
Parable Studies

*Physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things,
holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.*

1 Timothy 4:8

This study was written by Sara Schleicher. The theological content was reviewed by
Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Professor-emeritus, Pastor David Valleskey.

Parable Study 1

Opening Prayer: Dearest Jesus, The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons (1 Tim. 4:1). Keep us spiritually strong and alive by growing our faith in you. How easy it is for us to get distracted by our own ideas and our “busy” lives. Don’t let us take this gift for granted. Keep us close to your Word so we can grow in the knowledge of our Savior and, in turn, scatter the seed of your Good News. Amen.

Lesson 1

The Parables of the Mustard Seed and the Yeast (Matthew 13:31-35)

31 He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. **32** Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.”

33 He told them still another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough.” **34** Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable. **35** So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet: “I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world.”

1. What are some similar characteristics of mustard seeds and yeast?

2. What can this parable teach us about the kingdom of heaven?

3. Where does the word “church” come from?

4. Where have you seen evidence of the growth of Christ's Church?

The Parable of the Growing Seed (Mark 4:26-29)

26 He also said, “This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. **27** Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. **28** All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. **29** As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.”

1. What does the seed represent?

2. Look at verse 27. The emphasis is not on the work of the farmer, but on what?

3. The power of the Word will prompt us to do more scattering of the Word. Where is a good place to do this?

Digging Deeper: In Matthew 13:35, we are reminded that Jesus speaking in parables was another fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Though our eyes may fail to see all the prophecies Jesus fulfilled, He did not fail to fulfill a single one! Read Psalm 78:2.

- Why did Jesus speak in parables? Read Matthew 13:10-17.

- Doing the Lord's work can be discouraging at times because we may not get to see the fruit of our labor, but remember—we are to keep spreading the gospel, regardless of the outcome. Read 1 Cor. 3:6-7 and Isaiah 55:10-12.

- Read the lyrics to Hymn #544 "Preach You the Word."

Memory passage: *1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*

Parable Study 2

Opening Prayer: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, You have shown us the signs of the end of the age. You have told us to be watchful so we will not be deceived. You have taught us to be prepared by looking to You and trusting in Your salvation. May Your Holy Spirit come and fill our hearts with gladness and joy, as we await the glorious return of our Bridegroom, in Christ. Amen.

Lesson 2

The Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13)

1 “At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. **2** Five of them were foolish and five were wise. **3** The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. **4** The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. **5** The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep. **6** “At midnight the cry rang out: ‘Here’s the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!’ **7** “Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. **8** The foolish ones said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.’ **9** “‘No,’ they replied, ‘there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.’ **10** “But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. **11** “Later the others also came. ‘Sir! Sir!’ they said. ‘Open the door for us!’ **12** “But he replied, ‘I tell you the truth, I don’t know you.’ **13** “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

1. This parable starts out with 3 important words “At that time...” What time is Jesus talking about here?

2. True or false? The foolish virgins had never come to faith. Explain.

3. See verse 6. What is the significance of “midnight”?

Read Mark 13:32-37...The Day and Hour Unknown

4. What does the oil represent?

5. We know faith in Jesus cannot be bought or sold. So what is the meaning of the wise virgins telling the foolish ones to go buy some for themselves?

6. What are some practical ways we can keep ourselves ready for the coming of God's kingdom?

Digging Deeper:

- Read the longest Psalm in the Bible! Psalm 119.
- Note the emotional plea of the foolish virgins in verse 11. In love, Jesus gives His people warning before He comes. Read Matthew 7:21-23; Matthew 23:37; Luke 13:31-35.
- Our preparedness for heaven does not depend on our sinlessness, but on God's election. Find reassurance of God's calling by reading 2 Thessalonians.
- Sing Hymn #206 Wake, Awake, for Night is Flying

Memory passage: *Romans 13:11 And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.*

Parable Study 3

Opening Prayer: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in love, you have chosen us to be Your own. You have invited us to live with you eternally and also enjoy the peace and blessing of fellowship with You here on earth. Forgive us for the times we've put our own earthly pursuits and desires ahead of your plans for us. Thank you for covering our sin, clothing us with Christ, and making us Your radiant Bride through faith in Jesus. Amen.

Lesson 3

The Parable of the Wedding Banquet (Matthew 22:1-14)

1 Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: **2** “The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. **3** He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come. **4** “Then he sent some more servants and said, ‘Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.’ **5** “But they paid no attention and went off—one to his field, another to his business. **6** The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. **7** The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. **8** “Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. **9** Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.’ **10** So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests. **11** “But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. **12** ‘Friend,’ he asked, ‘how did you get in here without wedding clothes?’ The man was speechless. **13** “Then the king told the attendants, ‘Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ **14** “For many are invited, but few are chosen.”

1. What is Jesus' simple point or truth with this parable?

2. Who were the first people invited to the banquet?

3. How did the Jews show contempt for God's gracious invitation?

4. What does verse 9 teach you about God's grace?

5. Think about how often you are willing to share a great deal—a coupon—buy one, get one free! Now, think about the banquet God has prepared for you. How will you share that free gift?

6. Martin Luther said: "I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel."
How does his statement line up with God's Word in verse 14?

Digging Deeper:

- Compare this parable to the Parable of the Great Banquet in Luke 14:15-24
- Search for Bible passages that speak of being clothed in righteousness. Here's some to get you started: Isaiah 61:10; Isaiah 1:18; Galatians 3:27
- Every sinner who by God's graces accepts this great invitation confesses that Jesus truly is the Son of God. Read 2 great confessions of faith: The Centurion, Matthew 27:54 and The Thief on the Cross, Luke 23:40-43.
- Read or sing Hymn #54 Where Shepherds Lately Knelt
 "Can I, will I forget how Love was born, and burned
 Its way into my heart unasked, unforced, unearned..."

Memory passage: *Jeremiah 2:32 Does a maiden forget her jewelry, a bride her wedding ornaments? Yet my people have forgotten me, days without number.*