

THE EXPLOSIVE POWER
OF JESUS' PARABLES

DISCUSSION GUIDE

TELL ME
THE
STORIES
OF
JESUS

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INTRODUCTION

SUMMARY

The parables of Jesus are more than just stories. They are messages that use a simile or metaphor to help believers understand God and his kingdom, and the comparisons in them are often confusing and unexpected. However, they leave an unforgettable imprint on those who hear them. Jesus' parables are meant for believing Christians, and each one is a gift that teaches about grace, judgment, or the kingdom of God. Believers must be careful to avoid allegorizing the parables, and they must hear them knowing that Jesus is the reigning Lord and King who will return.

DISCUSSING THE CHAPTER

1 Why do you think humans are drawn to stories?

2 Do you agree that “stories are vital for how we understand the Bible”?
Why or why not?

3 What is a parable?

4 Why do you think Jesus taught using parables?

5 What is your favorite parable, and why?

6 Which parable is the most difficult for you to understand?

7 What convictions do you have about the Bible?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Have you ever carefully studied the parables of Jesus? If so, how did they help you better understand the kingdom? If not, what are you hoping to learn?

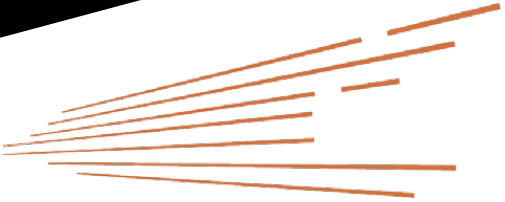
PRAYER

Father, please help me to learn more about you and your kingdom through the parables. Please open my ears to hear, and please help me to be a steadfast and faithful servant.

Amen.

CHAPTER 1

WHY DO YOU SPEAK TO THEM IN PARABLES?



SUMMARY

Shortly after Jesus shared the parable of the sower, the disciples asked him why he taught in parables. He had already demonstrated his power as the Son of God, and they were wondering why he didn't speak openly about his messianic identity and his purpose. However, Jesus told them that not everyone would understand his parables. He used the parable of the sower to teach about the kingdom and a person's ability to understand the gospel. Only those who have received the power of the Holy Spirit through their faith will be able to hear and obey the Word of God. Others will simply hear a story.

DISCUSSING THE CHAPTER

1 Why were Pharisees challenging Jesus?

2 Why did Jesus respond to the Pharisees using parables?

3 Why do you think the disciples wanted Jesus to publicly proclaim his identity and mission?

4 In what ways do the parables “simultaneously reveal and hide”?

5 How would you describe the differences between hearing the Word, receiving the Word, and obeying the Word?

6 What does it mean that the response to the parables reveals “the true condition of the human heart”?

7 What is the doctrine of election?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

What are your thoughts and beliefs about the doctrine of salvation?

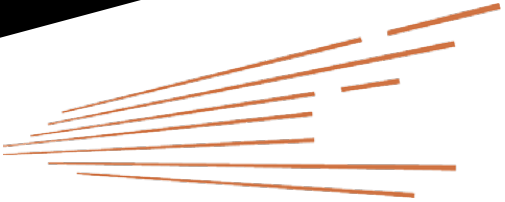
Why is it vital to the understanding of Jesus' parables?

PRAYER

Father, thank you for your mercy and grace, and thank you for sending the Holy Spirit. Please help me to hear and obey your Word as I open my heart to receive your gospel.

Amen.

CHAPTER 2 HEARTS READY TO RECEIVE THE WORD



SUMMARY

The condition of a person's heart is crucial to that person's ability to hear and understand the gospel. Jesus taught about this in the parable of the sower, which compares four soils to four types of hearts. The hard soil is a heart that rejects God and refuses to obey him, and Jesus said that this is the work of Satan. The shallow soil is a heart that is initially eager to receive God's Word, but the person's faithfulness eventually wanes and disappears, especially under tribulation or persecution on account of the Word. The weed-infested soil is a heart that hears the Word but does not produce fruit. The good soil represents the heart that receives and obeys the Word of God.

DISCUSSING THE CHAPTER

1 What is the difference between a church and a crowd? Why is it important to acknowledge that difference?

2 Why do you think it can be difficult for the Christian church to know the difference between a church and a crowd?

3 Why do you think Jesus used agricultural concepts in his parables?

4 In what ways does the parable of the sower explain “the nature of Christian preaching and evangelism”?

5 In what ways do you better understand Jesus’ message because of his parable of the sower and the seed?

6 What do you think it means to have a hardened heart?

7 Why do you think so many people refuse to hear the gospel?

8 What do you think it means to receive God's Word with joy?

9 In what ways are salvation and obedience related?

10 What is your favorite way to minister to others?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

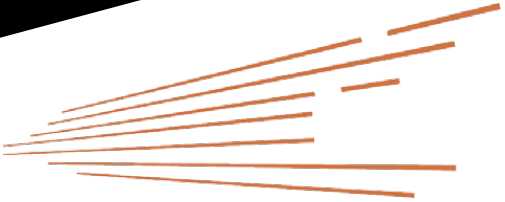
What is the condition of your heart right now?

PRAYER

Lord, thank you for planting a seed in my heart. Please help me to receive it and to be fruitful so that you can work through me.

Amen.

CHAPTER 3 THE CHILDREN OF LIGHT AND THE CHILDREN OF DARKNESS



SUMMARY

Jesus continued to use an agricultural theme in his next parable, which teaches about the difference between the children of light and the children of darkness using the comparison of wheat and weeds. The enemy sowed weeds in a wheat field, and the owner risked throwing out the good wheat along with the weeds. The owner instructed his servants to allow them to grow together, and then the wheat would be separated from the weeds, which would be burned. The parable illustrates how the church, or the children of light, is meant to minister faithfully despite the work of the sons of darkness. The parable also promises that believers will “shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father,” whereas the children of darkness will experience “weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

DISCUSSING THE CHAPTER

1 How would you explain Jesus' parable about the weeds to someone who hasn't heard it before?

2 What do you think it means that the church "is the blood-bought assembly of the saints"?

3 What is the purpose of the church? What does that look like in action?

4 What are some of the differences between the church and the world as outlined in the parable of the weeds?

5 What does it look like to live as “the children of light”?

6 How does the contrast between light and darkness help you better understand the purpose of Jesus and his believers?

7 Why do you think it is often easy for us to focus on the earthly city rather than the heavenly city?

8 What is the promise for believers in the parable of the weeds? How does that promise make you feel?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

In what ways can you be a light despite the darkness around you?

————— P R A Y E R —————

Father, please help me be a light to all those around me.

Please help me to continue your work at all times.

Amen.

CHAPTER 4 AND WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?



SUMMARY

The parable of the good Samaritan is a memorable one about the unfailing, deep love that God has for his people. The context of the parable is very important because it was prompted by an arrogant lawyer's attempt to narrowly define neighbor. Jesus used a Samaritan as the subject of the parable, which shocked his listeners because Jewish people despised Samaritans. The picture of a Samaritan showing compassion on his enemy illustrates God's mercy on his people. The parable teaches that Christians should demonstrate love, compassion, and mercy to those around them.

DISCUSSING THE CHAPTER

1 Why do you think we are often tempted to tame the gospel with moralism or “pragmatic self-help”?

2 In what ways do the two commandments in the lawyer’s answer go together?

3 In what ways was the lawyer’s question arrogant?

4 What strikes you most when you read the parable of the good Samaritan?

5 What does “mercy” mean to you?

6 When have you seen someone demonstrate mercy?

7 What is compassion, and what is its role in the Christian church?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

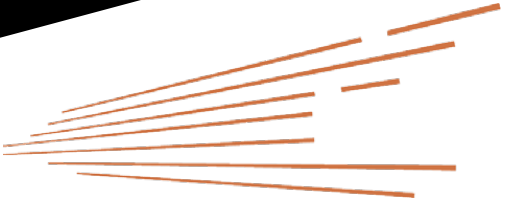
Who in your life has recently been a “neighbor” whom you could help? How could you help them?

PRAYER

Lord, I confess that my heart is not always open to showing mercy to those around me. Please soften my heart and help me view everyone as a neighbor who deserves my love and care.

Amen.

CHAPTER 5 EVEN IF ONE SHOULD RISE FROM THE DEAD



SUMMARY

The parable of the rich man and Lazarus features both a parabolic structure and a statement of propositional truth. It features a rich man who lived ostentatiously and a poor man who lived outside his gates. Jesus described how the rich man relied on his wealth for security and refused to show mercy to the less fortunate, despite knowing about the Word of God and what it commands. The parable is designed to help listeners understand God's coming judgment, which will be just. It illustrates the concept of righteousness, and it gives listeners a glimpse into what it will be like to spend eternity in heaven or hell. The central message is found in the rich man's refusal to listen to the Word of God. Christians must believe in the sufficiency of Scripture, and they must share the gospel with others.

DISCUSSING THE CHAPTER

1 Why is it important to understand and affirm “all the perfections of God’s Word”?

2 Do you believe the passage discussed in this chapter is a parable? Why or why not?

3 In what ways is prosperity theology “a refutation of the gospel of Jesus Christ”?

4 What is the “great reversal” in this parable, and what does it teach us?

5 What does this parable teach us about heaven and hell?

6 Why do you think hell is controversial today?

7 What does this parable teach us about the importance of sharing the gospel?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

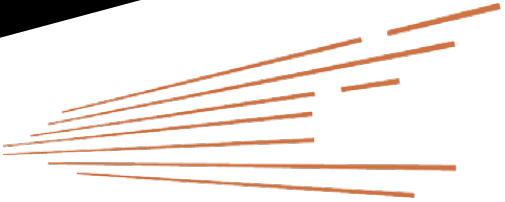
What has prevented you from sharing the gospel in the past? What can you do to overcome those barriers?

PRAYER

Father, please help me to see the opportunities you have given me to share the gospel with others. Help me to show love and mercy to all and allow me to be open to those who are doing the same for me.

Amen.

CHAPTER 6 REDEMPTION, REJOICING, AND REJECTION IN LUKE 15



SUMMARY

Jesus shared three parables about lostness in Luke 15, and his audience included tax collectors, sinners, Pharisees, and scribes. The Pharisees and scribes were angry because Jesus allowed sinners and tax collectors to listen to him speak, but this mercy that was shown by Jesus demonstrates his mission of salvation. He delivered these three parables of lostness as part of his response to the religious leaders' questions about why he ate and drank with sinners. Jesus described the joy over finding one lost sheep and one lost coin, and then he told the parable of the lost son. Each of these parables paints a picture of God's love and redemption, as well as the joy in heaven when a sinner repents. The parable of the lost son also continues with the story of the older brother, whose heart did not rejoice over his sibling's return. His father invited him to repent as well, just as our heavenly Father extends the same invitation to us.

DISCUSSING THE CHAPTER

1 What is the difference between losing something and being lost?

2 What does it mean to be lost in terms of our relationship with God?

3 How does it make you feel to know that God does not give sinners up as lost?

4 In what ways is Jesus our Shepherd?

5 Why is it important to note that the third parable of lostness features a conscious human being?

6 When have you felt the convicting power of the Holy Spirit?

7 How do you think God feels when someone returns to him?

8 What is God's sovereignty, and what role does it play in salvation?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Which brother in the parable of the lost son do you relate to most, and why?

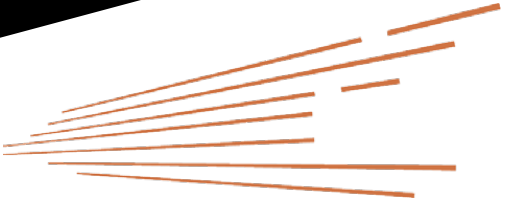
————— P R A Y E R —————

*Father, please forgive me for my sins against you and those you love,
and please help me to extend the same forgiveness to others.*

Amen.

CHAPTER 7

WHAT WILL HE DO TO THOSE TENANTS?



SUMMARY

The context of Jesus' parables in Matthew 21 is extremely important because he delivered them after being challenged by the chief priests and elders. He refused to reveal the source of his authority and instead asked a question of his own that would reveal the state of their hearts. They knew they could not answer honestly without angering the crowd, so they stated that they did not know the answer. This encounter was followed by Jesus' parable of the two sons, which was a rebuke to the challenge to his authority. The parable teaches about true obedience, but the chief priests and elders had demonstrated their staunch disobedience. Jesus then told the parable of the wicked tenants to accuse the leaders of the temple of plotting his murder. He quoted the Psalms to tell them that he was the stone they were rejecting. The chief priests and the Pharisees knew Jesus to be a prophet, but they refused to acknowledge him as the Messiah.

DISCUSSING THE CHAPTER

1 In what ways did the religious leaders in Matthew 21:23-27 display arrogance?

2 In what ways is feigned ignorance a type of spiritual rebellion?

3 How is the parable of the two sons similar to the parable of the prodigal son?
How is it different?

4 Why is obedience important for Christians?

5 Why do you think it was difficult for the temple authorities to believe that tax collectors and prostitutes would enter the kingdom of God before they would?

6 How does the information in Isaiah 5:1-7 help us better understand the parable of the wicked tenants?

7 What do you think it means that Jesus is the “chief cornerstone”?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

When have you felt convicted about your sin while reading the Bible? How did you respond to that conviction?

PRAYER

Lord, I accept you as the cornerstone of my life. Please help me to see my sin and repent of it, and please help me to be obedient to you.

Amen.

CHAPTER 8

UNWORTHY GUESTS



SUMMARY

In his next parable, Jesus taught about the kingdom of God using a story about a wedding feast that a king held for his son. The parable reflects the treatment of the prophets in the Old Testament and foreshadows the shameful treatment Jesus would endure upon his arrest and trial. It also teaches that the unlikely and unpredicted will enter God's kingdom. The wedding feast points to fulfillment of the kingdom, but the invitation to that feast has been rejected by many. The parable teaches that Christians must accept the invitation extended by God's grace with respect and graciousness, and refusal to do so will have eternal consequences. It illustrates the exclusivity of the gospel, and it teaches that the church should share the invitation with everyone.

DISCUSSING THE CHAPTER

1 How would you describe how it feels to be part of the kingdom of God?

2 How is the peace of God different from earthly peace?

3 How does it make you feel to know that the “unlikely and unpredicted” will enter the kingdom?

4 What do you think it looks like to respond graciously to Jesus' invitation?
What do you think it looks like to respond scornfully?

5 What can we learn about eternal punishment from this parable?

6 In what ways are weddings significant in the Bible?

7 What does God’s grace mean to you? How does his judgment make you feel?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Which aspect of the parable of the wedding feast resonates most with you?

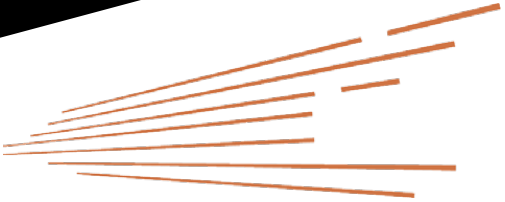
Why do you think that is?

PRAYER

Father, thank you for your invitation to accept your mercy, love, and grace. I graciously accept it, and I want to share it with others.

Amen.

CHAPTER 9 WHEN THE SON OF MAN COMES, WILL HE FIND FAITH ON EARTH?



SUMMARY

Jesus' parables often have an element of surprise, and this is certainly true of the parable of the persistent widow in the Gospel of Luke. Luke introduced the parable by noting that its purpose is to teach the importance of persistence in prayer and faith. The parable includes an unjust judge and a widow who repeatedly went to him for justice. The judge finally granted her request so that she would quit bothering him. The unjust judge is a direct contrast to our heavenly Father, who is always faithful and just. The parable also reinforces the exhortation to help the vulnerable, and it illustrates faithfulness in prayer. The church is to pray without ceasing and to not lose heart because we know that God will vindicate his people. Jesus asked if he would find faith on earth at his return. The mission of the church, which is built with Jesus as the cornerstone, will not fail, but the question is a reminder that the church must work persistently to preach the gospel, worship, and make disciples until that day.

DISCUSSING THE CHAPTER

1 How would you describe the widow in Luke 18?

2 What do you think it means that we ought to be persistent in faith and prayer?

3 In what ways is God different from the unjust judge?

4 Why is it important to understand that God will always act in a way that is “consistent with his character and power”?

5 Why do you think it is important for the church to care for the vulnerable?

6 What is the importance of prayer?

7 When has God answered your prayer in a different way or timetable than you expected?

8 Why is it “inconceivable” that Jesus will find no faith on earth when he returns?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

What would it look like in your life for you to be persistent in your faith and prayer?

— P R A Y E R —

*Lord, I want to grow in faithfulness and to be steadfast
despite the darkness around me.*

*Please help me to be like the persistent widow, and please give me
opportunities to help the vulnerable around me.*

Amen.

CHAPTER 10

THE EXALTED HUMBLER AND THE HUMBLE EXALTED



SUMMARY

Pharisees and tax collectors would have been familiar characters to the people who listened to Jesus' parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector. The Pharisees were ostentatious and obvious as they exhibited self-righteous behavior. The tax collectors were despised members of the underclass because they were considered criminals who were complicit with Rome. The Pharisee in the parable referred to himself frequently in his prayer at the temple, while the tax collector, who would have been unwelcome in the temple, repented in a prayer that was humble and reverent. This contrast illustrates how moralism is a false gospel because it focuses on oneself rather than on God. It also helps readers understand what true worship should look like, and it gives us a clear image of the justification we receive through Christ's righteousness. Jesus ended the parable by telling his listeners to humble, rather than exalt, themselves.

DISCUSSING THE CHAPTER

1 What is self-righteousness?

2 Why did the Pharisees keep adding to the law?

3 Why do you think it can be easy for us to begin to feel self-righteous?

4 Why should we not compare our spiritual condition to that of others'?

5 In what ways are you encouraged by Paul's message in Romans 8:26-27?

6 What is authentic repentance, and what does it look like?

7 Why is it important to understand that we are sinners?

8 What is moralism, and why is it a false gospel?

9 What does humble worship look like?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

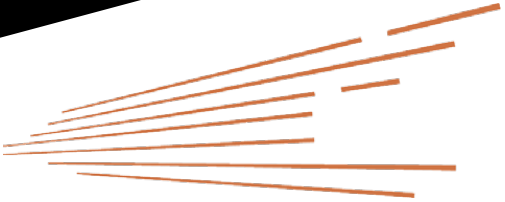
Do you think your prayers and posture in worship resemble those of the Pharisee or the tax collector? Why? What changes do you think you could make so that your prayers and worship are humble and reverent?

PRAYER

*Father, I come to you with a humble and repentant heart.
I know I am unworthy, and I am so thankful
for your love and mercy despite my sins.
Please help me to live in a way that glorifies you in all I do.
Amen.*

CHAPTER 11

THE SHREWD SONS OF THIS AGE



SUMMARY

Jesus' parable of the dishonest manager is a perplexing one and has often been misinterpreted. It features a manager who was going to be fired for wasting a rich man's wealth. The manager then made shrewd business deals with the rich man's clients and debtors, which bought him friends but betrayed the rich man's financial trust. The rich man praised the manager for his shrewdness despite his criminal activity. The details of the parable are crucial in order to interpret it correctly. The rich man is assumed to be a man of questionable character because of Jesus' other teachings about people who trusted only in their wealth. Also, the rich man did not fire the manager immediately, which gave the manager time to bargain with the clients and debtors. Jesus described the manager as "shrewd," which emphasizes that believers should be shrewd in their own opportunities to spread the gospel. If the sons of darkness show shrewdness in their work, then the sons of light should be even more shrewd in finding opportunities to share the gospel.

DISCUSSING THE CHAPTER

1 What were your thoughts about the parable of the dishonest manager before you read this chapter?

2 What elements of the parable of the dishonest manager make it perplexing?

3 How would you describe the difference between being dishonest and being shrewd?

4 What do you think it means that the sons of darkness are more shrewd with their generation than the sons of light? When have you seen examples of this?

5 What are some ways the children of light can be shrewd in order to advance the kingdom of God?

6 What are “the true riches”?

7 What do you think it means that we cannot serve two masters?

8 In what ways did this chapter change your thoughts or understanding of the parable of the dishonest manager?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

How shrewd are you when looking for opportunities to share the gospel? What changes could you make to take advantage of even more opportunities?

————— P R A Y E R —————

*Lord, please help me be shrewd so that
I can grow your kingdom and do your work.*

Amen.

CHAPTER 12

MISERLY FAIRNESS VERSUS EXTRAVAGANT GRACE



SUMMARY

The concept of God's grace can be a difficult one to grasp, but the parable of the laborers in the vineyard helps us understand it a bit more clearly. The story shows us that God's grace is not to be equated with fairness because he is sovereign and just. It presents us with an image of the kingdom of God and God's servants, and it teaches that God grants his mercy and grace to those whom he chooses. No one can earn their salvation because everyone who receives it does so by grace. The parable also teaches against grumbling about the goodness of the Lord.

DISCUSSING THE CHAPTER

1 How would you describe God's grace to someone who doesn't know about it?

2 Why do you think it is important to know that we cannot earn God's grace?

3 In what ways is fairness contrary to God's grace?

4 What is unexpected about the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, and why is it unexpected?

5 What is the difference between fairness and being right and just?

6 Why is grumbling or complaining a sin?

7 What helps you to change your perspective when you start grumbling?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

In what ways does the parable of the laborers in the vineyard challenge your perception of God's grace?

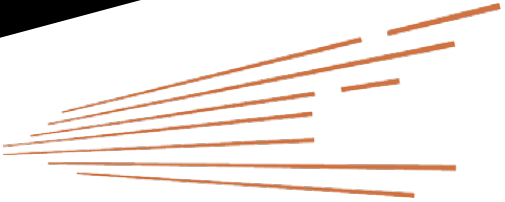
PRAYER

*Father, thank you for extending your grace to me.
Please forgive me for grumbling against you, and please help me
be joyful when others receive your gift of salvation.*

Amen.

CHAPTER 13

WELL DONE, GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT



SUMMARY

The parable of the talents is often believed to be about money and stewardship, but that is not the case. Jesus was actually teaching about the kingdom of God and the work that is assigned to those who believe in him. Jesus began the parable by warning that he would return at an unknown time, and when the parable is read in that light, the talents become opportunities to increase the kingdom. Each Christian has been called to do God's work, and each one will be held accountable for his stewardship on the day of judgment. The church should view the world as its mission field, and every opportunity to share the gospel should be taken. The parable also has a message of divine judgment in it as two servants are praised and the other is thrown into the outer darkness.

DISCUSSING THE CHAPTER

1 What do you think it means to be “faithful with a few things”?

2 What do you think it means to “enter into the joy of your master”?

3 What does faithfulness look like in the kingdom of God?

4 Why is it important to be a good steward of “opportunities for the kingdom”?
What might that look like in your life?

5 What is the concept of calling?

6 How does it make you feel to know that there will be an accounting of your work in the kingdom?

7 Who has inspired you to glorify God?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

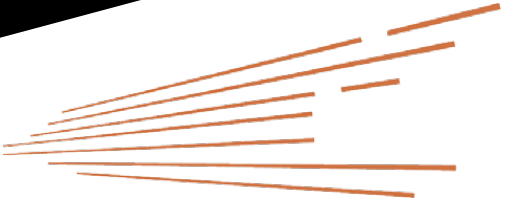
What are some ways you can share the gospel with someone this week?

PRAYER

*Father, I want to be a good and faithful servant.
Please guide me and help me to be a wise steward of the opportunities
you have given me to grow your kingdom.*

Amen.

CHAPTER 14 SO ALSO MY HEAVENLY FATHER WILL DO TO YOU



SUMMARY

Forgiveness is a topic that is addressed throughout the Bible, and Jesus taught about it several times. Jesus emphasized the importance of extending forgiveness that reflects the utter forgiveness believers receive from God, and he taught Peter that forgiveness should be unlimited. He followed this with the parable of the unforgiving servant, which teaches us about God's grace and forgiveness. The debt in the parable is compared to the debt Christ paid for the sin of believers, and that grace should be extended to others. Jesus warned that God knows when forgiveness has been offered from the heart, and it must be genuine for a believer to receive God's infinite forgiveness.

DISCUSSING THE CHAPTER

- 1** Why do you think making peace with others should be routine?
Why do you think it is important to do so privately?

- 2** What is forgiveness, and why is it important?

- 3** Why do you think it can often be difficult for us to forgive others?

4 What is the significance of Peter's suggestion of forgiving seven times?

5 In what ways are forgiveness and grace related?

6 What do you think it means that Jesus paid our debt? How is that related to atonement?

7 Why is it important to forgive from the heart? What do you think that looks like?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

To whom have you not extended true and complete forgiveness? Why do you think you've held on to your unforgiveness?

PRAYER

Lord, I confess that I have been like the unforgiving servant at times.

*Please forgive me for not extending grace to others,
and please help my heart soften toward obedience and forgiveness.*

Amen.

CHAPTER 15

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS LIKE THIS



SUMMARY

In Matthew 13, Jesus used a collection of short parables to help his listeners better understand the kingdom of God. He began by comparing faith to a mustard seed, which illustrates how the small kingdom of God on earth will grow exponentially in the fullness of time. Jesus then used leaven to represent the work of the kingdom on earth. Just like yeast, the extent of the growth is not visible until a certain point in time. These two parables teach listeners that they should not underestimate the power of the kingdom at work right now, even if there is little or no visible evidence of it. Then Jesus told the parable of the hidden treasure to illustrate that believers should be willing to make sacrifices to further the kingdom. The next parable, which is the parable of the pearl of great value, emphasizes pursuing a desire for Christ and keeping our focus on eternity. The next lesson is the parable of the net, which teaches about the sorting process that will occur on judgment day. The worthy will be received and the rejected will be thrown into the fiery furnace. The last in this sequence

is the parable of treasures old and new. This parable notes that Jesus and the New Testament fulfill the prophecies of the Old Testament. All of these parables point to Jesus and his kingdom of grace, as well as the church's mission to perform good works and witness to others.

DISCUSSING THE CHAPTER

- 1 In what ways does the parable of the mustard seed help us understand the kingdom of heaven?

- 2 Why do you think some people underestimate the kingdom of God?

- 3 What are some of the tasks Christians might do to help advance the kingdom?

4 What are some ways we can work in the kingdom while we wait for it to be fully established?

5 What does the “promise of the kingdom” look like to you?

6 What are some of the sacrifices that must be made on behalf of the kingdom?

7 Why do you think Christians are often afraid of desire? What are some of the desires we should have?

8 What can we learn about judgment from the parable of the net?

9 What is the pattern of promise and fulfillment in the Bible?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

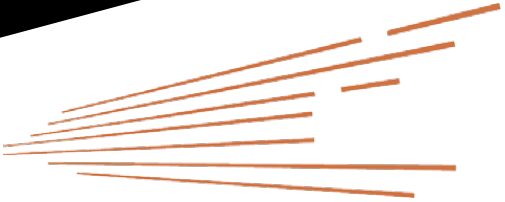
When have you made a sacrifice on behalf of the kingdom? What was that sacrifice, and how did it make you feel?

PRAYER

*Father, thank you for helping me understand
your kingdom and my work in it. Please help me remain steadfast
in my service even when I don't see visible results.*

Amen.

CHAPTER 16 WHEN THE SON OF MAN COMES IN HIS GLORY



SUMMARY

The parable of the sheep and the goats tells of a shepherd dividing sheep and goats to illustrate what will occur when Christ returns as eternal King. He will judge all people, with the sons of light being granted the kingdom of heaven and the sons of darkness being sent to the eternal fire. The theme of the day of judgment in this parable reflects the teachings of other parables, as well as other Scriptures throughout the Bible, and it is described in Revelation. The concepts of divine judgment and God's wrath are essential for believers as they fulfill their responsibility of serving others in the church.

DISCUSSING THE CHAPTER

1 What are the differences between the natures of sheep and goats? How do these differences help you to better understand the day of judgment?

2 What does Jesus' authority as King mean for believers and unbelievers?

3 Why do you think we often resist the "biblical theme of one judgment with two destinies"?

4 In what way does God's judgment demonstrate his glory?

5 What do you think it means to serve Christ?

6 What is God's wrath, and why is it important for us to understand?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

What are your beliefs about the day of judgment?

How have those beliefs shaped how you serve others?

PRAYER

Father, please help me to be a humble, obedient sheep.

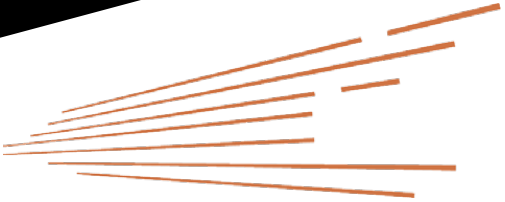
Please lead me where you would have me serve you,

and please give me a heart to help others.

Amen.

CHAPTER 17

YOU KNOW NEITHER THE DAY NOR THE HOUR



SUMMARY

Jesus told the parable of the ten virgins in order to teach people about his return. He told them that no one knows the day or the hour of the second coming, just as the people in Noah's time did not suspect that their lives were about to end. Elsewhere, Jesus told of a master who would have stayed awake and guarded his home if he'd known a thief was about to enter. He also told a story of a master who returned from a trip unexpectedly and caught his servant engaged in wicked behavior. These last two examples alone helped listeners understand that Jesus' return will be sudden and unexpected, but he emphasized it even more when he told the parable of the ten virgins. Christians must continue to work until the church's mission is complete and Jesus returns, just as the wise virgins brought enough oil for their lamps despite the bridegroom's delay. The bridegroom's response of "I do not know you" is a statement of judgment that will be spoken again when Jesus returns. Believers must continue working in the field with steadfast confidence and hope until Jesus comes again for the harvest.

DISCUSSING THE CHAPTER

1 What comes to mind when you think of “a thief in the night”?

2 What do you think it looks like to live in readiness for Christ’s return?

3 What do you think it looks like to be unprepared for Christ’s return?

4 Why do you think Jesus has delayed his return? What should we do while we wait for his return?

5 Do you feel fear when you think of Jesus' return? Why or why not?

6 In what "field" can you work for God's glory while you wait for Jesus' return?

7 What hope do you find in the impending return of Jesus?

8 Which of Jesus' parables resonates strongly with you at this time, and why?

9 What did you learn about Jesus' parables from reading this book?

10 Which parables do you understand more clearly after reading this book?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

What can you do to make sure you are living in readiness for Christ's return?

PRAYER

*Father, thank you for the hope you've given me
in your promise of Christ's return. Please help me to prepare myself
for that day and help me to continue to do your work.*

Amen.