

THE  
PARABLES  
*of* JESUS

SERMON NOTES

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## ABOUT THESE NOTES

*The Parables of Jesus* forms the basis of this six-week group study. You and your group will discover how Jesus' parables applied to people in his day and how he exposed the hypocrisy and lack of faith of Israel's religious leaders. But you will also discover how these parables apply to life today. As you depend on the Holy Spirit for illumination and ways to apply the truths Jesus taught in parables, you will grow in wisdom and holiness. Trust God to make you and your group members more effective in ministering to the needs your contemporaries. He will not disappoint you!



*Week 1*

# THE BOOK WHOSE AUTHOR IS GOD

Matthew 13; Mark 4

*We sow the seed, but God makes it grow.*

## INTRODUCTION

Have you read any good books lately? As librarians and teachers point out, books are our friends. They can entertain us, inform us, and often help to relieve our stress and soothe our spirits. But most books—even best-selling books—have a brief life. Their popularity fades and they are tossed aside or relegated to a dark shelf in a second-hand bookstore.

One book, however, has survived the test of time and the attacks of bitter foes. It has been a faithful friend and welcome companion for believers for centuries, and it will never become obsolete. It is the Bible, the Book whose author is God. We rightfully refer to it often as the Word of God.

## SERMON OUTLINE

### I. The Word's Vibrant Energy

Peter described the Word of God as “living” (vibrant or energetic), and Hebrews 4:12 says it is “alive and active.”

#### A. Its Role in Salvation (2 Tim. 3:15; 1 Pet. 1:23)

Timothy had been taught God's Word from infancy, and it had shown him how to be saved (2 Tim. 3:15). The apostle Peter credited the Word of God with the power to bring about the new birth, and he described the Word as “living and enduring” (1 Pet. 1:23). No other book can do what only God's Book can do!

#### B. Its Role in Sanctification (Ps. 1:2–3; John 17:17)

The person who meditates on the Word of God will bear fruit in his or her life. In his High Priestly Prayer, Jesus asked the Father to sanctify us by his Word (John 17:17). This fruit is surely the fruit of the Spirit described in Galatians 5:22–23. The Holy Spirit uses the Word he inspired to illustrate Jesus, the incarnate Word, in us.

### II. The Word's Vicious Adversary

#### A. The Devil Plants Doubt about the Word (Gen. 3:1)

He tempted Eve to sin by asking, “Did God really say . . . ?”

B. The Devil Denies the Word (Gen. 3:4)

He openly denied God's Word. He told Eve, "You will not certainly die,"

C. The Devil Distracts from the Word

Jesus said, "Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them" (Mark 4:15).

III. The Word's Varied Reception

A. Poor Reception (Matt. 13:19–22; Mark 4:13–19)

A mere emotional response does not survive the onslaught of trouble or persecution. The cares of the world and the deceitfulness of money make the Word unfruitful.

B. Good Reception (Matt. 13:23; Mark 4:20)

Those who give the Word a warm reception produce a bountiful harvest.

## CONCLUSION

Jesus warned, "Consider carefully how you listen" (Luke 8:18). Our quality of life and our spiritual productivity depend upon how carefully we listen to God's Word.



*Week 2*

## LOST AND FOUND

Luke 15:11–24

*Seek and welcome the lost.*

### INTRODUCTION

According to Kathryn Hatter of Demand Media, one of every seven teenagers will run away in his or her lifetime. Currently, in the United States alone, three million teens are on the run. Often, a young person runs away because of parental abuse, communication problems, or the parents are fighting or divorcing. Luke 15 unfolds Jesus' story about one young man who ran away from home in spite of having a loving father and ideal circumstances. Fortunately, this lost son eventually returned home.

### SERMON OUTLINE

#### I. The Lost Son (Luke 15:11–16)

##### A. Demanding (15:11)

He demanded his share of the inheritance. He would not wait.

##### B. Delusional (15:12–13)

He thought he would find pleasure and happiness in a distant country. He was mistaken.

##### C. Destitute (15:14–16)

All who wander from God are spiritually destitute. They have no peace or purpose in life.

#### II. The Found Son (Luke 15:17–24)

##### A. He Repented of His Folly (15:17–19)

Whoever recognizes the folly of trying to live apart from the heavenly Father should come to his or her senses, see the folly of his or her lifestyle, and repent.

##### B. He Returned to His Father (15:20)

The road back to the Father begins with repentance, but repentance needs to be followed by action. The lost son repented, and then got up and went to his father.

##### C. He Was Received by His Father (15:21–22)

The heavenly Father watches for the return of each of his wayward children. With overflowing compassion and love he embraces all who return to him. Also, he covers each

returning son or daughter with a robe of righteousness and reinstates the repentant child to a position of status in his family. (See 1 John 3:1.)

D. He Rejoiced with His Father (15:23–24)

Fully forgiven and reinstated as the father's beloved son, the former prodigal joined the father in a joyful celebration. Every recovered wayward child of God can rejoice and testify, "Let him lead me to the banquet hall, and let his banner over me be love" (Song 2:4). The world holds only broken cisterns. Its pleasures are fleeting, but in the Father's presence there is fullness of joy, and eternal pleasures are at his right hand (Ps. 18:11).

## CONCLUSION

The proud religious leaders to whom Jesus addressed this parable rejected God in favor of legalism and empty worship. They needed to repent and return to the Father. If you have turned away from God and find yourself destitute of peace, purposefulness, and joy, why not repent and return to the Father now? You may wish to repeat the words of a hymn: "I've wandered far away from God, now I'm coming home; the paths of sin too long I've trod, Lord, I'm coming home."



*Week 3*

## SIGN UP FOR GOOD SAMARITAN MINISTRY!

Luke 10:30–35

*God shows boundless mercy.*

### INTRODUCTION

Good Samaritan organizations exist around the world to help people in need. A Good Samaritan group may feed and clothe the homeless. Another may provide medical help to the suffering. Another may fly patients to medical facilities. Another may provide road assistance. Of course all these groups derive their name and spirit of helpfulness from Jesus' parable of the good Samaritan.

Christians do not need to be members of an organized Good Samaritan organization, but we should all be Good Samaritans. Here's what we need to do.

### SERMON OUTLINE

#### I. Shun Self-Centeredness (Luke 10:30–32)

A traveler fell among thieves. Beaten and near death, he lay by the side of the road (10:30). Would anyone help him?

##### A. A Priest Was too Self-Centered to Help (10:31)

Perhaps he was too concerned about his sanctity or schedule. He knew the law, but put his personal interests ahead of his duty to love his "neighbor" as God commanded.

##### B. A Levite Was too Self-Centered to Help (10:32)

The Levite, who was an assistant to priests, failed to help the victim. He, too, put self-interest ahead of the victim's need. Victimized by sin and Satan, many people need our assistance. If we are self-centered, their needs will not be met.

#### II. Show Compassion (Luke 10:33–34)

##### A. The Samaritan Took Pity on the Victim (10:33)

Compassion should fill our hearts when we see the needs of helpless, needy people. Remember, when Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion on them (Matt. 9:36). He saw them as harassed, helpless sheep without a shepherd.

B. The Samaritan Took Action (Luke 10:34)

The victims in our society need action and not simply pity. The Samaritan tended to the victim's wounds and set him on his own donkey in spite of the fact that the victim was probably a Jew, a member of a race that despised Samaritans.

III. Shoulder the Cost (Luke 10:35)

A. The Samaritan Paid for the Victim's Immediate Care

He gave an innkeeper two silver coins for this care.

B. The Samaritan Paid for the Victim's Long-Term Care

He agreed to compensate the innkeeper for the victim's long-term care. Involving ourselves in the needs of hurting, needy people may exact a personal financial toll on us. Are we willing to pay the price? Involving our church in the needs of hurting, needy people may exact a financial toll on our church. Are we willing to pay the price? Isn't rescuing one soul worth more than accumulating all the wealth in the world? (See Mark 8:36.)

## CONCLUSION

If we want to be Good Samaritans, we must renounce discrimination, put aside self-interest, and take positive action at any cost.



*Week 4*

## WHAT STUFF CAN'T DO FOR US

Luke 12:13–21

*God, not money, should control our lives.*

### INTRODUCTION

“Be the first on your block to own this new technology!” “You deserve this amazing automobile, and we can make it possible for you to drive it away today.” “Isn’t it time to upgrade your home with all new furniture?” “Every household item in our store is marked down 40 percent for the next three days only. Come in and take advantage of these spectacular savings while the sale lasts.” Advertising pitches like these bombard us every day, and if we don’t respond with a firm no, we might end up with an overabundance of stuff, but a dearth of spiritual riches.

### SERMON OUTLINE

#### I. Stuff Cannot Build a Quality Life (Luke 12:13–15)

##### A. Jesus’ Warning (12:15)

Jesus warned a man about the perils of greed, when he asked Jesus to order his brother to divide the inheritance with him (12:13). Are we alert when we read or hear enticing advertising? Do we post a guard over our hearts when we find stuff on sale? Do we ask the all-important question, “Do I really need this?” Do we understand that greed (covetousness) is a form of idolatry? (See Col. 3:3–5.)

##### B. Life’s Value Is Not Measured by the Number of Our Possessions (Luke 12:15)

A person may live in a sprawling, expensive, ornately furnished house but have an empty heart. Things do not make a house a home. Possessions do not make a family peaceful.

#### II. Stuff Cannot Add One Day to One’s Allotted Time on Earth (Luke 12:16–20)

##### A. The Rich Fool’s Expectation (12:16–19)

He was so focused on stuff—a plentiful crop—that he planned to build bigger barns to store it (12:16–18). Do we accumulate so much stuff that they can hardly move at home? Do we have so much clutter that we purchase or rent storage space to accommodate it? Do we really need all that stuff? Are we slaves to our possessions? Do we have things, or do things have us?

## B. The Rich Fool's Error (12:19–20)

The rich farmer was a fool because he thought his possessions would last indefinitely. He decided to kick back, eat, drink, and be merry. He failed to realize that possessions are a very shaky foundation for the so-called good life. God took the fool's life from him on the night the fool felt secure and giddy. His possessions would then belong to someone else. In *The Parables of Jesus*, author Kenneth Schenck comments about the rich fool: "He does not seem to give God the credit for his success or give God thanks. His imminent death is an indication that God's plan ultimately trumps our planning" (p. 62).

## CONCLUSION

You have never seen a U-Haul follow a hearse, have you? We cannot take our possessions with us when we die, but we can build treasure in heaven by doing God's will. Pleasing him is far better than accumulating stuff. As someone observed, "The best things in life are not things."



*Week 5*

## RSVP!

Luke 14:16–24

*God's call.*

### INTRODUCTION

Have you received an invitation to special event recently? It seems invitations come in a variety of styles and colors, but often they include an announced reception and ask the invitees to RSVP. We all know that means we should respond to the invitation, RSVP is an abbreviation for the French, *Répondez s'il vous plait*, meaning “Respond, please.”

Jesus told a parable about a man who prepared a great banquet and sent his servant to tell the invitees to come. The parable illustrates God’s invitation to the people of Israel to come to God’s banquet, the gospel feast.

### SERMON OUTLINE

#### I. The Gracious Invitation (Luke 14:16–20)

##### A. The Man Graciously Invited Guests (14:16)

A host is not compelled to invite guests. He does so out of the goodness of his heart. So God is not compelled to invite sinners to the gospel feast, but he does so graciously. Throughout the Bible, God graciously invites sinners to come to him. (See Isa. 55:1–2.)

##### B. The Man Graciously Sent His Servant to Invite the Guests (Luke 14:17)

God sent His servant, John the Baptist, to invite the people of Israel to come to the gospel feast (Matt. 3:1–3). Who did God send to invite you and me?

##### C. The Invitees Rejected the Man’s Gracious Invitation (Luke 14:18–20)

The invitees offered excuses for not accepting the invitation. Today, many make excuses for not accepting God’s gracious invitation. John 1:11 tells us Jesus came to his people, the Jews, but his own people did not receive him.

#### II. The Global Invitation (Luke 14:21–24)

##### A. God Invites Everyone to His Banquet (14: 21–23)

Israel’s leaders rejected God’s invitation, but the poor and physically challenged accepted it. God so loved the world that he gave his unique Son (John 3:16). Paul described the lowly

estate of most of those whom God has called (1 Cor. 1:26–29). We Christians are responsible to take God’s invitation to the whole world (Mark 16:15).

B. God Rejects Those Who Reject His Invitation (Luke 14:24)

“So, as the Holy Spirit says: ‘Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts’” (Heb. 3:7–8).

## CONCLUSION

Has your RSVP to God been positive? If not, why not respond positively now to his gracious invitation. A great feast is ready and waiting for you.



*Week 6*

## IS IT ONLY MONEY?

Matthew 25:14–30

*Future judgment.*

### INTRODUCTION

A story is told about a man who was ready to launch a business, but he wanted to acknowledge God as the One on whom the business success would depend. So he promised God he would give him 10 percent of whatever income he derived from the business.

At first the 10 percent was just a small amount because the business was small, but as it grew, the 10 percent grew into a sizable sum. Later, when the 10 percent reached a staggering amount, the businessman met with his pastor. “Pastor,” he said, “will you ask God to release me from my vow to give him 10 percent of my income? It was easy to tithe when the business was small, but now 10 percent is such a huge amount that it is very hard to give it.”

The pastor replied, “I cannot pray that God will release you from your vow, but I can pray that he will reduce your income to what it was when it was easy to tithe.”

God has given money to all of us in varying amounts, but he holds us accountable for how we use it.

### SERMON OUTLINE

#### I. We Are Stewards of the Money God Has given Us (Matt. 25:14–15)

##### A. Stewardship Is a Trust (25:14)

##### B. Stewardship Involves Whatever We Have (25:15)

A talent was a unit of silver money between fifty-eight pounds and eighty pounds. The master in the parable of the talents distributed the money according to his servant’s abilities. We don’t all have the same abilities and amount of money, but we all have a sacred trust to use what we have faithfully.

#### II. We May Handle Money in Different Ways (Matt. 25:16–18, 24–25)

##### A. We May Invest It (25:16–17)

Do we use the money God has entrusted to us for good purposes, like sharing the gospel, drawing the lost to Christ, and/or caring for the needy?

B. We May Fail to Put Money to Good Use (25:18, 24–25)

The servant who received one talent buried it, fearing an investment might fail and then he would have nothing to present to his master. Of course, the servant may have reasoned that his absent master might not return, and he would be able to keep the talent for himself. If we fail to use money to honor and serve God, are we any better than the “wicked, lazy servant” (25:26)?

III. The Consequences of How We Handle Money (Matt. 25:19–30)

A. Reward for Faithfulness (25:19–23)

God rewards good stewardship (2 Cor. 9:8–11; Gal. 6:8–9)

B. Regret for Unfaithfulness (Matt. 25:26–30)

## CONCLUSION

Money is *not* the root of all evil, as some people allege, but the *love* of money is a root of all evil (1 Tim. 6:10). If we love God supremely, we will use money wisely to accomplish his will and gain his approval. And isn't his approval worth far more than all the money in the world?