

Rejoice With Me

Message 2 of 5 in the series: "Once Upon a Time: Parables that Jesus Told"

A. Jesus often taught using parables.

Parable = "placing one thing by the side of another" = a short story that explains spiritual truths by using everyday objects and relationships = an earthly story with heavenly meaning.

1. Jesus taught the crowds using parables to reveal spiritual truth to those who were seeking it, even if they had little education or religious training. "Jesus always used stories and illustrations like these when speaking to the crowds. In fact, he never spoke to them without using such parables. This fulfilled what God had spoken through the prophet: 'I will speak to you in parables. I will explain things hidden since the creation of the world.'" Matthew 13:34-35 (NLT) (*Psalm 78:1-3*)
2. Sadly, the self-righteous, religious leaders in Jerusalem rejected Jesus and were not seeking spiritual truth. Although they were highly educated, their pride made them spiritually blind, so they didn't understand Jesus' parables at all. "You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them."

Matthew 13:14b-15 (NIV) (*Isaiah 6:9-10*)

B. God's heart and Jesus' mission:

Parable of the Lost Sheep:

"Tax collectors and other notorious sinners often came to listen to Jesus teach. This made the Pharisees and teachers of religious law complain that he was associating with such sinful people—even eating with them! So Jesus told them this story: 'If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them gets lost, what will he do? Won't he leave the ninety-nine others in the wilderness and go to search for the one that is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he will joyfully carry it home on his shoulders. When he arrives, he will call together his friends and neighbors, saying, "Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep." In the same way, there is more joy in heaven over one lost sinner who repents and returns to God than over ninety-nine others who are righteous and haven't strayed away!'" Luke 15:1-7 (NLT)

Parable of the Lost Coin:

"Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Won't she light a lamp and sweep the entire house and search carefully until she finds it? And when she finds it, she will call in her friends and neighbors and say, "Rejoice with me because I have found my lost coin." In the same way, there is joy in the presence of God's angels when even one sinner repents.'" Luke 15:8-10 (NLT)

Parable of the Lost Son:

"To illustrate the point further, Jesus told them this story: 'A man had two sons. The younger son told his father, "I want my share of your estate now before you die." So his father agreed to divide his wealth between his sons. A few days later this younger son packed all his belongings and moved to a distant land, and there he wasted all his money in wild living. About the time his money ran out, a great famine swept over the land, and he began to starve. He persuaded a local farmer to hire him, and the man sent him into his fields to feed the pigs. The young man became so hungry that even the pods he was feeding the pigs looked good to him. But no one gave him anything. When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, "At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger! I will go home to my father and say, 'Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired servant.'" So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him. His son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son." But his father said to the servants, "Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found." So the party began.'" Luke 15:11-24 (NLT)

Life Application: You don't do business as usual when someone is lost.

C. Have we come to Jesus on our terms, or have we counted the cost?

“A large crowd was following Jesus. He turned around and said to them, ‘If you want to be my disciple, you must, by comparison, hate everyone else—your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple. And if you do not carry your own cross and follow me, you cannot be my disciple. But don’t begin until you count the cost.’” Luke 14: 25-28a (NLT)

1. There is no middle ground.

“But since you are like lukewarm water, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth!”

Revelation 3:16 (NLT)

2. Something needs to change.

“And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart.” Ezekiel 36:26 (NLT)

“And now I am bound by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem. I don’t know what awaits me, except that the Holy Spirit tells me in city after city that jail and suffering lie ahead. But my life is worth nothing to me unless I use it for finishing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus—the work of telling others the Good News about the wonderful grace of God.” Acts 20:22-24 (NLT)

“Christianity, if false, is of no importance, and if true, of infinite importance. The only thing it cannot be is moderately important.” C.S. Lewis

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Connect Group Discussion Questions:

1. Which of the three parables is most impactful to you, and to which person do you relate the most in these parables?
2. Do you see people who are lost any differently after reading these parables and knowing God’s heart?
3. Were you aware of the cost of following Jesus when you first became a believer? How has that awareness changed throughout your walk with Christ?
4. How intentional are you with your resources and your time in reaching the lost?
5. What changes is God calling you to make so that reaching the lost will become a priority?
6. How intentional is your Connect Group in reaching the lost?