

Bible Study Class
Clayton Presbyterian Church
Lesson 16 Jesus
A Second Group of Parables

Opening Prayer: Dear Lord, help us to lean more on You and Your guidance rather than depending on the approval of others. In Jesus' Holy name we pray. Amen.
This prayer was adapted from the reading for May 1st in the book *Jesus Calling*.

Today's lesson will be based on Luke chapters 13-17. If we don't finish, we will continue next Sunday.

The Strait Gate. Warned Against Herod

Read Luke 13: 22-30

1. What question prompted Jesus' teaching on the narrow or strait gate? Fourfold reminds us that Jesus is still on His way to Jerusalem. He probably rested on the Sabbath when He healed the woman, but His journey started back in verse 10. Fourfold also suggests that since Jesus told the parables about the mustard seed and the yeast, a Jewish person was prompted to ask if just a few people would be saved. What is the main lesson of this teaching? This teaching was that just because they were Jews they wouldn't be saved. The reference to the people from the East, west, south, and north indicates that *Gentiles* will be saved.

Read Luke 13: 31-35

2. What warning was given to Jesus? Some of the Pharisees warned Him that Herod wanted to kill Him. This indicates that He is now in Herod's territory. Fourfold thinks that the Pharisees told Him this to scare Him. Other reference indicate that Herod wished to see Him. What was His reply? He calls Herod a fox, because He knows His intentions. He says He won't be in Herod's territory long and He must do what He was sent to do. Notice His loving description of Jerusalem that He knew would be His place of death.

Dining with a Pharisee, Sabbath Healing and Three Lessons

Suggested by the Event

Read Luke 14:1-6

3. What response did Jesus get from the lawyers and Pharisees when He asked them if it were lawful to heal on the Sabbath? They didn't respond. Fourfold thinks that the man was there not as a guest but as an onlooker, probably arranged by one or more of the Pharisees. The Pharisees were really ranked by

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their influence. We know that they were watching Jesus closely and this meal was just an occasion to try to trap Him. If they declared it lawful, they defeated their plot, and if they said otherwise, they involved themselves in an argument with him in which, as experience taught them, they would be humiliated before the people. Hence, they kept silence, but their silence only justified him, since it was the duty of every lawyer to pronounce this act unlawful if it had been so. He of course is reading their thoughts. What did Jesus do as a result of their response? He heals the man and sends him on his way. Here Jesus again asserts that the Sabbath law did not forbid acts of mercy.

Read Luke 14:7-14

4. In the parable taught to those He observed choosing the "chief" rooms or the "best places", what did Jesus suggest they do when invited to a wedding? Sit in the lowest place so that the host can invite you to a better place, if you choose the best place first, you may be embarrassed by having to give it to a more honored guest. Fourfold tells us that the tables of the time were usually U shaped with guests sitting on the outside and the inner part used by servants to serve. The central seat of each section was the honored seat. The words here used by our Lord teach how to avoid earthly shame and to obtain worldly honor. This illustration is intended to teach the great spiritual truth that true humility leads to exaltation.

5. What suggestion did Jesus make to His host in reference to inviting others to dinner? He told his host to invite the poor, the lame, the crippled, and the blind. Friends can pay you back by returning the invitation, these can't repay you. His point to us is to live more for charity and less for sociability.

Read Luke 14:15-24

6. In the parable of the great supper, what excuses were offered for not being able to accept the invitation? One man bought a field and needed to go look at it. Another bought five pair of oxen and needed to try them out. Another had just gotten married. What is main lesson of this parable? Many worldly things can distract us from attending to God's work and our lack of focus can cost us eternity.

The Cost of Discipleship Must be Counted

Read Luke 14:25-35

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7. Whom did Jesus say one must "hate" or love less if he is to be His disciple? He cites family members that must come after the love of Jesus. He was trying to impress on those who followed him casually that the cost was great. One must give up all to be a true disciple.

8. What two examples did Jesus use to teach that one needs to "count the cost" before becoming His disciple? The cost of building a tower. The parable is not intended to discourage anyone from attempting to be a disciple. It is meant to warn us against attempting so great a calling with frivolous spirit and lack of determination.

The Parables of the Lost Sheep, Lost Coin, and Lost Son

Read Luke 15:1-7

9. What group of people criticized Jesus for allowing publicans and sinners to come near Him to hear His teaching? The Pharisees and the teachers of the Law, The Pharisees classed as "sinners" all who failed to observe the traditions of the elders, and especially their traditional rules of purification. It was not so much the wickedness of this class as their legal uncleanness that made it wrong to eat with them.

10. In responding to the above criticism, what parable did Jesus teach? The parable of the lost sheep. What is its main lesson? The ninety-nine represent the Jewish respectability, and the lost sheep stands for a soul which has departed from that respectability.

11. What did Jesus say causes "joy in heaven"? One sinner who repents. God's love for the sinner was the paramount love.

Read Luke 15:8-10

12. What is the main lesson of the lost coin? The coin is worth about 17 cents. Oriental houses have no windows so the house is dark. The woman, having only ten of them, was evidently poor. Such small coins have been for centuries worn by oriental women as a sort of ornamental fringe around the forehead. Again, Jesus repeats the joy in heaven trying to shame the Pharisees.

Read Luke 15:11-32

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13. Briefly summarize the parable of the lost son. Fourfold reminds us that the eldest son would get a double portion, so the younger got a third that he squandered on riotous living until he ran out of resources and found himself in the pig pen. This was, to the Jew, the lowest of the low. They so hated pigs that they refused to name them and called them "the other thing." Notice that the employer isn't feeding him. When he comes to himself, he realizes that his father wouldn't treat him this badly. Fourfold says that repentance is a journey. His father is looking for him. What is the main lesson? Jesus now turns himself, from the publican to the Pharisee. He paints both parties as alike children of God, as both faulty and sinful in his sight, and each as being loved despite his faultiness. But while the story of the elder son had a present and local application to the Pharisees, it is to be taken comprehensively as describing all the self-righteous who murmur at and refuse to take part in the conversion of sinners. The father is a symbol for God who puts forth the effort to win the proud, exclusive, self-righteous spirits which filled the Pharisees and other Jewish leaders.

14. Compare and contrast the teachings of the three parables in Luke 15. A comparison of the three preceding parables brings out many suggestive points, thus: The first parable illustrates Christ's compassion. An animal is lost, and it must be found, though its value is only one out of a hundred. Man's lost condition makes him wretched. The second parable shows us how God values a soul. A lifeless piece of metal is lost, and while it could not be pitied, it could be valued, and since its value was one out ten, it was bad for the owner that it should be lost. God looks upon man's loss as his impoverishment. The first two parables depict the efforts of Christ in the salvation of man. The third sets forth the responsive efforts put forth by man to avail himself of God's salvation—the side of conversion more apparent to us. Moreover, as the parabolic figures become more nearly literal, as we pass from sheep and coin to son, the values also rise, and instead of one from a hundred, or one from ten, we have one out of two!

The Parable of the Unrighteous Steward

Read Luke 16:1-13

15. In the parable of the unjust steward, how did the steward prepare for his future after being told he would no longer be a steward? Fourfold reminds us that many publicans are now in the crowd with disciples of Jesus. The story makes a

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little more sense. This steward is described as free man since he was going to be dismissed. Since the steward didn't want to do agricultural work, he was too ashamed to beg, he tells those that owe the master to alter what they owed. In this way, since they were relieved of part of their debt, they "owed" the dishonest steward a favor or two. Verse 8 is the key to the situation since the steward is still dishonest. the steward, a worldly-minded rascal, knew better how to deal with a worldly-minded master above him and dishonest tenants beneath him, than a son of light knows how to deal with the God over him and his needy brethren about him.

16. Can one serve both God and "mammon"? Explain. The word serve is key to me. We serve God but we can use "mammon" in a Christian manner. Christians must take warning from the parable and use material possessions in deeds of usefulness and mercy.

Read Luke 16:14-18

17. Why and how did the Pharisees try to justify themselves? There was a belief that riches showed God's approval. They realized that Jesus identified with the materially poor. They tried to make fun of Jesus because they loved money. They followed traditions rather than the law.

The Rich Man and Lazarus

We may say generally that if the parable of the unjust steward teaches how riches are to be used, this parable sets forth the terrible consequences of a failure to use them properly.

Read Luke 16:19-31

18. Compare the respective conditions of Lazarus and the rich man while they lived? Verse one paints a complete picture of a rich man with expensive clothes and great luxury. Along the coast of Tyre there was found a rare shell-fish from which a costly purple dye was obtained, each little animal yielding about one drop of it. Woolen garments dyed with it were worn by kings and nobles, and idol images were sometimes arrayed in them. This purple robe formed the outer, and the linen the inner garment. The fine linen of Egypt, was produced from flax, which grew on the banks of the Nile. It was dazzlingly white, and worth twice its weight in gold. Lazarus is a poor sick beggar trying to survive on crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. Note that this man may not have been a beggar all of his life but was

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at the time of his death. Begging at a rich man's gate was common. The contrast here is sharp. Lazarus is naked and clothed with sores instead of rich apparel, and desires crumbs instead of a banquet. That he limited his desire to crumbs suggests a freedom from both worldly lust and envy. Whether he got the crumbs is not stated. His sufferings may have been as intense as the rich man's suffering in Hades. What were their status after they died? The rich man is in Hades and Lazarus is in the bosom of Abraham. This expression is taken from the custom of reclining on couches at feasts. In death as well as in life the two men stand in contrast.

19. What request did the rich man make of Abraham? The first request is for Lazarus to dip his finger in some cool water and come touch his tongue. I say that the rich man's attitude hasn't changed much. Fourfold contrasts the drop of water with the crumb saying that if the rich man had used his earthly wealth more wisely, he could have requested more here. Of what did Abraham remind him? He reminded him that during his earthly life he enjoyed many things while Lazarus suffered. Now the tables have been turned. The rich man had been guilty of that money-loving self-indulgence which was condemned by Jesus and justified by the Pharisees in verses 14 and 15. What other reason did Abraham give for not granting his request? There is a deep pit between us so that no one can cross between the two. A clear separation of good from evil in the future eternity.

20. After his first request was refused, what did the rich man then request? Send Lazarus to warn my five surviving brothers so that they won't come to this place of pain. Notice that his attitude is changing here, but he is still viewing Lazarus as a servant and not his equal. He is thinking that the testimony of the dead is greater than the testimony of God through His prophets. How then did Abraham reply? They wouldn't believe if they won't listen to Moses and the prophets. These words might sound like an overstatement but they were verified by the literal facts. Jesus had already raised at least two from the dead as witnesses to his divine power, and he was about to raise a third, who, with startling suggestiveness, would bear this very name of Lazarus. But despite all these witnesses the majority of the Jews disbelieved and continued to disbelieve in him. They wanted to kill Lazarus so they wouldn't have his testimony.

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Concerning Offenses, Faith, and Service

Jesus stops speaking with the Pharisees and these parables are addressed to His disciples although they follow some of the same subjects. Jesus taught about the power of sin, forgiveness, and faith. He instilled a passion in his disciples for the kingdom of God. In this passage, Jesus warned his disciples against the danger of causing others to sin. Jesus said that their lives should be marked by forgiveness, thankfulness, and faith. All three sections teach that Jesus' followers must see through the eyes of faith rather than be blinded by the concerns of the present age. Max Lucado also says, "Do I encourage this person to do what is right?" Halley suggests that Jesus seems to imply here that unwillingness to forgive is the cause of many people losing their souls.

Read Luke 17:1-10

After Jesus warned the Pharisees about the sin of loving money in the sixteenth chapter, He then turned to His disciples to warn them about possible sins in their lives, for temptations are an unfortunate part of life. After all, we are all sinners living in a sinful world. Jesus offered guidelines to the disciples on how to handle sin. First, disciples must avoid leading others into temptation. The punishment for this offense would be severe. Second, if other disciples sin, they must be taken aside and corrected. Third, if disciples repent, they must always be forgiven.

21. What is an "offense" as used in this text? It is a stumbling block in this text. It can be anything that may cause someone to sin. How is it "impossible" for offenses not to occur? No person sins in a vacuum; others are affected. Knowing human nature and conditions in the world, the Lord said that it was inevitable that offenses should come. But this does not diminish the guilt of those who cause the offenses. What in the text indicates the seriousness of offending a "little one" and causing him to stumble? God's children who are under His care. Can refer to those who are young in faith, but can also include any who are deemed insignificant as Lazarus in chapter 16. The severe form of the warning suggests that false teaching, or leading someone astray is very serious. Jesus emphatically warns that stumbling blocks are sure to come our way. Nonetheless, He condemned those who put stumbling blocks in the way of believers.

23. What should be the Christian's attitude and action toward his brother who sins against him? It is the Christian's duty to deal straightforwardly with a

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brother or sister in sin. But Jesus goes further: he urges his disciples to forgive those who repent when they are rebuked. Jewish custom required private reproof before exposing someone before a Jewish judicial assembly. Jewish tradition valued forgiveness, though genuine repentance should include restitution and no plans to sin again. The number 7 was not to set a limit on the number of times to forgive, but precisely the opposite. Christ meant that forgiveness should be granted unendingly. If a brother or sister does sin against us, we should give a private, loving rebuke. Our tendency might be to feel hurt down inside, nurse a grudge, and then tell others what happened to us, but this is the wrong approach toward solving personal differences. Our aim is not to embarrass or hurt the offender, but to encourage him or her to repent. In fact, we must be in the habit of forgiving, for others might sin against us seven times a day—or even seventy times seven. Set aside some time to figure out your motivation for being involved in people's lives. Are you influencing people for good or for evil? Make sure you never get yourself in a situation where you could cause someone to stumble.

24. What request did His apostles make after Jesus taught them the lesson on forgiveness? "Give us more faith." They felt inadequate in the face of the high standard He set for them. Apparently, the apostles thought great faith would be required. What was Jesus' response to their request? Jesus points to what even small faith can bring about. More important than the quantity of faith is the object of faith—a great and powerful God. One's faith often increases as one steps out in trusting obedience. the "faith as small as a mustard seed" applies to the power of prayer, but here the disciples need faith to forgive others. Sources agree in describing the mustard seed as proverbially small. The black mulberry tree has a vast root system that allows it to live up to six hundred years. The saying in verse 6 is a symbolic way to refer to seemingly impossible activities that could be done if one trusts in God. In this context, the "impossible" activity carried out by faith is that of forgiving a repentant believer.

25. Explain what Jesus meant when He said, "So likewise you, when you have done all the things which are commanded, say, "We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do." Jesus addresses the attitude of the disciples. Their duty is to serve God faithfully, recognizing that they are unworthy to serve their master. The Pharisees, in contrast, boast of their acts of piety. This servant has been plowing or tending sheep all day. When he has come in from

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the field at the end of a day of hard work, the master does not tell him to sit down for supper. Rather he orders him to put on his apron and serve supper. Only after that is done is the servant allowed to eat his own meal. The master does not thank him for doing these things. It is expected of a servant. One commentator says that the master isn't a particularly rich man because he seems to have only this one slave or servant who does many and varied duties. The point of this parable was that a servant should expect no special reward for doing what was his duty in the first place. The demanding standards Christ set in the first four verses may have seemed too high to the disciples, but they represented only the minimal duties for a servant of Christ. Those who obey are not to think their obedience is meritorious. Disciples are the servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. They belong to Him—spirit, soul, and body. In the light of Calvary, nothing they can ever do for the Savior is sufficient to recompense Him for what He has done. So, after the disciple has done everything that he has been commanded in the NT, he must still admit that he is an unprofitable servant who has only done what was his duty to do. Jesus wasn't saying that the master was right to be unappreciative. Jesus was using an example familiar to the people from that culture: the correct attitude of a servant. A servant did what he had to do, with no expectation of praise or reward. Jesus wanted his disciples to see that strong faith should not lead to spiritual pride. Our prayers should not be based on an attitude that says, "If I do this, then God will give me that." God gives on the basis of his grace, not as a reward for good behavior.

Closing prayer: May we leave today determined to be better servants of Christ who we can never be worthy to serve, but by grace we are granted that privilege. Amen.

Luke 13: 22-30	Luke 14:1-6	Luke 15:1-7	Luke 16:1-13
Luke 13: 31-35	Luke 14:7-14	Luke 15:8-10	Luke 16:14-18
Luke 17:1-10	Luke 14:15-24	Luke 15:11-32	Luke 16:19-31
	Luke 14:25-35		