

The Two Sons, the Wicked Farmers, and the Wedding Feast

Message 3 of 5 in the series: "Once Upon a Time: Parables that Jesus Told"

A. Jesus often taught using parables.

Parable = a short story that explains spiritual truths by using everyday objects and relationships.

Note: Parables reveal spiritual truth to those who seek it but conceal spiritual truth from those who refuse to listen. "His disciples came and asked him, 'Why do you use parables when you talk to the people?' He replied, "...**To those who listen to my teaching, more understanding will be given**, and they will have an abundance of knowledge. But for those who are not listening, even what little understanding they have will be taken away from them." Matthew 13:10 & 12 (NLT)

Life Application: If we seek God and ask for His direction/wisdom/strength, we will find Him. "For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. In those days when you pray, I will listen. **If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me.**" Jeremiah 29:11-13 (NLT)

B. A few days before He was crucified, Jesus told three parables that exposed the religious hypocrisy and hard hearts of the Jewish religious leaders who refused to believe Jesus is the son of God.

1. **The Two Sons:** "But what do you think about this? A man with two sons told the older boy, "Son, go out and work in the vineyard today." The son answered, "No, I won't go," **but later he changed his mind** and went anyway. Then the father told the other son, "You go," and he said, "Yes, sir, I will." But he didn't go. Which of the two obeyed his father?' They replied, 'The first.' Then Jesus explained his meaning: 'I tell you the truth, corrupt tax collectors and prostitutes will get into the Kingdom of God before you do. For John the Baptist came and showed you the right way to live, but you didn't believe him, while tax collectors and prostitutes did. And even when you saw this happening, **you refused to believe him and repent of your sins.**" Matthew 21:28-32 (NLT)

Life Application: God wants us to trust Him and do what He says, NOT just pay Him lip service. "You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you, for he wrote, '**These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.** Their worship is a farce, for they teach man-made ideas as commands from God.'" Matthew 15:7-9 (NLT) (*Isaiah 29:13*)

2. **The Wicked Farmers:** "Now listen to another story. A certain landowner planted a vineyard, built a wall around it, dug a pit for pressing out the grape juice, and built a lookout tower. Then he leased the vineyard to tenant farmers and moved to another country. At the time of the grape harvest, he sent his servants to collect his share of the crop. But the farmers grabbed his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another. So, the landowner sent a larger group of his servants to collect for him, but the results were the same. Finally, the owner sent his son, thinking, "Surely they will respect my son." But when the tenant farmers saw his son coming, they said to one another, "Here comes the heir to this estate. Come on, let's kill him and get the estate for ourselves!" So they grabbed him, dragged him out of the vineyard, and murdered him. When the owner of the vineyard returns,' Jesus asked, 'what do you think he will do to those farmers?' The religious leaders replied, 'He will put the wicked men to a horrible death and lease the vineyard to others who will give him his share of the crop after each harvest.' Then Jesus asked them, 'Didn't you ever read this in the Scriptures? "**The stone that the builders rejected has now become the cornerstone.** This is the Lord's doing, and it is wonderful to see." I tell you, **the Kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation that will produce the proper fruit.** Anyone who stumbles over that stone will be broken to pieces, and it will crush anyone it falls on.' **When the leading priests and Pharisees heard this parable, they realized he was telling the story against them—they were the wicked farmers.** They wanted to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowds, who considered Jesus to be a prophet." Matthew 21:33-46 (NLT)

Note: In this parable, the landowner is God, the vineyard is Israel, the tenant farmers are the Jewish religious leaders, the landowner's servants are the prophets who faithfully preached God's Word to the people of Israel, the landowner's son is Jesus, and the nation that will produce proper fruit is us, Gentiles who have been adopted into God's family through a personal relationship with Jesus.

Life Application: We must surrender our families/plans/possessions/careers/dreams to Jesus and allow Him to be the cornerstone of our lives. "You are coming to Christ, who is the living cornerstone of God's temple... As the Scriptures say, 'I am placing a cornerstone in Jerusalem, chosen for great honor, and anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced.'" 1 Peter 2:4a & 6 (NLT) (*Isaiah 28:16*)

Life Application: God expects us to bear fruit. “I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn’t produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more... Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and **you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.**”

John 15:1-2 & 4 (NLT)

Life Application: How do I respond when God points out things in my life that need to change? “Prove by the way you live that **you have repented of your sins and turned to God.**” Matthew 3:8 (NLT)

3. **The Wedding Feast:** “Jesus also told them other parables. He said, ‘The Kingdom of Heaven can be illustrated by the story of a king who prepared a great wedding feast for his son. When the banquet was ready, he sent his servants to notify those who were invited. But they all refused to come! So he sent other servants to tell them, “The feast has been prepared. The bulls and fattened cattle have been killed, and everything is ready. Come to the banquet!” But the guests he had invited ignored them and went their own way, one to his farm, another to his business. Others seized his messengers and insulted them and killed them. The king was furious, and he sent out his army to destroy the murderers and burn their town. And he said to his servants, “The wedding feast is ready, and the guests I invited aren’t worthy of the honor. Now go out to the street corners and invite everyone you see.” **So, the servants brought in everyone they could find, good and bad alike**, and the banquet hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to meet the guests, he noticed a man who wasn’t wearing the proper clothes for a wedding. “Friend,” he asked, “how is it that you are here without wedding clothes?” But the man had no reply. Then the king said to his aides, “Bind his hands and feet and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” For many are called, but few are chosen.” Matthew 22:1-14 (NLT)

Note: There will be a wedding feast in Heaven. “After this, I heard what sounded like a vast crowd in heaven shouting... ‘Praise the Lord! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us be glad and rejoice, and let us give honor to him. **For the time has come for the wedding feast of the Lamb, and his bride has prepared herself.**” Revelation 19:1a & 6b-7 (NLT)

Note: The proper attire for the wedding feast in Heaven is robes of righteousness. “I am overwhelmed with joy in the Lord my God! For **he has dressed me with the clothing of salvation and draped me in a robe of righteousness.**” Isaiah 61:10a (NLT) “For Christ also suffered once for sins, **the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.**” 1 Peter 3:18a (NIV)

Note: God wants His servants to invite everyone to the wedding feast. “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that **whoever believes in him** shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”

John 3:16-17 (NIV)

Life Application: We are some of the servants God is sending out. “...**God has given us this task of reconciling people to him.** For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people’s sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. **So we are Christ’s ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us.** We speak for Christ when we plead, ‘Come back to God!’ For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ. As God’s partners, we beg you not to accept this marvelous gift of God’s kindness and then ignore it. For God says, ‘At just the right time, I heard you. On the day of salvation, I helped you.’ Indeed, **the ‘right time’ is now.** Today is the day of salvation.”

2 Corinthians 5:18b-6:2 (NLT)

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Connect Group Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think it’s so important to God that we seek Him? (Jeremiah 29:11-13) Why do you think Jesus said that seeking God is required to understand His parables? (Matthew 10:13-15)
2. Read the parable of the two sons. (Matthew 21:28-32) With which son can you most identify? If you were the dad in the parable, how would you feel about each of your sons? (Matthew 15:7-9)

3. Read the parable of the wicked farmers (Matthew 21:33-46), and discuss the following Life Applications:
 - We must surrender our families/plans/possessions/careers/dreams to Jesus and allow Him to be our cornerstone of our lives. (1 Peter 2:4-6, Isaiah 28:16)
 - God expects us to bear fruit. (John 15:1-4)
 - How do I respond when God points out things in my life that need to change? (Psalm 139:3-24, Matthew 3:8)

4. Read the parable of the wedding feast (Matthew 22:1-14), and discuss the following questions:
 - How does it make you feel to know that there will be a wedding feast in Heaven? (Revelation 19:1-9) Who will be there? What do you think it will be like?
 - If the proper attire for the wedding feast in Heaven is robes of righteousness, where do we get them? How much do they cost us? How much did they cost Jesus? (Isaiah 61:10, 1 Peter 3:18)
 - Who is eligible to receive an invitation to the wedding feast in Heaven? (John 3:16-17, Romans 3:22-24)
 - Who is God sending out to invite people to His wedding feast? (Matthew 28:19-20, 2 Corinthians 5:17-6:2)
 - Are you going to the wedding feast in heaven? If so, who could you invite to attend with you?