHES US HOW GOD'S WORD GROWS IN OUR LIVES

Continuing our study of Jesus' parables in this chapter we will learn from Jesus how God's Word grows in our lives and in the life of the Christian church. Jesus teaches us this in the parables of:

- * The Sower,
- * The Weeds, and
- * The Mustard Seed.

In the first chapter of this book you learned that a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. In your study of the parables of Jesus you learn that each parable has a main spiritual thought to teach you.

What happens when you throw a stone into a pool of water? You will see a splash in the water and usually circles on the surface of the water. What happens when you plant a seed into the ground? You will see it grow until it produces a flower or some grass or a tree. Now ask yourself, what happens when the Word of God is preached and taught? What effect does God's Word have in your life? We find the answer to this question in this chapter.



Prayer: Dear God in heaven, we believe your Word will have a good effect in our lives. We pray that it has the effect on us today that we become stronger in our faith and trust in you as our Lord and Savior. Please do not let false teachers or our own sinful nature take your Word away from us. Bless us as we study your Word. We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

God' Word - Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23

³ Then he (Jesus) told them many things by using stories (parables). He said, “A farmer went out to plant his seed. ⁴ He scattered the seed on the ground. Some fell on a path. Birds came and ate it up. ⁵ Some seed fell on rocky places, where there wasn’t much soil. The plants came up quickly, because the soil wasn’t deep. ⁶ When the sun came up, it burned the plants. They dried up because they had no roots. ⁷ Other seed fell among thorns. The thorns grew up and crowded out the plants. ⁸ Still other seed fell on good soil. It produced a crop 100, 60 or 30 times more than what was planted. ⁹ Those who have ears should listen”...

¹⁸ “Listen! Here is the meaning of the story of the farmer. ¹⁹ People hear the message about the kingdom but do not understand it. Then the evil one comes. He steals what has been planted in their hearts. Those people are like the seed planted on a path. ²⁰ Others received the seed that fell on rocky places. They are those who hear the message and at once receive it with joy. ²¹ But they have no roots. So they last only a short time. They quickly fall away from the faith when trouble

or suffering comes because of the message.²² Others received the seed that fell among the thorns. They are those who hear the message. But then worries of this life and the false promises of wealth crowd it out. They keep it from producing fruit.²³ But still others received the seed that fell on good soil. They are those who hear the message and understand it. They produce a crop 100, 60 or 30 times more than the farmer planted.”

Explanation of the Parable

Jesus says, “Listen.” We should listen to the explanation of this parable of the sower. Jesus himself explains this parable for us. There are two important things that help us to understand this parable. One is the seed. The seed is the Word of God. The other is the ground on which the seed



fell. The ground is our hearts that listen to the Word of God. As the farmer scattered the seed some of it fell on the hard path. Birds ate the seed. In this case Satan snatches away the Word of God while the people listen to it.

The people listen to God's Word but forget it. They do not believe what Jesus says. Some of God's Word makes our hearts happy. But the faith of these people is not deep enough, or strong enough to stand the troubles, the sufferings, and the persecution that come into their lives because of Jesus. The lives of the third kind of people are filled with worldly desires and seeking after wealth. These desires for a good worldly life crowd out the desire to study God's Word. The love of riches fills their hearts. Finally, the last group of people listens to God Word and follows Jesus. Their hearts are prepared by the law. They know they cannot save themselves and hear the good news that Jesus saves us. Then the gospel brings forth good things in their lives. Through these believers in Jesus more people learn about how they too are saved.

1. The "seed" in this parable is the _____ of _____.
2. The ground in this parable is our _____ that _____ to the Word of God.
3. Some people listen to the Word of God but _____ it.

4. The faith of some people is not deep enough to stand the _____, the _____, and the _____ that come into their lives because of Jesus.
5. The desires for a good _____ crowd out the desire of some people to study God's Word.
6. Some people listen to God's Word and follow _____.

Answers to these questions can be found on page 38.

Do not let Satan, the people of the world, or the pleasures of this life lead you away from hearing and studying God's Word. That Word of God gives you many blessings. When we study God's Word the kingdom of God grows in our hearts and lives. Jesus tells us, "What I am about to tell you is true. Anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life" (John 5:24).

THE PARABLE OF THE WEEDS

God's Word - Matthew 13:24-30

²⁴ Jesus told the crowd another story (parable). “Here is what the kingdom of heaven is like,” he said. “A man planted good seed in the field. ²⁵ But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came. The enemy planted weeds among the wheat and then went away. ²⁶ The wheat began to grow and form grain. At the same time, weeds appeared. ²⁷ The owner’s servants came to him. They said, ‘Sir, didn’t you plant good seed in your field? Then where did the weeds come from?’ ²⁸ ‘An enemy did this,’ he replied. The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull the weeds up?’ ²⁹ ‘No,’ the owner answered. ‘While you are pulling up the weeds, you might pull up the wheat with them. ³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the workers what to do. Here is what I will say to them. First collect the weeds. Tie them in bundles to be burned. Then gather the wheat. Bring it into my storeroom.’”

Explanation of the parable

The explanation of this parable is very simple. The field is the world. The farmer is God. The good seed that produces wheat is the believers in the church we



can see on earth. The enemy is the devil. The weeds are those in the church who say they believe but really do not. Some of them teach false doctrines. Both the believers and unbelievers will live in our world but at the end of the world those who are not believers will be gathered together and will burn in the everlasting fire of hell. The believers will enjoy the blessings of heaven and live eternally in heaven.

1. The “wheat” in this parable is the _____.
2. The “weeds” are those in the _____ who say they _____ but do _____.
3. The weeds try to destroy the wheat by teaching _____.
4. On judgment day the unbelievers will _____ in the everlasting fire of _____.
5. On judgment day the believers will enjoy the _____ of _____.

Answers to these questions can be found on page 38.

This parable explains that believers and unbelievers will live together in this world until God comes to judge all people who have lived in our world. God's Word grows in the lives of believers when they continue to worship the true God and study his Word, the Bible. Beside the believers in the church there are also people who say they are believers but are not and some try to destroy the faith of believers by teaching false doctrines. God's Word teaches us, "He (God) is coming to judge everyone....He will sentence ungodly sinners for all the bad things they have said about him...Dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ said was going to happen. They told you , 'In the last days, some people will make fun of the truth.'... They are not led by the Holy Spirit. Dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith" (Jude 15-20). Therefore, we want to be good wheat. We will study God's Word. We will worship the true God. We will pray to him and serve him in our Christian life.

THE PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED

God's Word - Matthew 13:31,32

³¹ Jesus told the crowd another story (parable). He said, "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed. Someone took the seed and planted it in a field. ³² It is the smallest of all your seeds. But when it grows, it is the largest of all garden plants. It becomes a tree. Birds come and nest in its branches."

Explanation of the parable

This parable is easy to understand. Almost all of us have planted seeds in the ground. We have seen them grow. Some of the seeds have grown to be small plants and others to become huge trees. In the parables we studied before this one we learned how the Word of God grows in our hearts and lives. In this parable we learn how, through God's Word, the church of Jesus grows throughout the world. It is amazing how the kingdom of Jesus grows from small beginnings until it spreads over the entire world. God sent his one and only Son, Jesus, into the world so the people of the world could be saved. The New Testament church was



started when Jesus chose his twelve apostles. Then there were 70 disciples and on the festival of Pentecost 3,000 souls were added to the church (Read Acts 2:1-41). Later the Bible speaks of 5,000 believers being added to the church (Read Acts 4:4). Today believers are found in every nation of the world. The small seed has grown to a mighty tree through the message of the gospel. People today, like the birds in the parable, find hope and rest for their souls through the words of Jesus who said, come to me and I will give you “rest for your souls” (Matthew 11:28-30). This parable encourages us in our church work and fills us with joy.

1. In this parable we learn how, through God’s Word, the _____ of Jesus _____.
2. God sent Jesus, his only Son, into the world so the people of the _____ could be _____.
3. How many souls were added to the church on the festival of Pentecost? _____
4. Because you are a member of Jesus’ church you have _____ for your _____.

Answers to these questions can be found on page 38.

God causes his church to grow. The preaching and teaching of the gospel has entered people's hearts and lives. We have grown in our personal faith. The apostle Paul tells us, "I am not ashamed of the good news. It is God's power. And it will save everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16). Just as faith grows in our lives, so God's Word is planted and grows throughout the world. Jesus told his disciples before he returned to heaven, "You will be my witnesses from one end of the earth to the other" (Acts 1:8). The lives of believers are filled with joy and peace through the gospel. It is the good news about Jesus that we are to teach and preach throughout the world. Then God will cause the church to grow in our community and throughout the world.

Answers to the questions in Chapter Three:

The Parable of the Sower. - 1. Word, God; 2. hearts, listen; 3. forget; 4. trouble, sufferings, persecution; 5. worldly life; 6. Jesus.

The Parable of the Weeds. – 1. believers; 2. church, believe, not; 3. false doctrine; 4. burn, hell; 5. blessings, heaven.

The Parable of the Mustard Seed. – 1. church, grows; 2. world, saved; 3. 3,000; 4. rest, soul.



A Closing Prayer: Dear Jesus, we thank you that you came into the world to save us from our sins, from the fear of death and the power of the devil. We praise you that through your Word we have come to believe in you as the Savior of all people. Strengthen our faith through the study of the gospel. Allow your Word to go out into all the world so that many more people find the peace and joy that fills our hearts. In your name we pray this. Amen.

Chapter Three Test

1. The “seed” in the parable of the sower is the _____ of _____.
2. The “ground” in this parable is our _____ that _____ to the Word of God.
3. Some people listen to God’s Word but _____ it.
4. The faith of some people is not deep enough to stand the _____, the _____, and the _____ that come into their lives because of Jesus.
5. The desires for a good _____ crowd out the desire of some people to study God’s Word.
6. Some people know they cannot _____ themselves and believe the _____ that Jesus saves us.
7. The “wheat” in the parable of the weeds is the _____.

8. The “weeds” are those in the _____ who say they _____ but really do _____.
9. The weeds destroy the wheat by teaching _____.
10. On judgment day the unbelievers will _____ in the everlasting fire of _____.
11. On judgment day the believers will enjoy the _____ of _____.
12. In the parable of the mustard seed we learn how, through God’s Word, _____ of Jesus _____ throughout the world.
13. God sent Jesus, his only Son, into the world so the _____ of the _____ could be saved.
14. _____ souls were added to the church on the festival of Pentecost.
15. Because you are a member of Jesus’ church you have _____ for your _____.

Answers to these questions can be found on page 99.



The Pharisee and the Tax Collector.



Chapter Four

JESUS TEACHES US TO TRUST IN HIM FOR FORGIVENESS

In this chapter we will study more parables that Jesus taught and learn how we should trust him for the forgiveness of all our sins. We will study the following parables:

- * The Lost Sheep,
- * The Lost Son, and
- * The Pharisee and the Tax Collector.

We have learned that a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. In our study of the parables of Jesus we learn that each parable has a main spiritual thought it wants to teach us.

Have you ever stood before a judge in a courtroom? I know I have. And I was filled with joy when the judge said I was not guilty of a crime. That is what God has done for you. The Bible tells us that we are justified. To be justified means that God, like a judge, declares that our sins are forgiven because of what Jesus has done for us. In this chapter we will learn parables that fill our hearts and lives with joy because our sins are forgiven by our almighty God and judge in heaven.



Prayer: Dear God, we have disobeyed you in so many ways. We have sinned against our friends and neighbors many times. Lead us to be sorry for our sins and to trust in Jesus for forgiveness of all our sins. Cause the Holy Spirit, through the Scriptures, to fill our hearts with joy in knowing our sins are forgiven and we can go to be in heaven with you. Amen.

THE PARABLE OF THE LOST SHEEP

God's Word - Luke 15:1-7

¹ The tax collectors and “sinners” were all gathering around to hear Jesus. ² But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law were whispering among themselves. They said, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.” ³ Then Jesus told them a story (a parable). ⁴ He said, “Suppose one of you has 100 sheep and loses one of them. Won’t he leave the 99 in the open country? Won’t he go and look for the one lost sheep until he finds it? ⁵ When he finds it he will joyfully put it on his shoulders ⁶ and go home. Then he will call his friends and neighbors together. He will say, ‘Be joyful with me. I have found my lost sheep.’ ⁷ I tell you, it will be the same in heaven. There will be great joy when one sinner turns away from sin. Yes, there will be more joy than for the 99 godly people who do not need to turn away from their sins.”

Explanation of the Parable

The parable of the lost sheep is a simple one. It is a parable that Jesus explains. There are two kinds of people described in this parable. One kind is the tax collectors and sinners. These were people who cheated others and sinned against God’s law. The

other kind is the Pharisees and scribes. These are people who were self-righteous and they thought they didn't do anything wrong and could save themselves. Jesus came to save all people and to forgive all of their sins. He said, "The Son of Man came to look for the lost and saves them" (Luke 19:10). He shows his love especially for those who feel the need for his mercy. Jesus left the 99 sheep



who are those people who already are believers and searches for the one sheep that has strayed and does not believe that Jesus is the Savior of all people. God's compassion rests on the lost sinner, who will die eternally unless he is found and comes to faith in Jesus. The lost sheep is found and

there is joy among the shepherd's friends just as there is joy in heaven over one sinner who is sorry for his sins and believes that he is forgiven by God. Through the preaching of the law we learn we are sinners. The gospel shows us that Jesus is our Savior. This good news brings peace and joy to our hearts as well as joy in heaven. We can trust Jesus to forgive all of our sins. Jesus, our Good Shepherd, takes us home to heaven to enjoy the blessings God has prepared for us from before the beginning of the world.

1. Jesus came into the world to save _____ people.
2. Those who do not believe Jesus forgives their sins will die _____.
3. We can _____ Jesus to forgive all of our sins.
4. Jesus is our _____.

Answers to these questions can be found on page 57.

We can understand this parable that Jesus explains for us. It is Jesus who looks for lost sinners and forgives their sins. There is nothing we can do to save ourselves. Jesus has done everything and we can trust in him because he is God's Son and our Savior. The result is that there is joy in heaven over every sinner who repents. The apostle Paul tells us in Philippians 4:4, "Always be joyful because you belong to the Lord. I will say it again, be joyful!"

*THE PARABLE OF THE LOST SON***God's Word - Luke 15:11-32**

¹¹ Jesus continued, “There was a man who had two sons. ¹² The younger son spoke to his father. He said, ‘Father, give me my share of the family property.’ So the father divided the property between his two sons. ¹³ Not long after that, the younger son picked up all he had. Then he left for a country far away. There he wasted his money on wild living. ¹⁴ He spent everything he had. Then the whole country ran low on food. So the son did not have what he needed. ¹⁵ He went to work for someone who lived in the country, who sent him to the fields to feed the pigs. ¹⁶ The son wanted to fill his stomach with the food the pigs were eating. But no one gave him anything. ¹⁷ Then he began to think clearly again. He said, ‘How many of my father’s hired workers have more than enough food? But here I am dying from hunger! ¹⁸ I will get up and go back to my father. I will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven. And I have sinned against you. ¹⁹ I am no longer fit to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired workers.’ ²⁰ So he got up and went to his father. While the son was still a long way off, his father saw him. He was filled with tender love for his son. He ran to him. He threw his arms around him and kissed him. ²¹ The

son said to him, ‘I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer fit to be called your son.’²² But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet.²³ Bring the fattest calf and kill it. Let’s have a big dinner and celebrate.²⁴ This son of mine was dead. And now he is alive again. He was lost. And now he is found.’ So they began to celebrate.²⁵ The older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing.²⁶ So he called one of the servants. He asked him what was going on.²⁷ ‘Your brother has come home,’ the servant replied. ‘Your father has killed the fattest calf. He has done this because your brother is back safe and sound.’²⁸ The older brother became angry. He refused to go in. So his father went out and begged him.²⁹ But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I have worked like a slave for you. I have always obeyed your orders. You never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends.³⁰ But this son of yours wasted your money with some prostitutes. Now he comes home. And for him you kill the fattest calf.’³¹ ‘My son,’ the father said, ‘You are always with me. Everything I have is yours.³² But we had to celebrate and be glad. This brother of yours was dead. And now he is alive again. He was lost. And now he is found.’”



The lost son confesses his sins to his father.

Explanation of the parable

Luke, the Gospel writer, teaches that God wants everyone to be saved and teaches the truth that God loves equally each and every man, woman and child. Jesus came into our world to save everyone. We have learned in our study of parables that there is only one important lesson taught in each parable. In this parable of the lost son the lesson is very clear. We learn of the great love the father has for both of his sons. Especially, he is willing to forgive his younger son who had sinned against him in many ways. This son wanted his father's property even though his father was not dead. The son wasted all the money he received from his father by living a very sinful life. However, when the son had nothing left and remembered the blessings he had while living with his father, he returned to his father and his father lovingly forgave him. That is what our Father in heaven is willing to do for each one of us. We live very sinful lives. We do not keep God's law, nor can we keep it perfectly, the way he wants us to keep it. God's Word reminds us that if we keep the whole law and yet break it in only one way, we are guilty of the whole law (James 2:10). God also reminds us that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). But when we return to our Father in heaven and confess our sins, a loving and gracious God is ready to forgive

us. We can trust that God will forgive us because he loves us and is willing to forgive us for Jesus' sake.

1. The younger son wanted his father's _____ even though he was not _____.
2. When the son _____ to his father, he lovingly _____ his son.
3. True or False: The son earned his father's love and forgiveness.
4. We can trust that God will _____ us because he _____ us and is willing to forgive us for _____ sake.

Answers to these questions can be found on page 57.

When Jesus spoke to a man named Nicodemus, he gave him and us a wonderful gospel message that teaches us that we are saved by the love of God and faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son. Anyone who believes in him will not die but will have eternal life" (John 3:16). Trust in God for the forgiveness of your sins. God the father loved all people in the world and sent his Son, Jesus, into our world. Jesus loved us. He kept

God's law for us and was punished in our place for our sins. God the Holy Spirit loved us and brings us to faith in Jesus. Indeed, we can trust our God to forgive of all of our sins.

*THE PARABLE OF THE PHARISEE AND
THE TAX COLLECTOR*

God's Word - Luke 18:9 – 14

⁹ Jesus told a story (parable) to some people who were sure they were right with God. They looked down on everyone else. ¹⁰ He said to them, “Two men went up to the temple to pray. One was a Pharisee. The other was a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself. ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people,’ he said. ‘I am not like robbers or those who do other evil things. I am not like those who commit adultery. I am not even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week. And I give a tenth of all I get.’ ¹³ But the tax collector stood not very far away. He would not even look up to heaven. He beat his chest and said, ‘God have mercy on me. I am a sinner.’ ¹⁴ “I tell you, the tax collector went home accepted (justified) by God. But not the Pharisee. Everyone who lifts himself up will be brought down. And everyone who is brought down will be lifted up.”

Explanation of the parable

The Pharisees were a religious group among the Jews who thought they were better than other people and who tried to keep the law perfectly. In this parable the Pharisee points out to God that he is better than other people. He does not steal or commit adultery or do other evil things. On the other hand he tries to explain what good things he does. He fasts, that is he does not eat food, two times a week. According to Old Testament law Jews were required to fast only one day of the year. In the Old Testament Jews were required to give a tenth of their cattle, their grain, and the fruit of their trees as gifts to God. But this Pharisee is so proud that he gives a tenth of everything, not just of some things he has. He is proud, he is self-righteous, and he does more than God required of him. He now stands before God as a person who thinks he can save himself by the good things he does. The Pharisee is not accepted (justified) by God. However, the tax collector is a far different kind of person. Tax collectors were considered the worst of sinners by the Jews. They were despised as traitors who served a foreign government, the Romans. They cheated and stole money from the people by charging higher taxes than what was required. They kept the “profit” in their own pockets. The tax collector in the parable stands far away in

the temple. He does not feel good enough to approach God in his prayers. He confesses he is a sinner and asks God to be merciful to him. Jesus tells us this tax collector is “justified,” that is, he is completely forgiven by God. To be justified means that God declares us innocent of sin because of what Jesus did for us. This man looks to God for forgiveness, not to what he does. The same is true of us. We are forgiven, not because of the good things we do, but because of God’s love for us through Jesus Christ, our Savior. Therefore, we trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins and not in ourselves.

1. The Pharisee thought that he was right with God because he _____ more than God _____ of him.

2. True or False: The sin of the Pharisee is forgiven.

3. The sins of the tax collector are forgiven because he _____ he is a _____ and asks God to be _____ to him.

4. To be justified means that God declares us _____ of sin because of what Jesus did for us.

5. We are _____ not because of the _____ things we do, but because of God's love for us through _____ , our Savior.

Answers to these questions can be found on page 57.

Jesus, in this parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector teaches us that those who humbly confess their sins are justified (forgiven) by God. The apostle Paul in Romans 3:21 and 22 writes, “But now God has shown us how to become right with him. The Law and the Prophets give witness to this. It has nothing to do with obeying the law. We are made right with God by putting our faith in Jesus Christ. This happens to all who believe.”

From Jesus' parables we have studied in this chapter we learn that Jesus teaches us to trust in him for forgiveness. We cannot save ourselves. But Jesus kept the law for us and he paid for the punishment we deserved by dying for us on the cross. God forgives us because of his love for us that not only brings joy to our lives, but also joy in heaven. The apostle Paul tells us, “So who can

brag? No one! Are people saved by observing the law? Not at all! They are saved because of (through or by) their faith" (Romans 3:27).



A closing prayer: *Dear God in heaven, all praise and thanks is given to you. Because of your love and mercy you sent your only Son to be our Savior. Fill our hearts with faith to believe in Jesus. Fill our lives with joy in the forgiveness of our sins. We ask this for Jesus' sake. Amen.*

Answers to the questions in Chapter Four:

The Parable of the Lost Sheep – 1. all; 2. eternally; 3. trust; 4. Good Shepherd.

The Parable of the Lost Son – 1. property, dead; 2. returned, forgave; 3. false; 4. forgive, loves, Jesus.

The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector – 1. does, required; 2. false; 3. confesses, sinner, merciful; 4. innocent; 5. forgiven, good, Jesus.

Chapter Four Test

1. Those who do not believe Jesus forgives their sins will die _____.
2. There is joy in heaven over every sinner who repents and believes because of God's _____.
3. Jesus is our _____.
4. When the son in the parable of the lost son _____ to his father, he lovingly _____ his son.
5. True or False: The son earned his father's forgiveness.
6. We can trust that God will _____ us because he _____ and is willing to forgive us for _____ sake.
7. The Pharisee thought he was right with God because he _____ more than God _____.

8. The sins of the tax collector are forgiven because he _____ he is a _____ and asks God to be _____ to him.
9. To be justified means that God declares us _____ of sin because of what Jesus did for us.
10. We are _____, not because of the _____ things we do, but because of God's love for us through _____, our Savior.

Answers to these questions can be found on page 99.



The unmerciful servant.



Chapter Five

JESUS TEACHES US HOW TO LIVE OUR LIVES AS CHRISTIANS

Continuing our study of the parables of Jesus we will learn from him how we should live our Christian lives. We will study the following three parables:

- * The Unmerciful Servant,
- * The Talents, and
- * The Good Samaritan.

A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. In our study of the parables we learn that each parable has one main spiritual thought that it teaches us.

Jesus tells us, “So be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). We know we are not perfect. However, Jesus wants us to live as Christians should live. Do you always help your neighbor when he or she is in need? Do you always work hard using all of the abilities God has given you? Do you always forgive those who hurt you? In the following parables Jesus teaches us how to live our lives as Christians by showing our love to others.



Prayer: *Dear Lord, I do not always live as I should as a Christian. Please teach me to look beyond myself to see the needs of other people. I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

THE PARABLE OF THE UNMERCIFUL SERVANT

God's Word - Matthew 18:23-35

²³ *The kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to collect all the money his servants owed him.* ²⁴ *As the king began to do it, a man who*

owed him a million dollars was brought to him.²⁵ The man was not able to pay. So his master gave an order. The man, his wife, his children and all he owned had to be sold to pay back what he owed.²⁶ The servant fell on his knees before him. “Give me time,” he begged, “I’ll pay you back.”²⁷ His master felt sorry for him. He forgave him what he owed and let him go.²⁸ But then the servant went out and found one of the other servants who owed him a few dollars. He grabbed him and began to choke him. “Pay me back what you owe me!” he said.²⁹ The other servant fell on his knees. “Give me time,” he begged him. “I’ll pay you back.”³⁰ But the first servant refused. Instead, he went and had the man thrown into prison. The man would be held there until he could pay back what he owed.³¹ The other servants saw what had happened. It troubled them greatly. They went and told their master everything that had happened.³² Then the master called the first servant in. “You evil servant,” he said. “I forgave you all that you owed me because you begged me to.³³ Shouldn’t you have had mercy on the other servant just as I had mercy on you?”³⁴ In anger his master turned him over to the jailors. He would be punished until he paid back everything he owed.³⁵ This is how my Father in heaven will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.

Explanation of the parable

The reason for this parable is very clear. The apostle Peter asked how many times he should forgive a person who sins against him. Jesus' parable tells Peter and us to forgive other people every time they sin against us. We are to forgive those who sin against us just as our Father in heaven forgives us all of our sins. The king in the parable is God himself. In his mercy he forgives each of us a tremendous debt. This debt is the sin we commit during our lives. If we examine our lives we will confess we sin often and also that we have committed the same sins many times. But God has forgiven all of our sins. Now he teaches us to forgive those who sin against us. In comparison to the many sins we have committed, the sins of our neighbors against us are very few. But sometimes we are not ready to forgive our neighbor. We hold a grudge against him or her. We won't speak to them. We say bad things about the person who sinned against us. Knowing what God has done for us, we should be ready and willing to forgive and forget what others have done to us. In the Lord's Prayer we say, "Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us." After telling this parable Jesus says, "Forgive your brother from the heart."

1. Jesus told Peter that he should forgive others _____ they sin.
2. Our Father in heaven forgives us _____.
 - a. most of our sins.
 - b. the sins we pay for.
 - c. all of our sins.
3. If we examine our lives, each one of us will confess we have sinned _____.
 - a. a few times.
 - b. a lot, but less than others.
 - c. often.
4. God teaches us to forgive those who _____ against _____.
5. In the Lord's Prayer we say “ _____ us our sins, as we _____ those who sin against us.”

Answers to these questions can be found on page 76.

In this parable Jesus teaches us that God has forgiven us all of our many sins. As believing children of God, we should be ready to forgive the sins our friends commit against us. Forgiving other people is one of the many things Jesus teaches us by using parables. The apostle Paul writes, “Be

kind and tender to one another. Forgive each other, just as God forgave you because of what Christ has done" (Ephesians 4:32).

THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

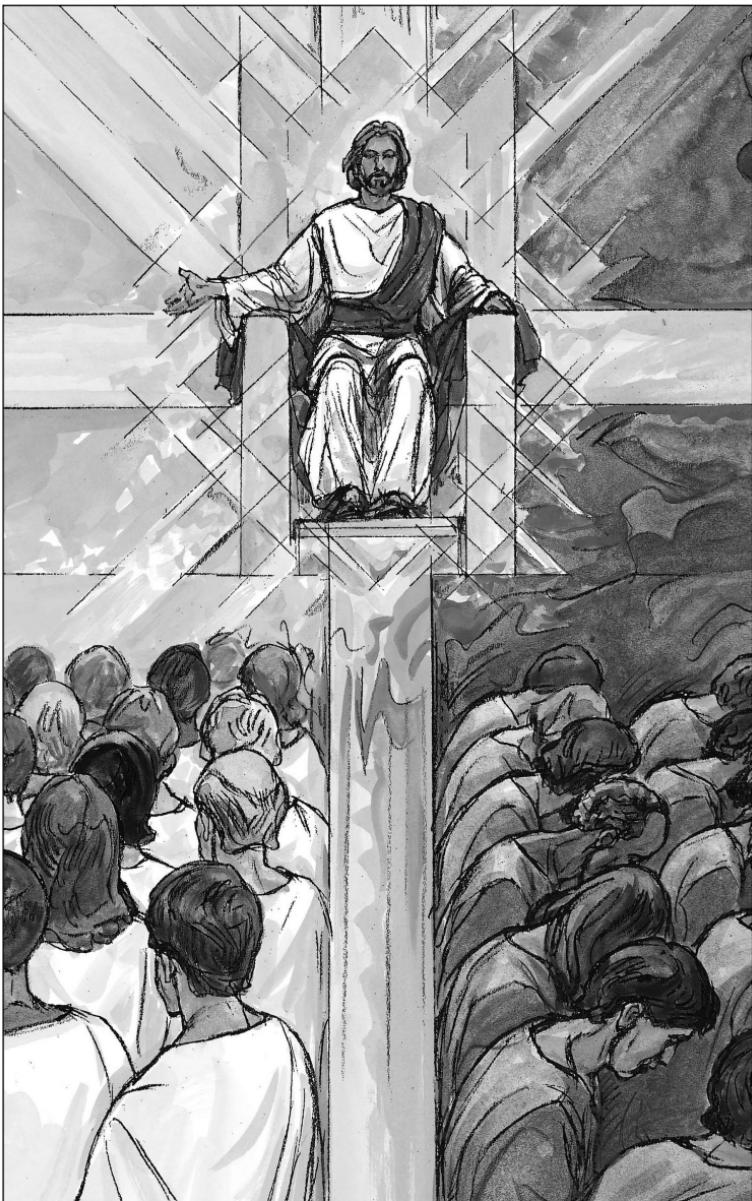
God's Word - Matthew 25:14-30

¹⁴ Again, here is what the kingdom of heaven will be like. A man was going on a journey. He sent for his servants and put them in charge of his property. ¹⁵ He gave \$10,000 to one. He gave \$4,000 to another. And he gave \$2,000 to the third. The man gave each servant the amount of money he knew the servant could take care of. Then he went on his journey. ¹⁶ The servant who had received the \$10,000 went at once and put his money to work. He earned \$10,000 more. ¹⁷ The one with the \$4,000 earned \$4,000 more. ¹⁸ But the man who had received \$2,000 went and dug a hole in the ground. He hid his master's money in it. ¹⁹ After a long time the master of the servants returned. He wanted to collect all the money they had earned. ²⁰ The man who had received \$10,000 brought the other \$10,000. "Master," he said, "you trusted me with \$10,000. See, I have earned \$10,000 more." ²¹ His master replied, "You have done well, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things.

I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness.”²² The man with \$4,000 also came. “Master,” he said, “you trusted me with \$4,000. See, I have earned \$4,000 more.”²³ His master replied, “You have done well, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things. I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness.”²⁴ Then the man who had received \$2,000 came. “Master,” he said, “I knew that you are a hard man. You harvest where you have not planted. You gather crops where you have not scattered seed.²⁵ So I was afraid. I went out and hid your \$2,000 in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.”²⁶ His master replied, “You evil, lazy servant! So you know I harvest where I have not planted? You know I gather crops where I have not scattered seed?²⁷ Well then, you should have put my money in the bank. When I returned, I would have received it back with interest.”²⁸ Then his master commanded his other servants. “Take the \$2,000 from him. Give it to the one who has \$20,000.²⁹ Everyone who has will be given more. He will have more than enough. And what about anyone who doesn't have? Even what he has will be taken away from him.³⁰ Throw that worthless servant outside. There will be darkness, people will sob and grind their teeth.”

Explanation of the parable

Faithfulness in serving the Lord is what Jesus teaches us in this parable. We are to be faithful in using the gifts God gives us until the time Jesus returns. The man taking a journey in this parable is Jesus himself. This parable was spoken only three days before he died on the cross. He was going on a long journey but would return again on judgment day. The servants are the disciples, the followers of Jesus, and that means us too. The gifts Jesus gives us are his Word, the Bible, and the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Each believer has different abilities found in the amount of money given to each of the servants. Because we do not know when Jesus will return, if it will be on the day of our death or on judgment day, it is important in our Christian life that we are faithful. To be faithful not only means to be full of faith, but also using our abilities to be faithful to carry out Jesus' work in our lives. Jesus wants us to use his gifts unceasingly in his service as individuals and as a church. The faithful servants enter into the joy of heaven with Jesus. The unfaithful servant will also be asked to give an account of his service. Faith without works is dead. This servant is called evil and lazy. Those who are useless cannot enter into God's kingdom of heaven. They will not remain in God's kingdom.



*The glorified and victorious Lord separates
believers and unbelievers.*

Does anyone want to be like this servant? The Lord trusts us, gives us great gifts, and sees whether we really have great faith in him and love for him.

1. The man in the parable who gives money to his servants is _____ himself.
2. The servants are the _____ of Jesus, and that means _____ too.
3. The gifts Jesus gives us are the _____ and the sacraments of _____ and the _____.
4. Jesus wants us to use his _____ unceasingly in his service as individuals and as a church.
5. Faithful servants will enter into the _____ of _____ with _____.

Answers to these questions can be found on page 76.

Jesus tells us in Revelation 2:10, “Be faithful, even if it means you must die. Then I will give you a crown. The crown is [eternal] life.” The apostle Peter writes in 1 Peter 4:10,11, “God’s gift of grace comes in different forms. Each of you has received

a gift in order to serve others. You should use it faithfully.” The main thing Jesus wants us to learn as he teaches us how to live our Christian lives is to be faithful in teaching and reaching out to others with the Word of God. We have different abilities. Some can teach, some can invite other people to read and study God’s Word, and some can help those who do not understand God’s Word. When we faithfully use our abilities and God’s Word, God will bless us.

THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN

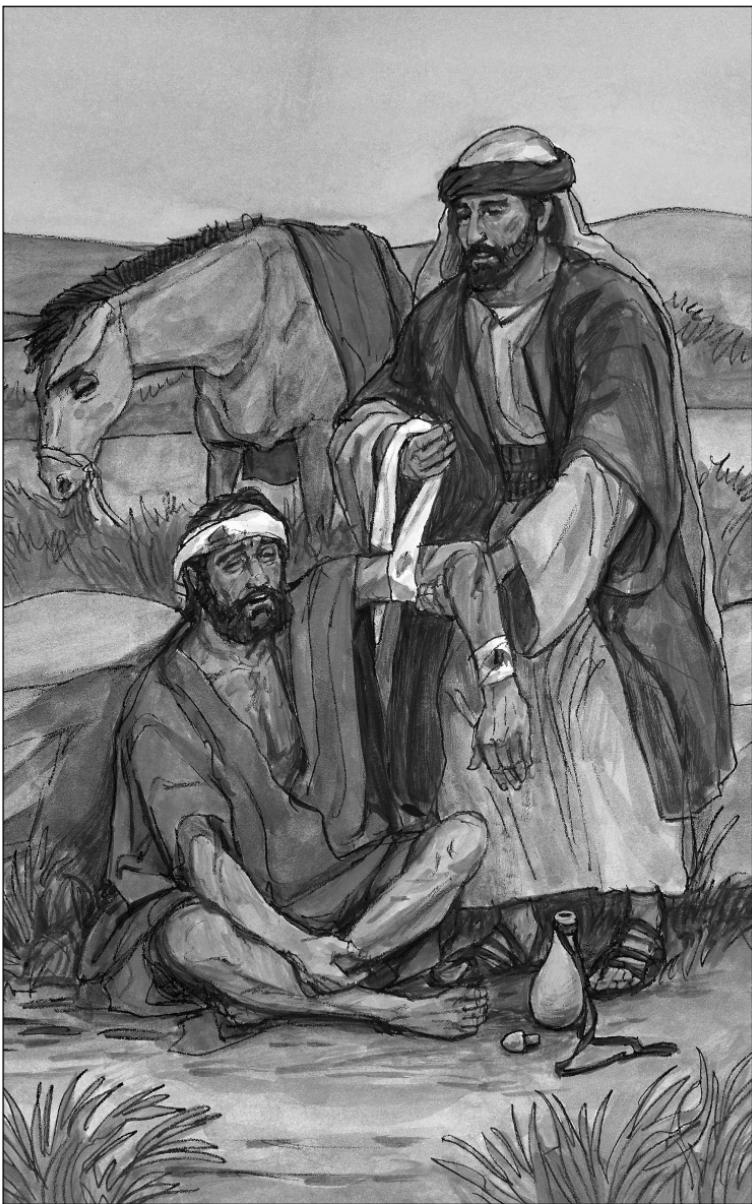
God’s Word - Luke 10:25-37

²⁵ One day an authority on the law stood up to put Jesus to the test. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to receive eternal life?” ²⁶ “What is written in the Law?” Jesus replied. “How do you understand it?” ²⁷ He answered, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Love him with all your strength and with all your mind.’ (Deuteronomy 6:5) And, ‘Love your neighbor as you love yourself.’” (Leviticus 19:18) ²⁸ “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do that and you will live.” ²⁹ But the man wanted to make himself look good. So he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” ³⁰ Jesus replied, “A

man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho. Robbers attacked him. They stripped him of his clothes and beat him. Then they went away, leaving him almost dead. ³¹ *A priest happened to be going down that same road. When he came to the man, he passed by on the other side.* ³² *A Levite also came by. When he saw the man, he passed by on the other side too.* ³³ *But a Samaritan came to the place where the man was. When he saw the man, he felt sorry for him.* ³⁴ *He went to him, poured olive oil and wine on his wounds and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey. He took him to an inn and took care of him.* ³⁵ *The next day he took out two silver coins. He gave them to the owner of the inn. “Take care of him,” he said. “When I return, I will pay you back for any extra expenses you may have.”* ³⁶ *Which of the three do you think was neighbor to the man who was attacked by the robbers?”* ³⁷ *The authority on the law replied, “The man who felt sorry for him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do as he did.”*

Explanation of the parable

The summary of the Ten Commandments is to love God and our neighbor. In answer to a man who asked, “Who is my neighbor?” Jesus told him a parable about a Good Samaritan. Samaritans were



The good Samaritan helps the man who was hurt.

enemies of the Jews (Matthew 5:43-45). When a priest and a Levite who were religious leaders of the Jews saw a beaten and robbed man lying in a ditch, they passed by him on the other side of the road. They refused to show love to someone who was in great need. Then a Samaritan came by and he provided wine and oil to cleanse and heal the man's wounds. He put him on his donkey and came to an inn where he took care of him. When the Samaritan had to leave, he provided money for the continued care of the wounded man until the Samaritan would return. The Samaritan was filled with great love for the wounded man. Jesus asks, "Who do you think was neighbor to the man who was attacked by robbers?" The man who asked, "Who is my neighbor?" answered correctly, "The man who felt sorry for him." Jesus told him and tells us, "Go and do as he did." In other words, we are the neighbor of anyone who is in need, whether that person is a friend or an enemy. We need to ask, "Who needs my help?" The answer comes from a heart filled with love. We must confess we have not always loved our neighbor as ourselves. We have not kept God's law. We need a Savior, Jesus Christ.

1. The actions of the priest and the Levite, who were _____ of the Jews, passed by the man who had been beaten and robbed.
2. Samaritans were _____ of the Jews.
3. We must _____ we have not always loved our _____ as ourselves.
4. We are the neighbor of _____ who is in need.

Answers to these questions can be found on page 76.

In this simple yet powerful parable Jesus teaches us to show love to all people, even our enemies. The apostle Paul in Galatians 6:10 reminds us, “So when we can do good to everyone, let us do it. Let us make a special point of doing good to those who belong to the family of believers.”

In this chapter we have learned from Jesus some important things we can and should do as Christians. One of the things we have learned is that we should be willing to forgive those who sin against us. We pray about this in the Lord’s Prayer when we say, “Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.” Also we have learned

that we should use our abilities, whatever they may be, to serve God and bring the message of the gospel to other people who have not heard about Jesus, our Savior. Finally, we learned that we are neighbors to everyone, even our enemies. We should be kind and helpful to all people when they are in need of our help.



A closing prayer: *Dear Father in heaven, we confess that we have not always lived a Christian life. We have sinned against our neighbors and against you. We need your forgiveness. Through our faith in Jesus, give us the willingness to forgive those who sin against us. Give us strength to use our abilities, whether great or small, to serve you. Also, give us love to help all people in need. We ask this in the name of Jesus, our Savior. Amen.*

Answers to the questions in Chapter Five:

The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant – 1. every time; 2. C; 3. C. 4; sin, us; 5. Forgive, forgive.

The Parable of the Talents – 1. Jesus; 2. followers, us; 3. Word or Bible, Baptism, Lord's Supper; 4. gifts; 5. joy, heaven, Jesus.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan – 1. religious leaders; 2. enemies; 3. confess, neighbor; 4. anyone.

Chapter Five Test

1. Jesus told Peter that he should forgive other people _____ they sin against him.

2. If we examine our lives, each one of us will confess we have sinned _____.
 - a. a few times.
 - b. many times, but less than other people.
 - c. repeatedly and also exceedingly much.

3. In the Lord's Prayer we say,
“ _____ our sins, as we
_____ those who sin against us.”

4. The man in the parable of the talents who gives money to his servants is _____ himself.

5. The servants are the _____ of Jesus, and that means _____ too.

6. The gifts that they receive from the master are the _____ and the sacraments of _____ and the _____.

7. Jesus wants us to use his _____ in his service as individuals and a church
_____.
8. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, the actions of the priest and the Levite, who were _____ of the Jews, passed by the man who had been beaten and robbed.
9. Samaritans were _____ of the Jews.
10. We must _____ we have not always loved our _____ as ourselves.

Answers to these questions can be found on page 99.



Chapter Six

JESUS TEACHES US TO BE PREPARED FOR THE LORD'S RETURN

In this final chapter about the parables of Jesus we will learn how we should prepare ourselves for the time when Jesus calls us from this world on the day we die or when he will come to judge the people of this world at the end of time. We will study the following parables:

- * The Rich Fool,
- * The Ten Bridesmaids, and
- * The Wedding Dinner.

Once more we want to review that a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. In our study of parables we learn that each parable has a main spiritual thought to teach us.

“Be prepared!” That is the cry of parents when they send their children to live away from home. “Be prepared!” That is the cry of a government when it is being invaded by an enemy. “Be prepared!” That is Jesus’ cry to all of us as we prepare to meet him, either on the day of our death, or when Jesus comes again to judge all people at the end of time.



Prayer: *O Lord, help us to be prepared so we are ready for your return whenever that might happen. Strengthen our faith so we are ready for your return whether it is on the day of our death, or when you come again to judge the world on the Last Day. Help us through your Holy Spirit today to learn and apply your Word of Truth to our lives. In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen.*

THE PARABLE OF THE RICH FOOL

God’s Word - Luke 12:15 – 21

¹⁵ Then he (Jesus) said to them, “Watch out! Be on your guard against wanting to have more and

more things. Life is not made up of how much a person has.”¹⁶ Then he told them a story (parable). He said, “A certain rich man’s land produced a good crop.¹⁷ He thought to himself, ‘What should I do? I don’t have any place to store my crops.’¹⁸ Then he said, ‘This is what I will do. I will tear down my storerooms and build bigger ones. I will store all my grain and my other things in them.¹⁹ I’ll say to myself, ‘You have plenty of good things stored away for many years. Take life easy. Eat, drink and have a good time.’²⁰ But God said to him, ‘You foolish man! This very night I will take your life away from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’²¹ “That is how it will be for anyone who stores things away for himself but is not rich in God’s eyes.”

Explanation of the parable

The foolishness of being selfish and coveting wealth is taught in this parable. Coveting is the greedy, evil desire to get worldly possessions as if they were our own. It is foolish for a person to think that his or her life and happiness depends on the abundance of things that we think are our own. God blessed the rich man with a good harvest, but the man believed the increased amount of grain was his own. Read how many times this rich man said, “This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my storerooms. I will say to myself.” These words

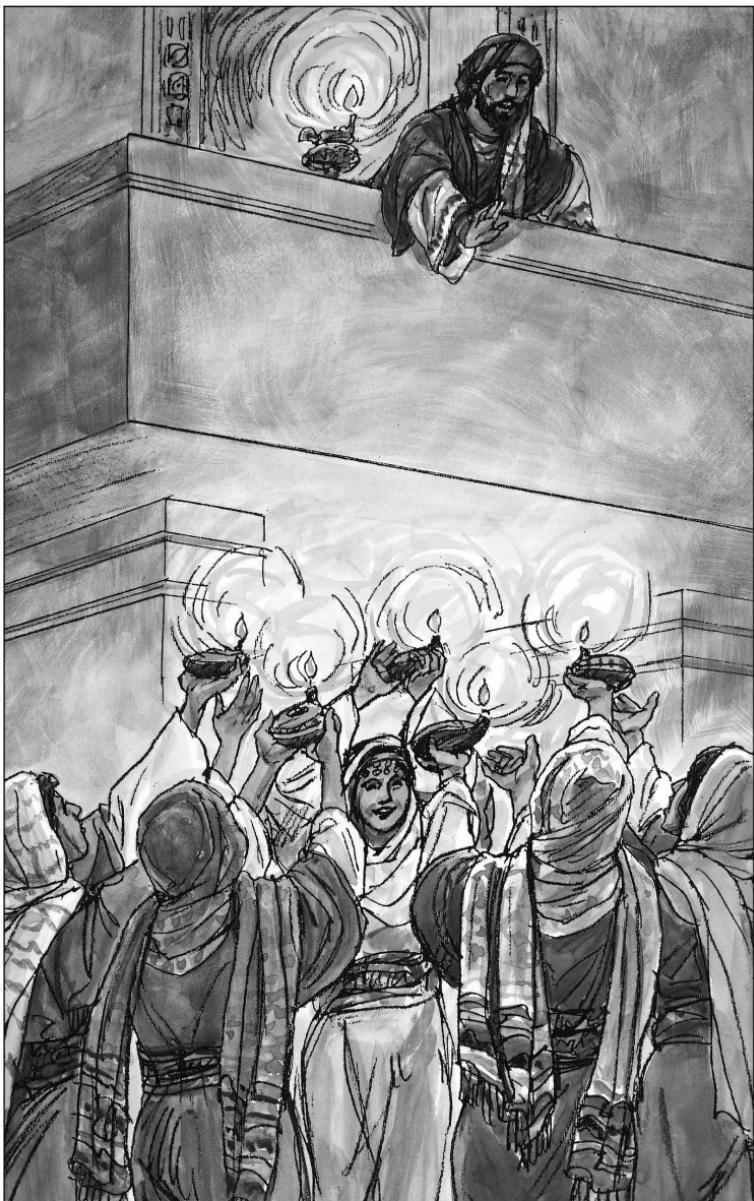
show he does not thank God for his good crops. God is far from his thoughts. This man's possessions were his god. Think about Proverbs 30:8,9: "Don't make me either poor or rich, but give me only the bread I need each day. If you don't, I might have too much. Then I will say I don't know you (God). I might say, 'Who is the Lord?' Or I might become poor and steal. Then I will bring shame on the name of my God." God's judgment on this man is clear. He said, "You foolish man! This very night I will take your life away from you." This man did not think about his soul. He was not prepared for death. He could not lengthen his life one minute. He could not redeem himself from a single sin. He could not buy one square foot of heaven. We need to seek true riches, which are – spiritual and heavenly gifts. These gifts are found only in Jesus Christ. Through faith in Jesus our future in heaven is safe. We, then, are not foolish but wise and prepared for going to heaven.

1. True or False: God condemns rich people because they are rich.
2. Success and wealth are gifts from _____.
3. The rich man was most interested in worldly _____.

4. The spiritual gift of _____ in Jesus Christ makes a person truly rich.

Answers to these questions can be found on page 93.

Whether you are poor or rich, is your life like that of the man in this parable? Are you selfish? Is becoming rich more important to you than being a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ? Are you rich in God's eyes? Being rich in God's eyes includes forgiveness of your sins, peace with God, and faith in God. Like the foolish rich man in this parable, we do not know when Jesus will come again at the end of our lives or on the Last Day. Jesus may return for us in an hour, in a day, in a month or several years from now. But we need to be prepared for that day. Jesus teaches us that we are foolish if we center our lives only on the things of this world. We are to center our lives on what God has done for us. God promises us, "God did not spare his only Son. He gave him up for us all. Then won't he also freely give us everything else?" (Romans 8:32). We are to prepare ourselves to meet Jesus by having a strong faith in Jesus. Such a faith comes from God's Word, and that faith leads us to worship the true God and live a Christian life. Prepare yourself for when Jesus calls you home to heaven.



The bridegroom and the foolish virgins.

*THE PARABLE OF THE TEN BRIDESMAIDS***God's Word - Matthew 25:1-13**

¹ This is what the kingdom of heaven will be like at that time. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went out to meet the groom. ² Five of them were foolish. Five were wise. ³ The foolish ones took their lamps but didn't take any olive oil with them. ⁴ The wise ones took oil in jars along with their lamps. ⁵ The groom did not come for a long time. So the bridesmaids all grew tired and fell asleep. ⁶ At midnight someone cried out, "Here comes the groom! Come out to meet him!" ⁷ Then all the bridesmaids woke up and got their lamps ready. ⁸ The foolish ones said to the wise ones, "Give us some of your oil. Our lamps are going out." ⁹ "No," they replied. "There may not be enough for all of us. Instead, go to those who sell oil. Buy some for yourselves." ¹⁰ So they went to buy the oil. But while they were on their way, the groom arrived. The bridesmaids who were ready went in with him to the wedding dinner. Then the door was shut. ¹¹ Later the other bridesmaids also came. "Sir! Sir!" they said. "Open the door for us!" ¹² But he replied, "What I am about to tell you is true. I don't know you." ¹³ So keep watch. You do not know the day or the hour that the groom will come.

Explanation of the parable

In Jesus' day Jewish marriage celebrations took place in the evening. The groom would go to the home of the bride. He would take her to his house. A number of the friends of the bride, the bridesmaids, would go with her and light the way with their lamps. This parable deals with the groom and the bridesmaids. The groom is Jesus. The bridesmaids are the followers of Jesus. The fact that some are wise and others are foolish decides all that follows in the parable. The wise bridesmaids are those who receive the message of the gospel and believe it. They live Christian lives by doing good works as a result of their faith. The foolish bridesmaids hear the gospel but are not serious about it and think what they do without faith in Jesus is good enough to please God. We might call the oil in the lamps our faith and the good works that are the result of our faith in Jesus.

Jesus delays his coming. But when he comes, the foolish bridesmaids do not have faith and now it is too late, their time of grace has come to an end. The time of grace comes to an end when Jesus calls us on the day of our death, or when he comes again on the Last Day. This is the point of the parable. Jesus says to the foolish bridesmaids, "I don't know you." How terrible this is. They cannot buy oil and the door of heaven is closed to the

foolish bridesmaids. The wise bridesmaids go into heaven when Jesus comes and enjoy the heavenly wedding dinner. Jesus reminds us to watch. Our watching means that we are faithful and treasure God's grace.

1. The foolish bridesmaids are those who are not _____ for the coming of Jesus on the Last Day.
2. The five wise bridesmaids are those who have _____ in Jesus on the Last Day.
3. True or False: The wise bridesmaids were not afraid to go out to meet the groom because they had bought their salvation.
4. True or False: Jesus' main point in this parable is that the time of grace when we can believe in Jesus comes to an end when we die or when Jesus comes again on the Last day.
5. True or False: We are ready for Jesus' return by being faithful to him and treasuring God's grace.

Answers to these questions can be found on page 93.

One day each of us will meet the Lord! At that time those who believe in Jesus will go from God's kingdom of grace on earth into his kingdom of glory in heaven. We always need to be prepared for the unknown hour when Jesus will come. We are to be watching for Jesus to come. Our watching means we must constantly look at our lives to be faithful and to treasure God's grace. Then we will be wise and can enter the wedding dinner. The dinner is the blessedness of heaven prepared for all who are true followers of Jesus. Therefore, be prepared! Don't wait until tomorrow! The apostle Paul reminds us, "Now is the time God shows us his favor. Now is the day he saves us" (2 Corinthians 6:2).

THE PARABLE OF THE WEDDING DINNER

God's Word - Matthew 22:1-14

¹ Jesus told more stories (parables). ² Here is what the kingdom of heaven is like. A king prepared a wedding dinner for his son. ³ He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the dinner. The servants told them to come. But they refused. ⁴ Then he sent some more servants. He said, "Tell those who were invited that I have prepared my dinner. I have killed my oxen and my

fattest cattle. Everything is ready. Come to the wedding dinner.”⁵ But the people paid no attention. One went away to his field. Another went away to his business.⁶ The rest grabbed his servants. They treated them badly and then killed them.⁷ The king became very angry. He sent his army to destroy them. They killed those murderers and burned their city.⁸ Then the king said to his servants, “The wedding dinner is ready. But those I invited were not fit to come.⁹ Go to the street corners. Invite to the dinner anyone you can find.”¹⁰ So the servants went out into the streets. They gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad. Soon the wedding hall was filled with guests.¹¹ The king came in to see the guests. He noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes.¹² “Friend,” he asked, “how did you get in here without wedding clothes?” The man could not think of anything to say.¹³ Then the king told his servants, “Tie up his hands and feet. Throw him outside into the darkness. Out there people will sob and grind their teeth.”¹⁴ Many are invited, but few are chosen.

Explanation of the parable

The king and the son in this parable are God the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. The wedding

dinner is the joys of heaven. This parable tells us how the king and his son were treated by those invited to the wedding dinner. The people of Israel, God's chosen people, had the benefit of Old Testament prophets and the New Testament disciples, who invited them to the wedding dinner. But they had excuses. They refused the invitation and finally God used armies to destroy Israel. Israel was invited but was not worthy. Then God sends out his servants into the highways to invite both good and bad people to the wedding dinner. These are people of all other nations, including yours. They are the gentiles, non-Jews, that are now invited to come to the wedding dinner. Many accept the invitation and the wedding hall is filled with guests. But one man does not have on the proper clothing for the dinner. God is the Judge of those who may enjoy the wedding dinner. The man in the parable cannot answer God. He knows he is not prepared to be present. He does not wear the robe of Jesus' righteousness. He tries to get into the wedding dinner wearing his own garment of his own efforts, his own good works. He, like many in Israel, will not enjoy the blessings of heaven, but rather the torments of an eternity in hell. He is not properly prepared.

1. The king and the son in this parable are God the _____ and his Son, _____.
2. The wedding dinner the king has prepared is the joys of _____.
3. The people invited to the dinner are, first of all, the people of _____.
4. Many of them _____ God's invitation.
5. God sent his invitation to you to be present at the wedding dinner by sending out his _____ into the _____. These are people of all other _____, including yours
6. God offers to you today the blessings of _____.

Answers to these questions can be found on page 93.

God has graciously invited us to be with him in heaven. He sent Jesus to keep the law for us and to be punished for our sins. God invites both good and bad people to be with him in heaven through the gospel, Baptism and the forgiveness of our

sins. The offer is open to all who believe in Jesus. We do not know exactly what heaven will be like. We do know it will be a place where we will be together with our Lord. It will be a place of joy where there is no more sorrow or crying. We will never be hungry or thirsty. God will wipe away all tears from our eyes. (Read Revelation 7:13-17 and also Revelation 21:4) We will want to be with Jesus in heaven. We prepare ourselves for heaven by listening to Jesus' Word. The Holy Spirit brings us to faith in Jesus and keeps us in that faith until the last hour of our life. Then we will be properly dressed for the marriage dinner of Jesus in heaven. The apostle John writes, "Jesus did many other miraculous signs in front of his disciples. They are not written down in this book (the Bible). But these are written down so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. If you believe this you will have life because you belong to him" (John 20:30,31).



A Closing Prayer: O Lord, help us to be prepared for your coming so we are ready for your return either at the end of our lives or at the end of the world. Thank you for calling sinners to repent of their sins. Thank you, Jesus, for your sacrifice on the cross. Holy Spirit, thank you for giving us saving faith. Help us to

learn and apply your Word of Truth to our lives and bless us with eternal life in heaven with you. In Jesus' name we ask this. Amen.

Answers to the questions in Chapter Six:

The Parable of the Rich Fool – 1. false; 2. God; 3. possessions; 4. faith.

The Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids – 1. prepared; 2. faith; 3. false; 4. true; 5. true.

The Parable of the Wedding Dinner – 1. Father, Jesus Christ; 2. heaven; 3. Israel; 4. refused; 5. servants, highways, nation; 6. heaven.

Chapter Six Test

1. True or False: God condemns rich people because they are rich.
2. Success and wealth are gifts from _____.
3. In the parable of the rich fool, the rich man was most interested in worldly _____.
4. The spiritual gift of _____ in Jesus Christ makes a person truly rich.
5. The five foolish bridesmaids are those who are not _____ for the coming of Jesus on the Last Day.
6. The five wise bridesmaids are those who have _____ in Jesus on the Last Day.
7. True or False: The wise bridesmaids were not afraid to go out to meet the groom because they had bought their salvation.
8. True or False: Jesus' main point in the parable is that the time of grace when we can believe in Jesus comes to an end when we die or on the Last Day.

9. True or False: We are ready for Jesus' return by being faithful to him and treasuring God's grace.
10. The king and the son in the parable of the wedding dinner are _____ the Father and his Son _____.
11. The wedding dinner the king has provided is the joys and blessings of _____.
12. The people invited to the dinner first of all are the people of _____. Many of them _____ the invitation.
13. God sent his invitation to you to be present at the wedding dinner by sending out his _____ into the _____. These are people of all other _____, including yours.
14. God offers to you today the blessings of _____.

Answers to these questions can be found on page 99.



Word List

ability(ies)	the skill and power to make, do, or think
amaze(ing)	to fill with great surprise or wonder
commit adultery	to unlawfully have sex with someone not your wife or husband
compassion	pity or sympathy for the sufferings of other people
despise(d)	to look down on or to consider someone or something worthless
doctrine(s)	a teaching
fable	an untrue short story
fast	to go without eating food
forgiveness	the act of excusing someone's fault or sin
grudge	a bad feeling toward someone
instance(s)	a single example or occasion
miserably	very unhappily or badly
myth	an untrue story that may be believed by some people

parable	an earthly story with a heavenly meaning
prepare(d)	to get ready for something before it happens
preserve(ing)	to cause or save something from being destroyed
prostitute(s)	a person who performs sexual acts with other people for pay
redeem	to buy back
simple	something not fancy or complicated
sob	to shed tears loudly and in short bursts
specific	exact, definite, for one use
traitor	a person who is not loyal to his or her country or cause
treasure (God's grace)	to value, to keep or regard as precious
trust	to have faith in; to believe in
vineyard	land planted with vines to produce grapes
worthy	having value; deserving praise



Answers to Chapter Tests

Chapter One: (page 11)

1. earthly, heavenly; 2. one; 3. why, means; 4. The Good Samaritan; 5. main point.

Chapter Two: (pages 24-25)

1. believe, not believe; 2. faith; 3. rain, flood, wind; 4. hear, obey; 5. foolish; 6. true; 7. Savior, sin; 8. kingdom, heaven; 9. priceless treasure; 10. Jesus, Scripture.

Chapter Three: (pages 40-41)

1. Word, God; 2. hearts, listen; 3. forget; 4. troubles, sufferings, persecutions; 5. worldly, life; 6. save, good news; 7. believers; 8. church, believe, not; 9. false doctrines; 10. burn, hell; 11. blessings, heaven; 12. church, grows; 13. people, world; 14. 3,000; 15. rest, soul.

Chapter Four: (pages 58-59)

1. eternally; 2. compassion; 3. Good Shepherd; 4. returned, forgave; 5. false; 6. forgive, loves, Jesus; 7. does, requires; 8. confesses, sinner, merciful; 9. innocent; 10. forgiven, good, Jesus Christ.

Chapter Five: (pages 77-78)

1. every time; 2. C; 3. Forgive, forgive; 4. Jesus; 5. followers, us; 6. Word or Bible, Baptism, Lord's Supper; 7. gifts, unceasingly; 8. religious leaders; 9. enemies; 10: confess, neighbor.

Chapter Six: (pages 94-95)

1. false; 2. God; 3. possessions; 4. faith; 5. prepared; 6. faith; 7. false; 8. true; 9. true; 10. God, Jesus Christ; 11. heaven; 12. Israel, refused; 13. servants, highways, nations; 14. heaven.



Final Test

Congratulations, you have completed your study of the parables of Jesus. Review chapter one that outlines for you what a parable is and how to study a parable. Then study your answers in chapters two through six that explain many of Jesus' parables.

Complete the final test without looking at the book. When you have finished the test, give it to the person who gave you this book, or mail it to the address listed on the back cover of the book. Someone will check the test. You may also ask for other Bible study books that are available.

If you are ready, remove the final test from this book and put the book away. Finish the test without looking at what is written in this book.



The Parables of Jesus

Final Test

1. A parable is an _____ story from everyday life that has a _____ meaning.
2. Each parable has only _____ meaning.
3. What parable did Jesus use in order to answer "Who is my neighbor?"

4. What is the most important thing in your life that Jesus teaches in the parable of the pearl of great price?

5. In the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector, why was the tax collector forgiven and not the Pharisee?

6. Whom did Jesus come into the world to save according to the parable of the lost sheep?

7. How did Jesus save you?

8. Why does God forgive us all of our sins?

The study of a parable

Mark 13:34 – 37

It (the kingdom of heaven) is like a man going away. He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge. Each one is given a task to do. He tells the one at the door to keep watch. So keep watch! You do not know when the owner of the house will come back. It may be in the evening or at midnight. It may be when the rooster crows or at dawn. He may come suddenly. So do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone. “Watch!”

9. Who is the man who owns the house and goes away?

10. Who are the servants that the owner tells to do their tasks?

11. When will the man who owns the house come back?

12. What is the main point of the parable?

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