

The Parables of Jesus #42
A Summary of Lessons from the Parables
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INTRODUCTION

A. Tonight we bring the sermon series on the parables of Jesus to an end

1. It has taken about a year to study the majority of the parables
2. For me it has been challenging and a pleasure to share

B. We have learned that a little story is a powerful teaching tool

1. Jesus used it to accomplish two things
 - a. for seekers, it was a way to convey important spiritual truths
 - b. for non-seekers, it was a way to keep those truths hidden and unavailable
2. The simple, common and ordinary were used to reveal insights needed in order to be a disciple

C. I want to summarize just a few of the important lessons we've learned

1. Not the detailed lessons we took time to investigate
2. Our purpose is to simply remember some of the overall truths of the parables

I. PARABLES TEACH ABOUT CONFLICT

A. Matt 9:16-17

No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and the tear is made worse. Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved. (NKJ)

B. Jesus was bringing something new to people

1. It would not fit into the old scheme of things
2. It demanded new vessels, for the old could not contain it

C. Think about how true this remains for us today

1. The gospel of Jesus demands that you die to your former life
 - a. you must die to sin
 - b. you must be born again
 - c. you must become a new creature in Christ
 - d. only then can you flex and grow the way God wants you to grow
2. You cannot stay the same person and attempt to follow Jesus

II. PARABLES TEACH BASIC CONCEPTS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

A. Mk 4:26-29 – we learn that God’s kingdom grows spontaneously

1. It’s like a man who plants seed in the ground
2. He sees it grow, and even harvests the crop, but doesn’t understand how it happens
3. Likewise, the kingdom is beyond man’s control – it’s a work of God’s genius

B. Mt. 13:45-46 – we learn that the kingdom is like a merchant seeking pearls

1. He found one of great price, sold all he had and bought it
2. It’s not just that the kingdom is of such great value (it is), but it is the action of the man that’s important
3. This is a picture of how we ought to be seeking that which is of ultimate value
 - a. how diligently would you seek the kingdom
 - b. when you find it, what would you be willing to give up?
 - c. would you give up all you have?

C. Mt. 13:3ff – we learn that God’s word is like seed planted in the ground

1. On hard ground where birds eat up the seed, it is like the word planted in a hard heart where Satan snatches it away
2. On stony ground where plants grow only for a short time, it is like the word planted in hearts that have no root, and it can’t grow
3. On thorny ground where plants are choked out, it is like the word planted in hearts that are consumed by worldly concerns and cares
4. But on good ground, where seed produces a bountiful crop, it is like the word planted in good hearts that produces the desired result

III. PARABLES TEACH ABOUT HUMAN BEHAVIOR AND ATTITUDE

A. In Lk 18:9ff is the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector

1. The proud Pharisee prayed to himself, out of his pride and self-congratulation
2. The tax collector was painfully honest about his sin and shame to seek God’s face
3. There is no better way to show us the folly of criticizing others instead of focusing on the one person we can do something about

B. Mt. 18:21ff is the parable of the unforgiving servant

1. Told in answer to Peter’s question about how many times should he forgive his brother
2. Here was a man who owed an unpayable debt to his master, yet the master was compassionate and forgave the debt
3. The man went right out and seized another who owed him a small sum, but demanded payment and refused to be compassionate and forgiving
4. If we are so freely forgiven by God, for debts we cannot repay, how can we fail to forgive those who are debtors to us for much smaller things?

C. Lk. 10:25ff is the parable of the “good” Samaritan

1. Here was a Samaritan who took care of the robbed and beaten man, when those who should have done it passed him by
2. It’s a story told in answer to the question about who is our neighbor
3. Who would we leave on the side of the road?
4. Do we understand our responsibility to help the helpless?

IV. PARABLES TEACH LESSONS ABOUT FAITH

A. Lk. 18:1ff is the parable about the persistent widow

1. She had someone who was misusing or abusing her, and she needed justice
2. Therefore she continually sought help from the judge with a persistent cry
3. We see her faith in the judge and should learn from her example in our relationship with God

B. Lk 15 contains three parables that tell us important things about God

1. In 15:3-7 the parable of the lost sheep tells us the attitude of God toward the lost – he goes in search of one
2. In 15:8-10 the parable of the lost coin gives emphasis to that truth as we see the woman search the entire house for one coin gone missing
3. In 15:11ff – the parable of the lost son is a powerful testimony to the love, patience and heart of God, waiting for the return of the son who rejected him and left home
4. Knowing these things about God creates a willingness to trust him, to see his love for us and yield to him, to believe that he cares deeply for us

V. PARABLES TEACH ABOUT JUDGMENT

A. The tough lessons of the parables have to do with judgment

1. Judgment is a two-edged sword, one side reward and the other punishment
2. Judgment is sure and certain, though we may not know when or how it will happen

B. Mt. 25:1-13 – the parable of the wise and foolish virgins is a parable of judgment

1. One group was prepared with sufficient oil for their lamps, the other was not
2. When the bridegroom came, those who were prepared went into the celebration
3. The unprepared were rejected and left outside

C. Mt. 25:31-46 – the parable of the sheep and goats is another parable of judgment

1. Judgment is described as a separating of two distinct groups, one described as sheep, the other goats
2. Again, the lesson is focused on preparation, but a specific kind – how we treat and care for those who need us

CONCLUSION

A. There are so many wonderful parables and important lessons

1. It is impossible to really summarize them all
2. Hopefully this will simply remind you of some of the stirring and challenging lessons we have discussed

B. I will close with one final parable that I think strikes at the heart of them all

1. Matt 7:24-29

Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. Now everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall. And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. (NKJ)

2. This is, perhaps, the most important of them all
 - a. once you have learned, what will you do with the information?
 - b. will it be just an academic exercise, or will it be a life changing event?
 - c. will you become wise, or remain foolish?

C. Invitation