

# KINGDOM TALES

Studies on the Parables  
&  
Original Stories about God's Kingdom  
to Deepen Your Faith

TROY M. BORST

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Original Stories about God's  
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By  
Rev. Dr. Troy M. Borst

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## INTRO: PARABLES & THE POWER OF STORY

This book is about exploring the creative side of Jesus Christ.

Jesus was and is the Son of God and during His three-year earthly ministry, “*No one ever spoke like this Man!*” (John 7:46). He taught individuals and crowds and shook them to their Jewish cores because He was the fulfillment and expansion of everything God the Father (YHWH) had been doing throughout history.

He did this through humor.

He did this through wise sayings.

He did this through parables.

Parables (pair-ah-bulls) are a story or tale about a simple subject meant to explain or expound on a spiritual Truth. We are not going to dig into them, but the Old Testament (Genesis-Malachi) contains parables. My personal favorite is the one in Judges 9. The New Testament also contains these simple tales with spiritual Truth and it is on these we will focus.

The four gospels that record for us Jesus' life (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) contain the parables of Jesus and those stories make up a crucial part of the New Testament and His teaching about the Kingdom of God.

If you understand the parable, you understand a little about God.

Jesus' task, among others for His three-year ministry (30-33 AD) was to simplify profound spiritual Truth so that the Kingdom of God would gain a foothold in the world run by Satan and begin to push back against the gates of Hell.

He was successful.

Jesus explained to His disciples why He spoke in parables and why He chose storytelling and even symbolic language to teach people about Heavenly Truths.

Matthew 13:10-13 (ESV) shares with us: *"Then the disciples came and said to Him, 'Why do You speak to them in parables?' 11 And He answered them, 'To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. 12 For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. 13 This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand."*

Jesus was communicating that His teachings are for everyone, but not everyone accepts Him. Sometimes it takes a little bit of effort to reach God and seek Him and pursue a relationship with the God of the Universe.

Yes, God is near.

Yes, we need to earnestly seek Him.

Parables are a way Jesus laid out spiritual Truth, but also challenged people to dig and pursue and think and seek and ruminate and pray and discover.

May this book do the same.

May you...

dig

pursue

think

seek

ruminate

pray

discover.

A parable utilizes a story to share a spiritual lesson. This book will discuss the parables of Jesus, but also has some creative original tales to spur your spiritual thinking as well. Enjoy them for what they are for they are not parables of Jesus, but the parables of a preacher trying to help you get closer to God.

There is power in story.

“We all live by narrative, every day and every minute of our lives. Narrative is the human way of working through a chaotic and unforgiving world.”<sup>1</sup>

The above random-ish quote from an article in 2002 reflects the truth that human beings are storytellers by nature (I would say by design). Storytelling is part of being human. Storytelling is part of navigating our natural world, our relationships, troubles, joys, and anything we experience.

We are Homo Sapiens Fabula.

Human beings tell stories naturally and it is also a way to have power or influence or attempt to make a difference. A good narrative captures our attention and can mold us and make us and change us.

The reason the nightly news is presented as it is (with information and then a further interview and then also a summary of the entire event or issue) rests in the power of story.

One way that lawyers attempt to persuade judges and juries is by “painting a picture” with words through story of their client’s innocence or the other person’s guilt. LaFonda Willis and Cherise

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<sup>1</sup> Wilson, E. O. (2002). The Power of Story. *American Educator*, 26(1), 8-11.

Bacalski state: “*Tell your client's story and do it clearly, succinctly, and persuasively. If you don't, know that an unfavorable, inaccurate, or losing rendition of your client's factual narrative will likely result. Remember that your client has a real opponent who is also trying to win the case. With that in mind, your goal-your mission-as an appellate practitioner should be to convince the judge to see things from your client's perspective and to agree with you. If you have compelling facts, make sound arguments, and the law is not clearly against you, then the judge will be inclined to rule in your favor.*”<sup>2</sup> What did these ladies just say? When the law is murky, a well-told convincing story wins the day. That is power.

The reason rom-com movies like *Fifty First Dates* or *Shotgun Wedding* or *Notting Hill* exist is because love and romantic relationships are difficult and human beings need to process those difficulties and, in the end, feel good about their lives and laugh... in the face of the wreck that is their marriage.

The reason comic books exist are because of the draw (pun intended) of story.

The power of story is present in the sharing of past culture and the importance of proper history textbooks. Even the word... history... has the word **STORY** in it.

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<sup>2</sup> Willis, L., & Bacalski, C. M. (2024). Effective Storytelling in Appellate Writing. *Appellate Practice Journal*, 43(1), 6-9.

The importance of story is at the heart of every eulogy.

The influence of story is why statista.com reports that “*adult fiction book sales increased by 0.8 percent between 2022 and 2023, with 2023 unit sales hitting 190.8 million, up from just over 189 million in the previous year.*”

Marlee Bunch, an experienced K-12 educator, regularly uses stories and creative content to reach her students about concepts that are difficult to analyze. She says: “*Perspective sharing, histories, stories, and relationships all create empathy and expands our knowledge about others.*”<sup>3</sup>

There is power and influence and purpose in story.

Marshall Ganz, the Rita E. Hauser Senior Lecturer in Leadership, Organizing, and Civil Society at Harvard Kennedy School presents that story enables people and movements to:

- #1 Deal with challenges while being mindful of the past.
- #2 Develop individual and collective identities that define us.
- #3 Access emotional or moral resources in order to act morally.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Bunch, M. (2023). Using Storytelling and Histories to Create Inclusive Spaces. *Radical Teacher*, 126, 67-70.

<sup>4</sup> Ganz, Marshall. 2001. The Power of Story in Social Movements. In the Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association, Anaheim, California, August 18-21, 2001.

All three of those correct notions from M. Ganz show the power of story in connecting people and shaping identity and thoughts and beliefs. Story enables us to internally adjust to the external world which is often vexing and unfair. The correct story helps us to remember how to act and why. The correct story helps us to remember who we were in the past and who we want to be in the future.

Story can be... and is... a vehicle for all of that.  
And more.

Jesus made no mistake (duh!) when He chose to couch spiritual truths in stories. A person may be struggling with forgiveness and recall the "Parable of the Prodigal Son" or is working under a Scrooge-type boss and rest easy in the "Parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man." A preacher might struggle his whole ministry to define success and feel like a failure until he remembers the "Parable of the Sower" in which Jesus Himself describes only 25% of people who accept the Gospel actually persevere.

Story is power to mold minds and hearts and actions and reactions.

Jesus had an entire Kingdom and way of living to describe in three years to unschooled ordinary men and women all the while resisting temptation to cut corners, dodging loaded questions from religious

authorities, and beating back the forces of darkness with healing and miracles.

Jesus turned to story to mold hearts and minds during His ministry.

Storytelling was a cornerstone of Jesus' teaching method (if not THE method) during His ministry. He often used parables to convey profound truths about God's Kingdom and the nature of human relationships.

Jesus' parables were accessible to people from various walks of life and He often used the common to explain the uncommon. He used familiar imagery from everyday experiences such as farming, fishing, and family dynamics to make His teachings relatable and understandable... and also at times mysterious.

Jesus Christ engaged His audience emotionally and intellectually with his stories. The parables invited listeners to reflect on deeper meanings and implications, prompting them to consider their own lives and relationship with God. The invitation to “go deeper” was the point.

Seek.

Think.

Find.

Understand.

Jesus of Nazareth's spiritual tales were not just about imparting information, but aimed to transform hearts and minds as people remembered them and thought deeper about them. More often than not, the parables called for repentance and a change of heart.

Through His parables, Jesus conveyed universal truths about love, forgiveness, mercy, justice, humility, money, prayer, and the very nature of God's Kingdom.

In summary, Jesus' use of storytelling exemplifies the power of narrative in conveying profound spiritual truths and shaping hearts and minds. His parables remain a foundational aspect of Christian teaching and continue to influence believers and non-believers alike through their enduring relevance and transformative potential.

# REFERENCE PAGE

PARABLES	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE
Salt of the Earth	Matthew 5:13	Mark 9:50	
Lamp Under a Bowl	Matthew 5:14-16	Mark 4:21-22	Luke 8:16, 11:33
Wise and Foolish Builders	Matthew 7:24-27		Luke 6:47-49
New Cloth on an Old Coat	Matthew 9:16	Mark 2:21	Luke 5:36
New Wine in Old Wineskins	Matthew 9:17	Mark 2:22	Luke 5:37-39
The Two Debtors			Luke 7:40-43
The Sower	Matthew 13:1-23	Mark 4:1-20	Luke 8:4-15
The Good Samaritan			Luke 10:25-37
The Friend at Midnight			Luke 11:5-13
Growing Seed		Mark 4:26-29	
The Rich Fool			Luke 12:13-21
The Watchful Servants		Mark 13:35-37	Luke 12:35-40
Unfruitful Fig Tree			Luke 13:6-9
The Weeds	Matthew 13:24-30, 36-4		
The Seed	Matthew 13:31-32	Mark 4:26-30	Luke 13:18-19
Yeast	Matthew 13:33		Luke 13:20-21
The Concealed Treasure	Matthew 13:44		
The Pearl	Matthew 13:45-46		
The Casting of the Net into the Sea	Matthew 13:47-50		
Owner of a House	Matthew 13:52		
The Lost Sheep	Matthew 18:12-14		Luke 15:3-7
The Unforgiving Servant	Matthew 18:23-35		
The Vineyard Workers	Matthew 20:1-16		
Lowest Seat at the Feast			Luke 14:7-14
The Great Feast			Luke 14:16-24
Cost of Discipleship			Luke 14:28-33
The Lost Coin			Luke 15:8-10
The Prodigal Son			Luke 15:11-32
The Shrewd Manager			Luke 16:1-13
The Rich Man and Lazarus			Luke 16:19-31
Master and His Servant			Luke 17:7-10
Persistent Widow			Luke 18:1-8
The Two Sons	Matthew 21:28-32		
The Vineyard Owner	Matthew 21:33-44	Mark 12:1-11	Luke 20:9-18
The Marriage Feast	Matthew 22:1-14		
Fig Tree	Matthew 24:32-35	Mark 13:28-31	Luke 21:29-33
Faithful and Wise Servant	Matthew 24:45-51		Luke 12:42-48
The Pharisee and the Tax Collector			Luke 18:9-14
Ten Virgins	Matthew 25:1-13		
The Talent	Matthew 25:14-30		Luke 19:11-27
The Sheep and the Goats	Matthew 25:31-46		

**PARABLE OF JESUS:**  
**Look like Light, Taste Like Salt**  
**Matthew 5:13-16**

Matthew 5:13-16 (ESV)

*"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. 14 "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."*

This passage you just read is part of Matthew 5 that most of the time is called the "Sermon on the Mount." The Sermon on the Mount goes from Matthew 5 with the Beatitudes to Matthew 7 with the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Builders.

The Sermon on the Mount contains a whole lot of theology about God, about being a follower of God, and about expectations God has of us.

Matthew 5:1-2 clues us in on the situation. Matthew 5:1-2 (ESV) says: *"Now when He saw the crowds, He went up on a mountainside*

*and sat down. His disciples came to Him, and He began to teach them saying..”*

His disciples were there.

Crowds were there as well.

Jesus sat down with His disciples and began to teach them and the rest of the crowds were there overhearing His solid teaching to His committed followers. I mention that because we need to remember that this passage is directed towards the followers of Jesus.

This passage is for us!

In this passage, Jesus is giving us some direction on what it means to be a disciple.

**TWO PRIMARY ELEMENTS:** In explaining life following Jesus (discipleship), Jesus uses two elements from everyday life to explain His expectations and the results of being a disciple.

The first is salt.

The second is light.

**SALT:** Salt is a mineral that has been used for 1000s of years. Archaeologists have found places in Romania where people were boiling water to extract salts and salt-works in China that date back many thousands of years. Salt was even a tradable item and was

used as money. I mention all that to say that salt has been around a long time and it has been a normal part of life every day for most people.

Jesus using salt to teach a lesson is not surprising since everyone listening would have used it, seen it, tasted it, or purchased it.

Salt in Jesus' day had two primary purposes.

First, salt was used to preserve food. In an age of no refrigeration, no electricity, and no Kenmore, people had to preserve meats and other food somehow. Salt can preserve fish, meat, beans, cabbage, and many other foods. A family in ancient times that had a supply of salt was a family that could harvest or kill food and preserve it for later and provide for meals long after unsalted food would go bad.

Second, salt was used to purify. Bacteria and many types of fungus cannot survive in a salty environment. Salt is used to purify. There are actually two examples of this in the Bible.

2 Kings 2:21-22 (ESV) says, "*Then he went out to the spring and threw the salt into it, saying, 'This is what the LORD says: 'I have healed this water. Never again will it cause death or make the land unproductive.' 22 And the water has remained wholesome to this day, according to the word Elisha had spoken.*" Elisha used salt and God blessed that salt to create a perpetually good source of water.

We also find a weird passage in Ezekiel 16:4 (ESV) which says, “*On the day you were born your cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water to make you clean, nor were you rubbed with salt or wrapped in cloths.*” It seems that salt was used when a baby was born to keep the baby healthy and to keep them from getting sick.

I have two stories about salt that came to mind when I was reading over this passage. The first happened to me one day while I was checking out of Walmart. Our family uses salt like most people, but one day I was shopping in Walmart and I found a grinder filled with pink salt. I thought it might add some taste to meals so I bought it. I was checking out and the cashier came to the item and just looked at it amazed. She asked me, “What is this?” I guess she had never seen it before. I told her it was salt. She asked me why it was pink. I told her it was a different kind of salt. Then she asked me a question that I did not have an answer to.

She asked: “Do you think they color it all with a marker?”

That story really has nothing to do with salt, but it is pretty funny.

Another story came to mind. I was eating out the other day at one of my favorite restaurants and I had fries that came with my meal. I have found at this restaurant that the french fries either come without salt or there are mounds and mounds of salt on them. There is no in between. I started to eat the fries, because french fries are the best

food ever invented, and the saltiness of the fries made them inedible. I tried to shake the salt off the fries, but to be honest, once salt gets into something... salt is in it.

The salt flavors every bite and you cannot unsalt something once it has been added. I ended up asking for another serving of fries without salt, but the point remains, once salt is in something, it is all in it.

**LIGHT:** The other element Jesus mentions is light. Light is the opposite of darkness. Light is something that has a specific meaning and two specific purposes in the Bible.

When we see light in the Bible, it is always associated with “life” and has that specific meaning. For example, when God was creating the Universe and creating life, He first made... what? He first made light (Genesis 1:3) because life thrives in the light. Light means life is possible. Sunshine and stars and the moon all shine down on us as life is thriving underneath it.

In passages like Psalm 27:1 we see that light and life are parallel thoughts: “*The LORD is my light and my salvation— whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life -- of whom shall I be afraid?*” (ESV)

The phrase “light of life” also is used in both the Old Testament and the New Testament (Job 33:30, Psalm 49:19, 56:13, Isaiah 53:11, John 8:12).

When we see light in the Bible, it also has the normal purpose of chasing away the darkness so that people can clearly see. That is the purpose of light. That is the purpose of candles, lamps, light bulbs, flash lights, headlights on cars, porch lights and any other form of light. Those items bring light when darkness has come.

We find that true in Exodus 13:21 when God led the people by fire at night. In 1 Kings 3:21, the woman whose son was stolen away saw clearly in the light what had happened. In Luke 15:8, the woman who lost a coin uses a lamp so she can thoroughly look for her lost coin.

Also, when we see light in the Bible, it also has the normal purpose of indicating the presence of God. Light indicates the presence of God. God was speaking with Moses through the burning bush (Exodus 3). We find that in the Tabernacle there was to always be lamps and light lit to indicate the presence of God (Numbers 4, 8).

I have two stories about light that came to mind when I was reading over this passage. The first happened to me when we lived in Pennsylvania many years ago. We had a basement in our house that was dark and damp. It was the damp part I was trying to figure out because I did not want mold to become a problem. I could see that

water was in the basement, but I could not see where it was coming from. I could not see if a pipe was leaking, if water was coming in from outside, or what the problem was.

It was not until I got a large light and went over the basement in a search until I found the old leaky pipe. I found the leaky pipe and its very small drip that was easily missed. The light helped me to find the problem.

Then, I had to fix the leaky pipe, but that is another story.

I also remember another story about light that was more recent. I learned a few years ago, from a youtube video, how to change brakes on a car. The last time I attempted to change the breaks on one of our vehicles, I started in the evening after dinner. It was taking forever. I could not get bolts loosened. I could not get this piece and that piece to work. Pretty soon, the darkness of evening was coming and I knew I had to have light. I was trying to finish replacing brakes in the dark. It was light when I started and turned dark before I could finish. I went inside to get a flashlight and looked under every sink and found none. I looked in our shed and found none. I looked in drawers and everywhere, but found no flashlight. I ended up using the little flashlight on my phone, holding the phone in my mouth, to try and have light to finish the brake job.

It was completely frustrating because I could not see anything, but needed to finish. I ended up frustrated, but finished the brakes.

I then drove to the store and bought 2 flashlights.

## SUMMARY OF SALT AND LIGHT

Salt preserves and purifies.

Light is life, the presence of God, and helps us see clearly.

Matthew 5:13-17 (ESV), again tells us: "*You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. 14 "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."*

**APPLICATION:** Jesus is teaching us exactly what a Christian is in our world.

A Christian person who follows Jesus Christ is a person who is light in their life. A Christian is someone who follows the way of life of God. A Christian reflects the presence of God in their lives. Christians are concerned about personal holiness. Christians help others around them see God clearly when they do not understand. That is what being a city on a hill or a lamp on a stand means. We are showing people God and His way of life and we reflect Him in all we do and say.

A Christian person who follows Jesus Christ has godly salt in their life. A Christian is definitely a person who preserves the Word of God by studying the Bible and living it out. A disciple is someone who by their very words, actions, and attitudes is the representative of the life Christ teaches us to have. We are also constantly purifying ourselves from the sinful nature. We are not perfect and are constantly finding ourselves short of the standard God sets for us. We then pray, repent, and move towards godliness on a regular basis.

As a result of looking like light and tasting like salt, the disciple has three very important efforts in life. These are actions that should define us as disciples of Jesus Christ.

#1 AGENT OF REDEMPTION: A Christian disciple is a person who looks like light and acts like salt. The result of that is that we are constantly pointing people around us to Jesus.

We are agents of redemption. We need to be like John the Baptist who points out Jesus as the "*Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*" (John 1:29, 36, ESV). We need to be like Andrew who took his brother to meet Jesus (John 1:41). We need to be like Philip who finds his best friend and takes him to Jesus (John 1:45). We need to be like the woman at the well who shares with all her neighbors the good news about Jesus (John 4:28-29). We need to be like the Philippian jailer who came to faith in Christ and shared this

with his whole family (Acts 16:34). We need to be like Lois and Eunice who shared their faith with their family (2 Timothy 1:5).

You see in all of these instances; the follower of Jesus was the agent of redemption that introduced Jesus to someone else. They were light. They were salt.

Is there a family member or someone we love dearly that needs to be pointed to Jesus?

Is there someone that we need to invite to church to move them along in their spiritual journey?

Is there an area we are failing in that hurts our witness as salt and light for others?

**#2 IRRITATE TOWARDS GODLINESS:** A Christian disciple is a person who looks like light and acts like salt. I think all of us could agree that our world is not by default godly and does not seek God's will as a regular practice. As a disciple, we are people who are committed to God and His way of life. That means we are constantly moving towards godliness in our lives.

I believe that also means we are pushing, pulling, helping, and aiding other in our lives towards godliness as well. That is never easy. Most

of the time the world river flows one way and God commands us to move the other direction.

James 5:19-20 says, "*My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, 20 remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins*" (ESV). That is being salt and light in our lives and in the lives of people around us.

Is there someone in our lives we need to come along side and pull towards godliness?

Is there something in our lives that needs to be purified so we are closer to God?

What can we add to our lives to push ourselves towards Godliness?

**#3 DIVINE STANDARD FOLLOWER:** A Christian disciple is a person who looks like light and acts like salt. Jesus explains that the salt of their day could lose its saltiness.

Saltless salt is useless. Jesus explains to His disciples that someone that follows Him does what is needed to continue to be salty and not lose the saltiness. Read the Bible, pray, dig in to Christian fellowship, use spiritual gifts, and other challenges. Follow the divine standard God set up and be salty. Jesus explains that

people can put a lamp under a cover. An unlit light is useless. Jesus explains to His disciples that someone who follows Him does what is needed to shine a light on Godliness. Share our faith, invite folks to church, pray for one another, and make God a normal part of your conversation.

Have we lost our saltiness?

Have we hidden our light under something?

Is there enough evidence in our lives to convict us of being a Christian?

**SUMMARY:** Jesus' message to His disciples is about being faithful followers. That means followers of Jesus are salt and light.

If you are not a believer in Jesus, you are not yet salt and you do not yet have light in you. If you feel like your life is dark and totally taken over by darkness, you are not alone. Everyone who is lost without Jesus feels that way. Being lost without Jesus Christ means living in the dark without life. If that is you, please understand and recognize that Jesus Christ came to bring light and life and purity to us.

John 1:9-13 says, "*The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and though the world*

*was made through Him, the world did not recognize Him. 11 He came to that which was His own, but His own did not receive Him. 12 Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His Name, He gave the right to become children of God— 13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God<sup>b</sup> (ESV).*

The children of God are salt and light and have eternal life. Any person at any time can choose life and choose to believe in Jesus Christ and He will remove the darkness and put in its place light and life.

Go be light.

Go be salt.



# Kingdom Tales

**MS. AGNES**

It was early Sunday morning and Agnes did not want to get up. Her back hurt. Her knee hurt. She did not sleep well. But it was Sunday and it was the day she set aside to go to church and to worship. It was also the day she taught the kids in Sunday School class.

Agnes arrived at church and went to her classroom which was where the 1<sup>st</sup> graders gathered. She got the handouts ready. Agnes paused for a moment and took a sip of her coffee. She prayed for a few minutes. Then she heard the patter of feet outside the door and the door swung open.

In marched a 1<sup>st</sup> grader whose name was Pistol. Yes, Pistol. He was a blond-haired blue-eyed menace. After him, came Pemberley, Rydder, and Kyndle.

‘Where do these parents come up with these names?’ she wondered.

Agnes greeted each of the kids as their parents dropped them off. Agnes showed a video, taught her lesson on the Good Samaritan, and settled the kids into a craft. It was all going well until the 1<sup>st</sup> graders started acting like 1<sup>st</sup> graders.

This is what happened that Sunday in her class:  
Pistol sneezed something green colored all over her.  
Pemberley clogged the toilet.  
Rydder sang a Disney song non-stop.  
Kyndle stated she was now Goldfish crackers intolerant.

Agnes was pleased when the class time was over and it was time for her to go to church. Agnes was frustrated today more than any other Sunday for some reason. The sneezing, clogged toilet, and everything was just getting on her nerves. There wasn't even a thank you from any of the parents. Humph. As she walked into the sanctuary, she wondered if teaching Sunday School to 1<sup>st</sup> graders was for her.

As the service began, the lights dimmed a little and the light shone at the front of the sanctuary. It was time for a baptism. There standing in the waters of baptism was Porter, a young man she had taught many years ago.

He stood there ready to be baptized. Porter stated that he believed that Jesus was the Son of God. The minister asked Porter where he had learned about Jesus.

Porter said: "Well I have two parents who have shown me a lot about Jesus. They are the biggest influence. I have to say though, that my

journey towards Jesus started with Ms. Agnes in 1<sup>st</sup> grade. It was because of her faithfulness I was introduced to Jesus.”

Porter was baptized.

Agnes had tears in her eyes. The green goo on her blouse and the clogged toilet and the silly songs and the goldfish intolerance seemed to be minor things. Here was a young man who had found faith in Christ and she had been part of planting seeds.

End

1 Corinthians 12:19-26 (ESV)

*“If all were a single member, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. 21 The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” 22 On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23 and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, 24 which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, 25 that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. 26 If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.”*

  **KINGDOM TRUTH**  

The Kingdom of God is about serving others and passing along faith. Knowledge about the Kingdom of God is not to be hidden away or kept to oneself, but shared and taught as much as possible.

  **KINGDOM TRUTH**  

The Kingdom of Heaven is like eating a meal at a restaurant, knowing you only have \$2 to your name, and the wait staff tells you the meal was paid for by the wait staff.



# KINGDOM TALES

## MR. GUNDERSON

The name on the front of the funeral booklet said “Joe ‘Mr. Coffee’ Gunderson.” The man who was in charge of coffee was named Mr. Gunderson, but everyone at the church just called him “Mr. Coffee.”

Mr. Coffee would get up very early every Sunday morning and get to the church before anyone else. Mr. Coffee would set up tables and chairs, set out cups, and would make several pots of coffee for the people of the church. He would then welcome people as they came in with smiles and coffee and a warm handshake.

He did this every single Sunday.

He was up early.

He made coffee.

He did it because he loved to serve.

One morning everyone else arrived at church to find the tables and chairs set up, the cups out, the coffee made, and Mr. Coffee slumped over in a chair. Joe ‘Mr. Coffee’ Gunderson passed away.

It was a very sad morning for people at the church when they lost this dear servant. There was shock and tears and a great sense of loss.

At his funeral, one person got up to speak about Joe “Mr Coffee” Gunderson. The young man recounted how he had been far from God and decided to give God one last shot to make a difference in his life. He pulled into a random church one Sunday and went in for services. He was greeted by “Mr. Coffee.”

He said: “Mr. Coffee gave me a cup of coffee and made me feel so very welcome. From that cup of coffee until now, I have felt welcomed and got the sense that God was welcoming me too. I have again found my faith with God. ‘Mr Coffee’ wasn’t really about the coffee, but he was about serving and loving God so that others would feel welcomed.”

Others nodded their head in agreement as the young man spoke at the funeral of his dear friend.

End

Psalms 145:4 (ESV)

*“One generation shall commend Your works to another, and shall declare Your mighty acts.”*

Matthew 6:20-21 (ESV)

*“But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*

2 Timothy 4:6-8 (ESV)

*“For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved His appearing.”*

  **KINGDOM TRUTH**  

The Kingdom of God is about serving others and passing along faith. Knowledge about the Kingdom of God is not to be hidden away or kept to oneself, but shared and taught as much as possible.

  **KINGDOM TRUTH**  

The Age to  
Come in Christ  
is like Amish  
dandelion jelly on  
a fresh made  
warm buttermilk  
biscuit.



# Kingdom Tales

## THE BOAT STORY

Once upon a time there was a world that was totally dark. No light. No light at all. No sun. No moon. No stars. The only lights in the whole world were lamps, candles, fires, and other man-made lights. The super-rich people had flashlights, but that was more of a legend that most people only dreamed about.

Light was a commodity often missed in this world.

In this world that was totally dark, was a man that lived in a town where there were no roads because the town was built on canals, rivers, and lakes.

Everyone's house was on some kind of water.

Everyone used some kind of boat to get around.

Our story centers on a man in a boat making his way through the dark city canals. It was more of a gondola or canoe really, but sufficed to say that it was a small 2 or 3-person boat. It had a place in the stern for a person to row and a place in the bow where a lamp was hung.

The lamp would light the way of the man in the boat.

The man in his boat is just about to head home from work. Unfortunately, his job at the local market was on one side of town and his home with his family was on the complete opposite side of town. He had to make his way through all the canals home as quick as he could. He lit the lamp on the front of his boat and set off into the canal. He pushed off with a long oar and began to make his way down the canal. In his boat was a box of supplies for his neighbor, some groceries for his family, and himself. He and the stuff took up some of the room in the boat, but not all of it.

As he made his way down the canal, he could see about twenty feet from the lamp in all directions. It was shining well. He passed out of the market area into where houses stood.

The light revealed a man walking on the right side on a walk way. "Hey there!" the man on the walk called out.

"Hey there!" the man in the boat called back.

"Hey can you spare some room in your boat for me? I need a ride down the canal."

"I cannot. I am on my way home. There is no room." The man in the boat knew there was no reason to deny the man, but it was an inconvenience. That there was no room in the boat was a lie. There was room for at least one or two if they sat correctly.

As soon as he passed the man, the lamp at the front of his boat dimmed. Where he could once see twenty feet from the lamp, he could now see less. The darkness crept closer to his boat.

The man in the boat continued down the canal towards his home. Further down the canal he could see a faint glowing. It looked like a collection of lights. As he got closer, he noticed it was a fire. A house was on fire! It was awful. There was a string of people with buckets from the canal all the way to the house. They had formed a chain to fight the fire. Bucket after bucket of water was being dumped into the house.

He could see flames and smoke.

He could see they needed more hands and help.

The man decided to head home instead of stop and help. As soon as he passed the fire brigade, the lamp at the front of his boat dimmed. Where he could once see twenty feet from the lamp, he could barely see what was in front of him.

The lamp was barely shining.

The light from his boat lit almost nothing.

The darkness crept closer to his boat and almost overtook him.

The man in the boat could barely see in front of his boat. This was dangerous. Light was needed for him to navigate the correct canals

to get home. Some went right. Some went left. He could not believe that after each encounter his lamp had dimmed.

As he made his way through what he thought was a familiar canal, his oar bumped the walk and he realized he had drifted dangerously close to the edge. As he looked at the walk, he noticed a mother and two kids sitting around a small dwindling candle. All three of them looked disheveled and in his estimation probably did not have a home. He could barely see, but it looked like all three of them were sharing a small piece of bread.

He knew that was not enough for all of them.

He shook his head.

He pushed his oar to move past them and his lamp poofed out.

No light.

None.

He was in complete darkness.

The man immediately moved his oar to move towards the bank and as he did so the lamp flickered on and had a small glow. His boat lightly clunked against the walk. He looked at the dimly lit lamp. He looked at the mother and three children. He looked at his ample supplies in his boat. With a call to the mother, he beckoned her over to the canal edge and gave her some food from his provisions. She was so thankful and she started to cry. The kids ran to her and jumped up and down excitedly. They screeched thank yous to him.

While he was giving the mother and children food, his lamp grew steadily brighter.

The man in the boat made his way down the canal towards his home. He used the oar to navigate as best he could. The lamp was not as dim now, but ever since he had left the woman and her children the lamp was a little brighter. Not like when he started, but a little brighter. As he was just about home, he could almost smell his wife's cooking. He could almost hear his kids laughing.

As he rounded a bend towards home, the lamp lit a boat in the middle of the canal in front of him. The boat was not moving in the water and was in distress. The other craft was sitting quite low in the water. He could see a man bailing water. The man had a bucket and was bailing over and over so that his boat would not sink.

"Hey there!" the man sinking and bailing cried out.

"Hey there!" the man in the boat called back.

"Hey can you spare an extra hand? I can't bail water and fix the leak at the same time!" He said this all while bailing water constantly.

The man looked at the man bailing water. He looked towards home. He looked at the lamp on the front of his boat. "I will," he cried out.

He lashed his boat quickly to the sinking one and grabbed the bucket. With much effort, he took over bailing water at a feverish pace. The owner of the boat quickly grabbed supplies and fixed the hole in his boat. It did not take long for the man to fix his boat for everyone in this dark world who lived in this town were boating experts.

The man did not notice it, but while he was bailing water, the lamp on his boat grew brighter and brighter. It grew brighter than it had ever been. In fact, the lamp was so bright it helped the man fix his boat even faster because he could see exactly what he was doing.

The lamp grew so bright that the people who lived in the area came to their windows and look out.

They saw one man helping another and nodded their heads in affirmation.

They saw mercy and kindness and love from one person to another.

End

Matthew 5:14-16 (ESV)

*“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father Who is in heaven.”*

  **KINGDOM TRUTH**  

The Kingdom of God is about serving others and passing along faith. Knowledge about the Kingdom of God is not to be hidden away or kept to oneself, but shared and taught as much as possible.

  **KINGDOM TRUTH**  



# KINGDOM TALES

## BASKET FULL OF ROCKS

Once upon a time there was a woman whose job it was to carry rocks from the rock pile outside of her village all the way into her hometown. She had a large basket on her back to fill at the rock pile and then walk to town. She did this over and over as long as it was light. It was hard work and sweaty work and heavy work, but it was her job and it was how she paid the bills to help feed her family. She wasn't good at cooking or gardening or mending clothes or music or teaching or selling in the market or any of the normal jobs women did for a living in town.

So, she carried rocks.

Big rocks.

Little rocks.

Muddy rocks.

Brown rocks.

Lots of rocks.

One particular day the woman was filling up her basket at the pile of rocks outside of town disaster struck. She hefted a pretty good-sized rock from the pile and thought she got it into her basket, but she did not. Instead of dropping it into her basket, the pretty good-sized rock dropped onto her foot.

She hooted.

She hollered.

She caterwauled.

She hopped around one-footed.

The pain of her toes let the rest of her body know something was wrong. Her shabby shoes had not protected her feet at all. She hurt herself. Bad.

Just about then, a skinny young man on a horse was riding by out of town. He saw her hopping around on one foot in obvious pain. She was yelling and carrying on and definitely looked like she was hurt. The skinny young man noticed the pretty good-sized rock on the ground and guessed what had happened.

The skinny young man rode on choosing not to see.

The woman knows in her mind, for where else are such things known, that she has to head back to town with her basket full of rocks. She must have rocks. No rocks. No pay. No rocks. Bad day.

Her foot hurt. The tough lady hefted the large basket on her back and started to limp into town. This was not a slight limp or a little limp, but a dreadful noticeable painful limp.

As she was heading into town, the local bodybuilding champion named Mariusz happened to be walking the same way as her. He noticed her dreadful painful limp, but didn't say anything. He noticed the limp made her almost spill rocks out of her basket. He didn't say anything. A conversation began and they talked about the weather and how the price of rocks just kept going up and up and up. Mariusz bought lots of rocks for lifting.

She stumbled.

The bodybuilding champion noticed her stumble and felt so sorry for her. He pitied her. She had to lug those rocks all the way into town with a limp and his heart felt so sad for her. The two walked until they came to the outskirts of town and the bodybuilder waved goodbye and went into the gym. The woman with the dreadful noticeable painful limp carrying rocks on her back waved goodbye to her friend Mariusz and continued on into town.

She passed the local general store. Men and women pointed and noticed her, but no one came up to her to aid. She walked and walked. The women at the beauty salon called out to her and told her how sorry they were for her pain, but none helped carry any of her load. She walked and walked. A politician giving a speech in the town square noticed her and decided to use her as an example of the economic hardships workplace injuries place on physical laborers and how local laws would help such people once he was elected.

It was not until she passed the local elementary school when something amazing happened. All of the children were at recess when the woman carrying the rocks limped by. One by one the children broke from their hopscotch and jump ropes and kickball games and ran to the hard-working limping woman. As the woman walked, a child would come up behind her and take a stone from her basket and carry it alongside her.

One by one children came.

The woman limped along with an empty basket as a gaggle of kids behind her each carried her load. It was not long past the school when the woman came upon her rock pile in town. One by one the children tossed their rocks and stones on the pile, smiled, waved, and ran back to the school yard.

The woman had a big smile from ear to ear, but her foot did still hurt.

The next day the woman with the dreadful noticeable painful limp whose job it was to carry rocks on her back... went back to work. No rocks. No pay. No rocks. Bad day. Her foot was hurt, but she had rocks to move and so off to work she went. The limp was not as noticeable after an evening of propping her foot up with an icepack.

A distressing sight greeted the woman as she arrived at her rock pile outside of town. Sitting on her rock pile was the skinny young man

from the day before who noticed her plight, but rode out of town without helping.

He sat in obvious pain.

She approached and he mentioned to her that a good distance after leaving town, he sneezed the loudest sneeze anyone had ever sneezed and scared his horse. His horse bucked him off and ran away. In the process of landing on the ground, he hurt both his feet. It had taken him all night to drag himself back to the spot of the rock pile.

What would she do?

What could she say?

This particular story can end in several ways as the woman who carries rocks responds to the young skinny man who has hurt both feet.

Yes, she could fill up her basket with rocks and more rocks and then put the basket on her back and make her way into town leaving the young skinny man to drag himself into town. We might call that normal fair behavior or natural consequences for the young man.

Maybe she could start laughing hysterically because a person who refused to help her the day before needed her help.

She could point and stare for sure.

Reenacting the accident all the while making fun of him for being stupid and heartless is a real possibility one might call ironic justice.

Yes, she could sit and listen to him tell his story of woe and empathize and share with him words of pity and sorrow. She could share her experience the day before with pain and anguish and also then blame him for not helping her and share that he's in the spot he's in because he's a terrible person. We might call that correcting his behavior.

And then there is another possibility that may or may not occur to us. She could sit and listen to him tell his story of woe and empathize and then pick up the skinny young man and stuff him in her basket and carry him back to town because a skinny young man weighs much less than a basket full of rocks. We might call that compassion.

The Kingdom of God is full of souls who deny themselves and their sinful natures regularly in order to be more like Jesus who loves us and shows undeserved compassion.

End

Psalms 78:38 (ESV)

*“Yet He, being compassionate, atoned for their iniquity and did not destroy them; He restrained His anger often and did not stir up all His wrath.”*

> “rawkham”: to love deeply, to have mercy, to be compassionate

Matthew 22:36-38 (ESV)

*“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” 37 And He said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment.”*

> “agapao”: to be well pleased, to love dearly

## **KINGDOM TRUTH**

The Kingdom of God has its foundation, meaning, and purpose in love. A person must understand love to comprehend the will of God and to understand how to behave as a child of God. Love is the “why” to so many questions about God’s Kingdom and solves many mysteries.

## **KINGDOM TRUTH**

The Kingdom of  
Heaven is like eating  
a meal at a restaurant,  
knowing you only  
have \$2 to your name,  
and the wait staff tells  
you the meal was paid  
for by a stranger.



# Kingdom Tales

**DEMAS**

**D**emas waited by the side of the road in the shadows. He had his spot picked out perfectly... it was his normal spot. He could see the road coming down from Jerusalem, but none of the travelers could see him. He had done this several times and had stolen some good loot over the past few days. He tightened the grip on his knife. He didn't want to use it, but would if he had to... it was more for show.

Demas heard the sound of a voice coming down the road. He crouched a little lower. In the distance, he saw a big fat man singing obnoxiously loud and moving carelessly on the road. The traveler moved his hands in the air and sang loudly to the sky to no one in particular. On his hip was a large leather sack... maybe money... maybe important scrolls someone would pay to get back. The man certainly was dressed wealthy and did not seem to pay attention to anything but his song.

The loud man passed Demas' hiding place. Demas sprung from his hiding place. He grabbed the man from behind and spun him around with force. He put the knife threateningly to his big fat belly.

“Hand over the sack! I will rob you as I have all the others!” Demas said in a demanding low voice.

The fat wealthy man tried to back up, but Demas kept a good hold on his cloak and shook him a little.

“Hand over the sack!” Demas yelled louder.

The fat man’s face was fearful, but only for a moment. All of a sudden, the man stopped struggling, took the sack, and handed it to Demas with a large knowing smile spreading across his face. Demas could not figure out why the fat rich man stopped struggling and smiled.

Then Demas heard it behind him.

The clink.

The clank.

The sound of several feet on the road.

Demas turned to find five Roman soldiers with swords drawn.

It had been a trap.

“Good soldiers,” the fat man said addressing the Romans, “this man came from the darkness beside the road and has robbed me of my pack. I believe he is the same highwayman that has been robbing other innocent travelers.”

The commander of the soldiers stepped forward.

Demas dropped his knife and hung his head ashamed that he had fell for such an obvious trap.

“We heard him. We’ve got our man and you held up your end of the bargain.” The commander took the sack from Demas and handed it back to the man. He also tossed a sack of coins in his direction.

“Now be on your way!” the commander said to the man-who-had-been-bait. With that, the soldiers bound Demas and pushed him back towards Jerusalem.

While they were pushing him back to Jerusalem, they laughed that their trap had worked the first time they tried it. Also while they led him back to Jerusalem, they read off his charges:

Theft of travelers on a Roman road three times.

Theft of a nobleman’s seal and blackmail.

Theft from a market.

Theft from a butcher.

Theft from a baker.

Theft from a candle stick maker.

Theft from an inn.

All of those were true, Demas thought, along with some they had not tied to him. As he marched bound towards Jerusalem, he wondered what his punishment would be? What would happen to him now that the Romans had caught a thief?

Demas sat in his cell for over a month. He was now officially a convicted thief in the court of the Romans and no hope of release. All the charges against him were true. Witness and those he had stolen from had come forward and identified him as the thief. Not only that, the soldiers had caught him in their trap stealing.

He was guilty.

His punishment?

He had not heard yet.

The fellow with him in his cell was also a convicted criminal. Both were indeed guilty as they shared their stories.

Demas sat in his cell and heard a loud commotion outside. It was the loudest he had heard the soldiers get since he had arrived here. He heard the soldiers yelling and mocking. They were whipping someone. He heard the sounds of flogging.

He heard words like "hail" and "king."

Demas wasn't sure what was going on out there, but it did not sound good... not even a little. Who were they beating? What had the man done? What would make the soldiers yell so much? Was he next?

After the beatings seemed to die down, the gates in the hall outside his cell began to open. Someone was coming for them. A soldier arrived at his cell and raked the keys along the bars. He opened the gate.

"Time for you two to receive your sentence!" the soldier called out with a pleased tone.

"What is our sentence," the other man in the cell questioned?

The soldier said with a smile, "crucifixion."

Demas hung his head in shame.

Of course, it was crucifixion.

Demas hurt.

Shoulders were out of socket.

Nails pierced his bones in his hands and feet.

Barely stand the pain.

Hands were numb.

Back was raw from rubbing up and down on the cross.

Barely breathe.

Demas was hung first. Then the man who had been in the cell with him. Then it was the man who he heard being beaten by the soldiers. He heard them all talking.

The man between them was Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus was a Rabbi who had been about the countryside doing miracles and teaching people about God. He had even heard the soldiers say that Pilate the governor had declared Him innocent, but crucifixion was still His sentence. Crucifixion for an innocent man simply made no sense!

Demas heard Jesus say, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." He saw Jesus' mother there. He heard Jesus ask some young man to care for his mother. He heard people pass by calling Him the Christ.

The Christ!

The Christ was being killed!

Why would anyone kill the Christ?!

He was the One promised in the Law and the Prophets!

All three men suffered on their crosses all day long. Demas seemed to notice as the day grew strangely darker that Jesus bore more weight and pain than he or the other man. Something else was going on with Him. Suddenly the other man started to yell at Jesus.

He would lift up on the nails and cry out over and over, "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!"

Demas could not believe that the other man would be awful even now. They were all dying. Demas pushed up on his nail and rebuked him saying, "Don't you fear God, since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." Demas slunk back down and pain shot through his arms and lungs and legs.

Jesus looked over at him. His eyes were full of... compassion... sacrifice... power... omnipotence... goodness... holiness... he had never seen eyes like those before.

Certainly this was the Christ!

Then Demas lifted himself up again on the nail and eked out, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."

End

Luke 23:39-43 (ESV)

*“One of the criminals who were hanged railed at Him, saying, “Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!” 40 But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? 41 And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.” 42 And he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into Your kingdom.” 43 And He said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in paradise.”*

Romans 5:6-11 (ESV)

*“For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— 8 but God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Since, therefore, we have now been justified by His blood, much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God. 10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by His life. 11 More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.”*

  **KINGDOM TRUTH**  

Faith in Jesus is the **ONLY** way into the Kingdom of God.

  **KINGDOM TRUTH**  



# Kingdom Tales

MERCY IS LIKE

**M**ercy is like two farmers who had two fields next to each other. Each farmer came out on the same morning to prepare their fields and to plant seed. They looked at each other and went about their work.

Farmer Smith went about his work and planted seed the way he knew how which was how his father had taught him. Farmer Jones was planting seed and noticed what was happening in the other field and laughed and carried on. He shouted and made fun of his neighbor because of poor farming technique and how nothing would grow.

By the end of the day, both farmers had planted their fields.

That night there was a furious storm with mighty wind and much rain. The next morning both farmers went out to inspect their fields.

Farmer Jones, who had jeered his neighbor and loudly bullied Farmer Smith, found that in the storm all his seed had been blown away or washed away. He basically had an empty field. He also had used up all his seed so he had nothing. Farmer Smith went to inspect his field and found everything was fine. In fact, he even had extra seed in the barn which had survived the storm.

The two farmers met at the fence between their fields and compared notes. Farmer Jones was downcast. He feared for the future. Farmer Smith, who had extra seed, went to his barn, got seed, and hefted the bags over the fence to his neighbor.

End

Matthew 5:7 (ESV)

*“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”*

Matthew 9:13 (ESV)

*“Go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’ For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”*

James 2:13 (ESV)

*“For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.”*

James 3:17 (ESV)

*“But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.”*

  **KINGDOM TRUTH**  

The Kingdom of God is an atmosphere of complete mercy and grace and compassion. Human beings need it to be so because we fail and fall often and quite miserably. The only way to be reconciled to God is for Him to extend compassion and mercy to us. Grace is motivated by His love for us.

  **KINGDOM TRUTH**  

The Kingdom of  
Jesus is like a  
family owned  
company which is  
bought by the son  
and then given to  
the employees.



# KINGDOM TALES

## THE PLUCKING OF THE BIRDS

Imagine a little area where all kinds of birds live. There are toucans, flamingos, peacocks, golden pheasants, and all kinds of colorful macaws. They all live in harmony except for one season when villagers who live nearby challenge each other to see which villager can pluck the most feathers from the birds.

It is fun for the villagers and painful for the birds.

One day, the season came for plucking feathers.

All of the birds saw the villagers coming and hid amongst the thick foliage, but one bird decided not to hide. The peacock decided not to hide. The peacock, instead of hiding, decided to raise his head high, spread out its beautiful feathers, and strut around like he was hot stuff. Surely the bird would be seen as too beautiful to pluck and the villagers would leave him alone.

Unfortunately for the peacock, that was not the case.

The villagers found the peacock strutting around and grabbed every single one of the bird's feathers. The rest of the birds stayed hidden safe and sound and full of plumage.

The proud peacock had been stripped of all his feathers.

The proud peacock had been stripped of all his feathers.

Soon, the villagers all went away because they could find no more birds to pluck. Some of the birds remained hidden. Once the coast was clear, toucans, flamingos, peahens, golden pheasants, and all kinds of colorful macaws came out of hiding and saw what happened to the proud peacock.

It was not long until the laughter began.

“You look like a chicken,” a toucan guffawed.

“You look ready to be put in an oven,” a flamingo squawked.

“You look ridiculous,” a peahen declared.

“So much for strutting your stuff, now you have no stuff,” crowed a pheasant.

All of the macaws just pointed and laughed.

The laughter of all the birds filled the air.

Once the coast was clear, toucans, flamingos, peahens, golden pheasants, and all kinds of colorful macaws had come out of hiding and saw what had happened to the proud peacock.

They were poking fun.

They were having quite a laugh fest at the demise of the peacock.

Little did the flocks know that the villagers had not gone that far away in a bit of planned jiggery-pokery. They heard quite the commotion and immediately decided to investigate. They saw the peacock stripped of feathers surrounded by a whole throng of birds full of feathers!

They got low.

They got slow.

They knew how to go.

The birds were focusing on making fun of the peacock and did not sense the encroaching humans. They were all making such a commotion that not one bird knew the villagers were coming close.

The villagers leapt from the bushes and began to pick all the feathers off all of the birds. No bird could fly away. No bird could get out of the way. All of the birds making fun of the peacock got their feathers pulled and there was nothing they could do to stop it.

All the birds were left featherless.

Not one feather remained in the whole forest.

End

2 Chronicles 26:16-21 (ESV)

*“But when he was strong, he grew proud, to his destruction. For he was unfaithful to the Lord his God and entered the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense. 17 But Azariah the priest went in after him, with eighty priests of the Lord who were men of valor, 18 and they withstood King Uzziah and said to him, “It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the Lord, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to burn incense. Go out of the sanctuary, for you have done wrong, and it will bring you no honor from the Lord God.” 19 Then Uzziah was angry. Now he had a censer in his hand to burn incense, and when he became angry with the priests, leprosy broke out on his forehead in the presence of the priests in the house of the Lord, by the altar of incense. 20 And Azariah the chief priest and all the priests looked at him, and behold, he was leprous in his forehead! And they rushed him out quickly, and he himself hurried to go out, because the Lord had struck him. 21 And King Uzziah was a leper to the day of his death, and being a leper lived in a separate house, for he was excluded from the house of the Lord. And Jotham his son was over the king’s household, governing the people of the land.”*

1 John 2:16 (ESV)

*“For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.”*

  **KINGDOM TRUTH**  

The Kingdom of God is an economy of submission where there is no place for pride. Pride is not rewarded or wanted. Humbleness and service is the currency of Heaven. Denial of self is the order of each and every day.

  **KINGDOM TRUTH**  

The Kingdom of  
God is like  
refunded bank  
fees from a  
mistake you  
legitimately made.



# kingdom tales

## PETE'S BIRD

There once was a guy named Pete. Pete decided that he wanted to buy a pet and have that pet with him at all times and always be with him. Pete went to his local pet store and explained to the kind pet store owner exactly what he wanted.

"I know it sounds silly, but I want a pet that will be my friend. I want a pet who will like me. I want a pet who will encourage me," he said. Then he awkwardly asked, "Is that weird?"

The pet store owner looked at him with a strange glare, but then his face lit up. He pointed to the bird section.

Pete walked over to the bird section and there was only one bird in the whole section. It was a medium sized Myna Bird with a little pair of headphones on. It was just perched there and watched him as he approached.

There was a sign hanging in front of the bird: "No touching. This bird is ready to repeat whatever you tell him. Make it good. Buy him. Say one phrase, and he is smart enough to repeat it at exactly the right time. This is a super intelligent bird."

Pete looked at the bird.

The bird seemed to smile at him.

He saw a little yellow beak with a jet-black body.

The bird seemed to smile at him.

Pete had to have the bird!

The store owner walked up behind him: "Do you want the bird?"

"Yes," Pete answered.

As soon as Pete nodded, the store owner took the headphones off the bird and it jumped onto Pete's shoulder. It just sat there. It looked at him expectantly.

The owner pointed to the sign and indicated that the next thing Pete said would be learned and repeated by the bird.

Pete realized the enormity of what he had to teach the bird. He wanted a friendly encouraging pet companion to rival all others:

What would encourage him the most?

What would benefit him the most to hear often?

What would he need to hear over and over?

Then it came to him.

He knew exactly what phrase he would teach his bird.

Pete said very clearly to the bird: "Follow Jesus in all things."

The pet shop owner looked very strange at Pete for he was not a Christian. He had a Bible at home, but it was propping up his kitchen table to make it even.

As he took Pete's money he said to Pete, "That has to be the dumbest thing that I have ever heard. You are an idiot. Now for the rest of that bird's life it will say, 'Follow Jesus in all things.' You are so dumb." The owner just kept saying derogatory things to Pete over and over. His voice was angry.

Pete found himself getting angry himself. His thoughts began to come one after another: 'Who in the world was this guy? Why would he be so judgmental? Why would he just attack him about his faith?'

As the owner said more and more things, Pete got angrier and angrier. As he stood there waiting for his receipt, Pete felt the need to call down curses from God on this fellow and yell back at him, but in the moment, the bird looked at him and said, "Follow Jesus in all things."

Pete realized that answering in anger would solve nothing.

Pete realized starting an argument would not be helpful.

Pete paused for a moment and said simply, "Jesus is my anchor in life and I look to Him for direction. Right now, I want to yell at you and return the hate that you have flooded in my direction. But I won't because a gentle word turns away wrath. I hope someday you meet God and experience His grace." With that, Pete walked out of the store.

The bird just bobbed his head up and down in approval.

Pete had other places to go. In fact, he had to go and get tires for his truck. He got in his truck and the bird hopped off his shoulder and onto the seat. Pete drove to the tire store and could already feel his frustration brewing. You see, Pete ordered and paid for his tires 3 weeks ago. The first week, they had ordered the wrong tires. The second week, they had gotten his tires in, but had sold them to someone else on accident. This was the third week. As he pulled into the parking lot of the tire place, he could feel the frustration growing as he anticipated another unforeseen problem.

He opened the door to get out and his bird jumped onto his shoulder. He walked into the office of the tire place.

He waited in line.

He waited his turn.

He waited in line.

It was taking longer than it should have.

His righteous frustration grew. They had messed up twice and now he had to take a day off to get something done.

When Pete got to the front of the line, it was the manager manning the desk. Pete gave his name. The manager asked how his experience had been and his jaw dropped as Pete explained the ordeal over the past 3 weeks. Pete explained it calmly and with patience.

The manager listened and then typed Pete's order into the computer. His face fell. He almost did not look at Pete. "Uh sir," the manager said, "your tires are not here. They will be here tomorrow."

Pete's blood pressure skyrocketed.

Three times now this place had messed up! Not once, not twice, but three times. The bird on Pete's shoulder cheeped, "Follow Jesus in all things" and then went back to looking around at all the colorful posters.

Pete stood there not knowing what to say.

The manager looked at Pete in shock and said, "I can't believe you are not yelling or asking for a refund or telling me how awful we are." Pete just stared.

He really could not even think.

“Let me tell you what we are going to do,” the manager continued, “I am going to push through a \$50 rebate for you on these tires you have already bought. I am going to upgrade you right now and I am putting 4 better tires on your vehicle instead of 2. I am going to try and make this right since we have done so poorly. Is that ok?”

Pete looked at the man. A man who was just trying to do the right thing in an impossibly hard situation. Pete handed him the key.

The bird just nodded up and down as Pete sat in the waiting area for his vehicle. Pete sat in the waiting area for his truck. It got done. He left with 4 new tires on his truck and the whole situation had been made right.

On his way home, Pete noticed that early voting was open at his local library. He could go vote. He had the day off. It never took all that long, but to be honest, he wasn't all that pleased with anything or anyone he had to vote for. He looked at his bird and started to talk as they sat at the traffic light.

“I don't want to vote. I don't think my vote really matters. I am not even sure what should guide my vote,” he said to his pet companion.

The bird looked at him with one eye and cocked its head and repeated, "Follow Jesus in all things."

Pete was a little puzzled and looked at the bird: "Are you telling me that as a Christian, Jesus cares whether or not I vote and also has a divine opinion on how I should vote? Are you sure?"

The bird just bobbed his head up and down.

He got to the library and he turned into the voting place. He walked up and the volunteer on the outside asked him to have his ID out as that makes it all go faster. She looked strangely at him since he still had his bird on his shoulder.

The bird just nodded his head up and down and flapped his wings.

Pete got into the polling place and gave his ID to the worker. She input his ID and he signed the little digital pad confirming it was him doing the voting. He got a little receipt and followed the colors on the floor to the printer where his ballot was waiting for him. He took the ballot and went to the little alcove where he could fill in the circles for his vote.

He looked at his ballot.

The first office he had to vote for was President.

He looked at the bird.

The bird looked at him and piped, "Follow Jesus in all things."

He marked his ballot.

The second office he had to vote for were people in the Congress.

He looked at the bird.

The bird tilted his head and chirped, "Follow Jesus in all things."

He marked his ballot.

There were options for property appraisers. There were selections for judges to keep or dismiss. There were even amendments to the state constitution that were on the ballot. Some about energy and some about taxes on property. There was even one about legalizing marijuana.

Pete looked at his bird. "Are you telling me that God has principles to guide me in all of these things? You are telling me that it matters to my Christian faith how I vote? Are you telling me that being a follower of Jesus means that even in voting there is a Godly path?" So many questions for this little bird.

He looked at the bird.

The bird observed the ballot and said, "Follow Jesus in all things."

He marked his ballot.

Pete left the little voting alcove and put his paper ballot into the scanner and the computer recorded his vote. The volunteer thanked

him for voting and gave him a little “I voted” sticker to put on his shirt. He put it on to encourage other people to vote.

Pete left the voting place and headed home. On his way home, there was a “more seasoned” driver in the lane ahead of him. She could barely see over the steering wheel and was driving slowly. She was weaving just enough that he did not want to pass for fear of an accident.

Pete’s bird looked at him, winked, and chattered, “Follow Jesus in all things.” Pete chilled out as he came to the stop light.

At the stop light, Pete noticed a pan-handler on the side of the road. The person had a sign that said, “Need beer, why lie. God bless.” The pan handler looked at Pete in his truck and noticed the bird.

The bird looked at Pete and warbled, “Follow Jesus in all things.”

Pete pulled out a \$5 from his wallet and a card that had information about his church’s food pantry which happens on Tuesday mornings. He gave the money and the card to the pan-handler.

The bird on his shoulder just nodded and nodded.

On the rest of the drive home, Pete decided he wanted to listen to music. He turned on the radio and blasted good tunes. The song

he was listening to was a driving beat, but did have a curse word every other minute.

The bird on his shoulder nodded his head and said very clearly: “Seriously, do I need to say it again? By now you should get it! As a follower of Jesus, He rules absolutely every part of your life. No exceptions.”

End

Luke 6:46 (ESV)

*“Why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you?”*

John 14:21 (ESV)

*“Whoever has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.”*

Galatians 2:20 (ESV)

*“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me.”*

  **KINGDOM TRUTH**  

The Kingdom of God is filled with people who confess and accept Jesus of Nazareth as Savior and Lord. The ‘Savior’ part is often the most attractive and is seen as a ‘get-out-of-hell’ card. The more difficult side of Christianity, because of our sinful nature, is submitting to the lordship of Jesus Christ which is fruit of our salvation.

  **KINGDOM TRUTH**  

The Kingdom of  
God is like new  
car smell. It is  
distinct, unique,  
and comes after a  
heavy price is  
paid.



# Kingdom Tales

## THREE STRANDS STORY

Once upon a time, there was a tall tower that stretched high into the sky. The top of the tower held a glass bowl filled with the “Water of Life.” Anyone who reached the top of the tower could drink from the glass bowl and could have one of several gifts given by the water.

One could have a great sense of belonging and feel part of a large family with shared goals and experiences.

One could have a sense of being cared for and could care for others in return.

One could have a clear conscience in life and have a righteous reputation.

One could have a faith in God that is deep and wide and sure and strong and sound.

One could have companions to experience life with in good times and in bad.

One could have a powerful filling of the Holy Spirit and real faith.

Anyway, anyone who reached the top of the tower could drink from the glass bowl and could have any of those gifts described. The problem was that the tower had...

... no doors

... no stairs

... no ladders

... no windows

... no hand holds

... nor any way to climb.

The tower was perfectly round and smooth.

Three people took on the challenge to reach the top of the tower. Crowds gathered to watch these three attempt to reach the top. Each of them had trained in their own way to reach the top and receive a blessing.

First, there was a woman who decided that she would train and work to run up the side of the tower. She figured that God had blessed her with speed, coordination, and bravery and she could get up such speed that she could run up the tower and reach the top. She trained and she trained and she got faster and faster.

Her feet were quick.

Her balance was perfect.

She outran a horse.

She outran a speeding train.  
She outran even the wind!  
She was ready.

The speedy woman got ready run. She walked away from the tower a great distance in order to build up her speed. Dust flew behind her as she began to run. Wooosh! She picked up speed. Leaves blew off trees. Spectators were shocked.

As she approached the tower, she attained top speed and began to run up and up and up the tower. Her speed slowed about half-way up. Up she went, but every step was more difficult. She got two thirds of the way up and then came back down. Wooosh! The runner landed at the bottom of the tower; unhurt, but also unsuccessful.

Second, there was a man who decided that he would train and work to jump to the top of the tower. He figured that God had blessed him with good feet, strong legs, and the perseverance needed to jump high.

His jumping skill was unlike anyone who had lived before.  
He jumped so well that he could jump over a lake.  
He could jump over his house in one leap.  
He jumped over the whole town.  
His jumping was perfect.  
He was ready.

The jumper walked to the base of the tower and got in the right frame of mind. He knew in his mind he was ready. The crowds cheered him all the while consoling the fast running woman. The man bent down at the base of the tower and gathered all his will and strength. The ground underneath him shook as he jumped. Wooosh!

Some of the crowd were shaken off their feet as he jumped.

It was a perfect jump with great strength and skill.

The top of the tower was...

... coming closer and closer and closer and closer  
and then

... not so close and not so close and not so close.

He got two thirds of the way up and then came back down. Wooosh!  
He landed at the bottom of the tower; unhurt, but also unsuccessful.

Thirdly, there was a man who decided that he would train and work to use his great strength to climb the high tower with a large rope. He figured that God had blessed him with strong hands, strong arms, and very strong shoulders. He believed he could pull himself all the way to the top of the tower using a rope.

He pulled a large ship with his muscles and the rope.

He pulled a leaning tree straight with his strength and rope.

His strength and rope were ready for the challenge.

He stretched. He flexed. He looked in a mirror. The crowds cheered him all the while consoling the fast running woman and the high jumping man who had both failed.

The man grabbed his rope and swung swung swung it high in the air. Woosh! The hook reached all the way to the top of the tower. It was secure! The crowd cheered! The man began to march up the tower hand over hand climbing. Every step he got closer to the top. Every step his strength was being used up. He got two thirds of the way up and then came back down because his strength had failed him. Woosh! He landed at the bottom of the tower; unhurt, but also unsuccessful.

Three people took on the challenge to reach the top of the tower.

All prepared.

All tried.

All did their best.

All failed.

Crowds gathered to watch these three people attempt to reach the top of the tower. None had been successful. The crowd sat stunned as did all three of the participants. None of them had been

successful in reaching the top. In the midst of the stunned crowd, an older woman came from the crowd and gathered the three participants.

“May I offer you some advice?” she asked the three of them.

“Yes!” each of them said in unison.

“Hear my words,” the older woman said, *“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.”*

The three challengers looked at each other and realized that if anyone was to reach the top that they would need to work together. By forming a fellowship that worked together and helped one another and encouraged one another, they could reach the top.

It was not necessarily about each of them, but all of them.

The three challengers huddled at the base of the tower and talked and planned and conversed about the challenge of reaching the top.

The crowd did not know what was happening and started to walk away home.

The old woman cried out: "Pay attention! See what they will do!"

After a few more moments, the three challengers had their plan.

The man with the rope cut his super strong rope into four sections. Each one of the challengers tied a section around their waist and the man had one last piece in his hand.

The three challengers walked away from the tower a great distance.

The two men held onto the rope around the runner's waist. Dust flew behind her as she began to run. She dragged the men along behind her. Berries blew off bushes. Wooosh!

The runner reached the tower and was so fast she started to run up and up and up the tower. As before, she began to slow.

Slower.

Slower.

Slower.

Just as she began to slow, the man who loved to jump planted his feet on the tower and jumped forward. Now it was the other two hanging on. They flew through the air towards the top of the tower.

Just as they were about to reach the top, all three began to slow.

Slower.

Slower.

Slower.

The strong man slung the rope out, hitched it to the top, and the other two challengers hung onto him as his strength finished their way to the top.

All three challengers stood at the top victorious!

The crowd cheered!

Only by working together and supporting one another could any of the challengers reach the top of the tower. All three of them drank from the glass bowl filled with the “Water of Life.”

They knew in their hearts that they could not have reached the top of the tower without the fellowship of them working together.

End

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (ESV)

*“Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken.”*

Galatians 6:2 (ESV)

*“Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”*

Hebrews 10:24-25 (ESV)

*“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”*

  **KINGDOM TRUTH**  

Those who are in the Kingdom of God are neither spectators in the stands or athletes competing for individual glory. The Kingdom of God is about community. The Church is a community submitted to the lordship of Jesus which reflects the nature and character of the Triune God.

  **KINGDOM TRUTH**  

The Kingdom of God is like the feeling of putting your hand in your jacket pocket and finding \$20. You then hand that \$20 to a beggar you pass by because you could.



# Kingdom Tales

## THE FROG SPA

Maurice was excited to get to go to the spa. His boss Croaker had purchased a day at a spa for him out of the blue. Boss Croaker even chipped in for a taxi ride there. There didn't seem to be a rhyme or reason for it so he concluded that... for once... his boss was being nice and wanted to make him hoppier.

His boss was rarely nice.

Maurice was a hard-working amphibian. He spent his days hopping from lily pad to lily pad bringing messages from Big Boss Leaper to the rest of the frogs and tadpoles in the area. There was a fly shortage in the swamp so there had been a lot of messages lately. He had been working very hard.

Maurice arrived at the spa ready for a day of rest and relaxation and recreation and reduction of stress. He found it interesting that when he arrived at the spa there was a protester outside the gates.

The protester, who looked wild-eyed and a little strange, was shouting: "Look, this place is dangerous... turn back now" and held up a sign: "Don't jump on the bandwagon."

‘That frog is very strange,’ he thought. Nothing could damper his mood... not even an annoying protester calling out for him to pay attention.

He arrived inside and immediately the pampering started. Maurice had bacon and cheese covered french fries and a croak-a-cola shoved in his hand and was given a fluffy robe that smelled like exotic spices. It felt good on his skin. They put open toad sandals on his feet and led him to a big room with a TV. He sat down in the big room on a cushy lily pad and his favorite Soap Opera... ‘Days of our Fries’... was on the TV.

Oh yeah, he was going to enjoy this day!

After ‘Days of our Fries’ was over, Maurice the frog decided to hop on over to the snack bar area since he was hungry. It was a buffet! What a place! After this day at the spa, he would probably gain a few pounds... which seemed to be what the spa attendants wanted. He could see outside the window of the buffet that lots of other frogs were also having the time of their lives and relaxing well.

Some were playing croak-et.

Some were making basketball jump shots.

All were having a good time.

He also could see outside the gates of the spa that the protester was still there. He was jumping up and down yelling at all the frogs in the spa:

“Get out, the end is near!”

“Come with me and be saved!”

“Pay attention and get out now!”

“Come this way!”

It wasn't long until a bell sound went out through the whole spa and all the frogs headed to the main floor to the main spa area. It was a large round metal looking pool. There was a diving board and all the frogs took off their robes, jumped on the diving board, and went into the pool.

Maurice followed the crowd.

He usually just followed the crowd.

Maurice jumped on in the large round metal pool and enjoyed the warm water and healthy relaxation.

Maurice had not been in the pool long when he started to sweat a little. It felt good. It wasn't uncomfortable, but very nice and soothing. In fact, the spicy smelling robe he had taken off had made his skin feel soft and the pool made him relax even more. Everyone was enjoying the pool, but Maurice was feeling warmer and started to feel a little sleepy. All the frogs were resting and relaxing in the pool.

The water got warmer and no frog seemed to notice.

The water got warmer and no frog seemed to notice.

The water got warmer and no frog seemed to notice.

Maurice the frog decided he'd had enough pool time and wanted to try something else. Besides, the water was getting pretty warm. He tried to get out of the pool, but the spa attendants encouraged him strongly to remain in the pool. So he did. It was so nice and warm. All the frogs stayed in the pool even though the pool seemed to get hotter and hotter by the moment.

The water got warmer and no frog seemed to notice.

The water got warmer and no frog seemed to notice.

The water got warmer and no frog seemed to notice.

The only frog who seemed to care and know what was going on was the wild-eyed weird looking boisterous protester that had been outside the gate. The protester frog... perhaps more like a herald of doom... broke into the spa and was now at the side of the very large now very hot pool.

"I've witnessed this before, come follow me now!" he ribbited to all the frogs. "You will only live if you come with me, I can show you the way! Don't croak in here!"

Some frogs did not listen to him and stayed in the now almost boiling pool of water. A few frogs, like Maurice, listened to him and pushed their way past the spa attendants and hopped out of the spa.

Maurice had become very unhoppy in the pool.

The crazy protester had Maurice's attention now and he finally listened. 'Maybe the protester wasn't crazy,' he thought.

Maurice felt like a polliwog and could barely move. What had been going on to him in there?! These spa attendants were ker-mitting some kind of awful deed and so had his bosses... Big Boss Leaper and Boss Croaker... by sending him here.

Maurice knew that he had narrowly escaped a very bad situation when all of a sudden all the spa attendants dumped in butter, Cajun spices, diced onions, green bell peppers, garlic, salt, cayenne pepper, chopped up celery, tomatoes, and a bunch of rice.

All of the spa attendants called out at once [in a deep heavy Louisiana Cajun accent]... "This is goin' to taste so very good we gar-on-tee!"

Maurice and the other frogs barely hopped away to freedom.

The wild-eyed now-not-so-crazy protester frog had shown them the way to safety and had shown them the path out of danger. They all got a little way from the spa to safety and the protester turned back to go back to the spa.

“Where are you going?” Maurice asked in surprise.

“I have to go back to lead others out,” he croaked back quickly, “I am the one who points to the way to life and safety and salvation.”

End

Zephaniah 1:12-13 (ESV)

*“At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and I will punish the men who are complacent, those who say in their hearts, ‘The Lord will not do good, nor will he do ill.’ Their goods shall be plundered, and their houses laid waste. Though they build houses, they shall not inhabit them; though they plant vineyards, they shall not drink wine from them.”*

> “kawfaw”: to thicken or condense, to settle, to become dense

Romans 12:11 (ESV)

*“Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.”*

Revelation 3:2 (ESV)

*“Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of My God.”*

Revelation 3:16 (ESV)

*“So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.”*

  **KINGDOM TRUTH**  

The spiritually lazy have no place in the Kingdom of God.

  **KINGDOM TRUTH**  

The Kingdom  
of Heaven is like  
a meme first  
discovered and  
shared with  
many friends.

## PARABLE OF JESUS:

### Accepting Change

Luke 5:33-39

Change is one of the most difficult aspects of life that happens to all of us. Things do not stay the same because technology, relationships, jobs, prices, our health and just about everything else changes at one time or another.

People die and things change.

We lose a job and things change.

Leadership changes.

Our kids and grandkids get older and things change.

Computer processing gets faster and faster and things change.

The list could go on and on.

It really does not matter what aspect of life you want to look at, change is part of it and we have to either accept it or resist it. Change basically means something has ended and there is a chance for a new beginning.

It occurs to me, however, that not all change is good.

\* Coke tried to change their formula in 1985 and it lasted 3 months and changed it back after protests.

\* Taco Bell changed its prices from .49, .59, .69 in the 1980s and it is certainly more expensive now... poor college students and large

families could all go out to eat at Taco Bell for just a few bucks... not anymore.

\* I remember gas at .99 a gallon. Now .99 worth of gas won't get you out of the parking lot.

My point is: change is a natural part of life, but we do not have to accept all change. What changes should we accept? What changes should we go after? What changes should we praise God for when they come? How do we identify those changes that will indeed give us a new beginning?

These are not necessarily easy questions to answer because most of us dislike change so much. Yet there are times when change is desperately needed or when change is thrust upon us.

Luke 5 (and the parable therein) is a portion of Scripture which gives us a picture of change that gives us a great perspective on accepting change.

**RATIONALE FOR CHANGE:** Jesus tells a parable about change and shares the wisdom that our insides should match our outsides.

Luke finishes chapter 5 of his Gospel by recording some teaching of Jesus that occurred after He heals the leper, the paralytic, and calls Matthew to be a disciple. I hope you understand that not all change

is bad and some change is necessary. We should accept change that heals us from the past. We should accept change that moves us towards God. We should accept change that God commands.

Why?

Why should we do that?

Why should we change to pattern our lives after Jesus Christ?

Why should we change and forgive?

Why should we change how we spend our money?

Why should we change what we do and where we go and how we talk?

Why should we get out of an utterly sinful relationship?

Why do any of that?

I believe it is because our inside needs to match our outside.

Luke 5:33-39 (ESV) says:

*“And they said to Him, “The disciples of John fast often and offer prayers, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but Yours eat and drink.” 34 And Jesus said to them, “Can you make wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? 35 The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days.” 36 He also told them a parable: “No one tears a piece from a new garment and puts it on an old garment. If he does, he will tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old. 37 And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed.*

*38 But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. 39 And no one after drinking old wine desires new, for he says, 'The old is good.'"*

Jesus says many things at the end of chapter 5. He teaches the Pharisees and the disciples that He will not be with them forever and that His time on earth is limited (verse 35).

Jesus teaches those standing around that He is teaching a new and more full way of living and not all the patterns of the past will fit (verse 36).

Most of all I think Jesus teaches the disciples, the Pharisees, and anyone who will listen that their inside must match the outside. Inside an old wineskin one expects vintage wine. Inside a new wineskin one expects new wine.

Mixing the two does not work as the new wine ferments in an old skin... it breaks and everything is useless. Everything works best when the inside matches the outside.

Jesus teaches the same thing in Matthew 23:24-28 (ESV) when He says, "*You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel! 25 'Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. 26 You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean. 27*

*“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people’s bones and all uncleanness. 28 So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.”*

Jesus wants our insides to match our outsides. This makes us authentic disciples of Jesus. This makes us authentic worshippers of God. I want that for me and I hope you want that for yourself.

In order to reach the goal of our inside matching the outside of our lives change needs to occur. Not change that we can ignore, but change that we need to pursue and accept.

**SUMMARY:** We must ask ourselves what changes we need to make in our lives. Any change that comes your way that enables our inside to match our outside in Christ Jesus is a change worthy of pursuing and worthy of accepting.

I don’t know what changes need to happen in your life.

Are they changes that will lead to healing for you?

Are they changes that get you moving towards God?

Are they changes that God commands?

Pursue them. Accept them.



# KINGDOM TALES

## SAM THE SHEEP

Sam the sheep was minding his own business when the sky lit up with angels. It was so bright! He couldn't see because of the shining glory and that was "Baaahd." There were lots of voices and lots of singing. It was so loud he could hear nothing else but angelic voices.

Once his eyes adjusted to the light, the glory of the angels lit up the grass around him... ooh... there was a good patch of grass to eat. Grass is good. Sam the sheep was happy the angels were there because now in the middle of the night he could see where the good grass was. Awesome! Grass is good.

After a little while, the night again grew dark because the angels left. Everything still had a little glow to it though. It had been dark for a few minutes and he heard the command that they were on the move.

On the move in the middle of the night?!  
Was the shepherd drunk again?!  
Did the bright light of the angels fry his brain?!

Traveling at night was not good at all for anyone sheep he had ever known. He could walk off a cliff like his Uncle Ovine. Whatever the

reason, they were on the move. He felt sheepish about traveling at night, but then he always did.

Sam was in sheer panic as he didn't know where they were going, but he followed his shepherd anyway. Somebody mentioned heading to Bethlehem which was ok with him. The water in Bethlehem was good. Water is good. Maybe there would be more food.

Mmmmm... food is good.

Sam asked Suzie next to him if she knew why they were going to Bethlehem. Admittedly he had been distracted by grass. Grass is good.

"We don't know why?" she laughed, "We are going because The Good Shepherd was born and the shepherds are flocking to check Him out."

"What?" Sam asked Suzie, "You mean I missed out on the announcement about The Good Shepherd because I was eating grass?"

"Yes," Suzie said as she trotted along.

"That's baaahd," Sam said sheepishly.

Sam the sheep had been minding his own business when the sky had lit with singing angels. Then there was travel involved. He and the shepherds and the rest of the sheep arrived on the outskirts of Bethlehem and went to a stable. Oh yeah, they were going to stay in a great place tonight! No sleeping out in the open, oh no, they were sleeping in a barn with a proper feeding trough! No one was going to pull the wool over his eyes, being in Bethlehem was a great thing!

The shepherds went into the stable and the sheep stood around outside. That's what they did. Stood around. Sam the sheep got curious. The last time he got curious he ended up getting his head stuck in a hole for half a day, but he figured if the shepherd was in there it couldn't be too bad. Sam rammed himself past some other sheep and looked inside the barn.

What he saw absolutely shocked him to the wool.

The proper feeding trough in this barn was being used!

They put a human baby in there. That's no place for a baby! Babies belong in a knapsack or in a drawer or something, not in a trough where food goes! A trough is a place for food!

Mmmmm... food is good.

Then, Sam the sheep heard his shepherd's voice and he listened because he always listened to the voice of his shepherd: "The angels told us He is our Savior. The angels told us He is the Christ. The angels told us He is God. Is that true?"

Both the man and the very tired looking woman said yes. Sam the sheep was looking at The Good Shepherd in the flesh.

The Good Shepherd is the Savior.

The Good Shepherd is the Christ.

The Good Shepherd is God.

Well, Sam already knew that last one. God was everyone and everything's Good Shepherd. The shepherds starting praying. Then the shepherds were singing. The parents just held their Kid and took it all in.

Sam understood what he was looking at: The Almighty God had entered creation and became flesh and made His dwelling among His creation. That wasn't just good news, but the bestest news.

Sam the sheep had been minding his own business when all of a sudden the sky had lit up with angels. Then there was travel involved. Then he had seen The Good Shepherd in the flesh which was a little underwhelming to tell the truth. He was a baby. In a barn. Taking up space meant for food. The shepherds seemed overjoyed

and were sharing the news with everyone they passed on the way out of town.

Sam told a dog he passed, "Hey The Good Shepherd is here and He will bring people salvation."

Sam told a cat he passed, "Hey The Good Shepherd is here and He will forgive people of sins."

Sam told a rabbit he passed, "Hey The Good Shepherd is here and He will lead lost people to God."

Sam the sheep was never the same after that night. Would ewe be?

End

Matthew 1:20-23 (ESV)

*“But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.” 22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: 23 “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us).”*

John 10:11 (ESV)

*“I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.”*

  **KINGDOM TRUTH**  

The Kingdom of God became a spiritual and physical reality at the birth of Jesus of Nazareth. His birth marked the fulfillment of every Old Testament prophecy about salvation for God's people. The birth of Jesus is when the Son was incarnated and dwelt among us.

  **KINGDOM TRUTH**  

The Kingdom  
of Heaven is like  
F4 Key after  
the Blue  
Screen of  
Death.

## PARABLE OF JESUS:

Value Guilt

[Luke 7:36-50 [verses 40-43]]

When my daughter Abigail was about six months old (if I remember correctly), I worked overnight from 10:00pm to 8:00am at a children's home. Kelly worked as a teacher during the day and took care of Abigail during the evenings and I worked at night and took care of her during the day.

I remember getting home one morning and I was fixing us breakfast... her bottle and my cereal. We had a small seat which I put Abigail in often and I set it on the counter while I made everything we needed. I was tired and was thankful that at around 10am the baby would nap because I would finally get to sleep.

I turned by back to finish heating up the bottle and I hear this loud crack and screaming. I turn around and Abigail had used her inhuman strength to rock forward and fall in the chair face first onto the concrete floor.

I knew at that moment I had ruined my child.

I quickly but firmly held her head still and placed her in the front seat of the car. We lived in the middle of the Smokey Mountains and the closest hospital was about 30 minutes away. I raced ever so gently to

the hospital. She screamed uncontrollably, as did I, the whole drive to the hospital. I kept her as still as I could, but she wasn't doing much but screaming anyway. We arrived at the ER and I explained to the nurse on duty what had happened.

I was obviously upset and Abigail was screaming.

The nurse immediately got us to triage and I laid the baby on the examination table. The moment the doctor walked into the examination room, the baby stopped crying and started to act all cute and fine. The doctor walked in to see a normal baby on the table with me describing a horrific event which probably could have left this child paralyzed, but she was just fine. She laughed at the doctor and acted all cute. She checked out just fine and had no marks or bruises or issues of any kind.

I felt extremely guilty. My guilt overwhelmed me as I had to explain to Kelly on the drive back home what had happened. Yes, I almost broke our first child. Yes, I learned my lesson. That guilt from that day made me think twice or three times what I allowed my children to do because I think that parents should be the first line of safety for their children.

Guilt is a complicated emotion that can be both positive and negative in our lives. An old psychology textbook I have on the shelves in my

office does not define “guilt” very well, but does describe that “*guilt develops in connection with the motive to live up to standards.*”<sup>5</sup>

Standards exists inside ourselves and outside of us and when we do not meet those standards, we feel guilty. In the story I just told you, I failed to live up to what I consider the standard of a good father in keeping my daughter safe and healthy.

What is guilt?

It is an emotion.

We would probably classify it as a negative emotion that occurs because of negative actions, negative thoughts, and other negative emotions. In the New Testament, in verses like John 9:41 and John 16:8, “guilt” is at times used in place of the word “sin.”

Guilt then is a natural response to not meeting some kind of standard.

Guilt can come from sin when we do not reach God’s standard.

Guilt can come from our own standards and we don’t measure up to what we set for ourselves.

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<sup>5</sup> Kagan, J., Havemann, E. (1968). Psychology; an Introduction. United States: Harcourt, Brace & World. Page 540.

Guilt can come from what other people judge about us and our failings.

Guilt can come from something being done to us and erroneously taking blame on ourselves.

The issue with guilt is that there are actually two different kinds of guilt:

The first kind of guilt is called “functional guilt.” “Functional guilt” comes from social suggestions that people will reject you, not like you, break relationships, or level disapproval at you. Functional guilt comes from the suggestions and judgments of the people around you. Functional guilt comes from our own consciences and from the perceived judgment of the people around us.

The second more important kind of guilt is “value guilt.” “Value guilt” is the “uncomfortable inner awareness that we have violated God’s moral law.” “Value guilt is valuable. It can lead us to repentance.” Value guilt comes partly from our own consciences, but also from the conviction of the Holy Spirit.<sup>6</sup>

Luke 7 is a chapter in the Bible that describes guilt. Guilt flows from the verses of this particular passage. It describes functional guilt and

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<sup>6</sup> Meier, P. D., Minirth, F. B., Wichern, F. B. (1982). Introduction to Psychology and Counseling: Christian Perspectives and Applications. United States: Baker Book House.

value guilt and shows us in the end how to use value guilt in our lives.  
Jesus was travelling and ministering among the people.

Blind people were seeing.

Dead people were rising.

Demon possessed people were healed.

Amongst all of this, Jesus receives an invitation to attend a dinner. It was not unusual for affluent members of society to invite travelling teachers to their home. Luke 7 describes such an invitation:

Luke 7:36-50 (ESV):

*“One of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him, and He went into the Pharisee’s house and reclined at table. 37 And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that He was reclining at table in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, 38 and standing behind Him at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed His feet and anointed them with the ointment. 39 Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he said to himself, “If this Man were a prophet, He would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner.” 40 And Jesus answering said to him, “Simon, I have something to say to you.” And he answered, “Say it, Teacher.” 41 “A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of*

*both. Now which of them will love him more?" 43 Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt." And He said to him, "You have judged rightly." 44 Then turning toward the woman He said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has wet My feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. 45 You gave Me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss My feet. 46 You did not anoint My head with oil, but she has anointed My feet with ointment. 47 Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little." 48 And He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." 49 Then those who were at table with Him began to say among themselves, "Who is this, who even forgives sins?" 50 And He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."*

**SITUATION:** The situation that is described to us is one of guilt on the parts of several individuals.

The first person who is guilty in this passage is the woman who comes to the house. The verses describe this woman as having led a "sinful life" and obviously knew Jesus. She wanted to be near Jesus and braved going into the Pharisee's house to do so.

Note that the woman felt guilty from two different avenues. She first felt guilty in her heart because of her treatment of Jesus and how she acted in His presence. She realized her sinfulness in comparison to

Him and felt guilty because she knew that she had not met God's expectations for her life. She had sinned. She was guilty and felt it. I am going to make a leap here and say that she had encountered Jesus before and was so thankful for the change He brought about in her life. Perhaps she wanted to show her thanks for what He did in her heart. We don't really know what prompted her visit, just that she heard Jesus was there and she arrived to wash His feet.

She secondly felt guilty because of the judgment heaped upon her by the host of the house, Simon the Pharisee. He looked at her and verse 39 shows us that he was totally incensed by her presence, yet he allowed her to touch Jesus and wash His feet. Guilt was heaped on this woman from this religious leader because of what he considered her moral failings. Everything about her was offensive to the Pharisee and even though he did not say anything, it would seem that his body language and non-verbal communication showed his distaste.

The second person who is guilty in this passage is Simon the Pharisee. It would seem that Simon invited a travelling teacher into his home and did not do anything that a host was expected to do. Simon did not wash his Guest's feet as was the custom. He did not greet his Guest with a kiss as was the custom. He did not provide any oil to aid his Guest. Simon failed in common courtesy in so many ways, but it was not until Simon became judgmental of the weeping woman that Jesus pointed out all of his transgressions.

Simon the Pharisee had invited a teacher into his home and was quite a poor host. Not only that, we can look inside the heart of Simon the Pharisee and see that his heart was filled with distaste, a judgmental attitude, pride, and a lack of care and kindness.

In the passage, both “functional guilt” and “value guilt” were present and only one of the kinds of guilt was of any good to the people at the feast.

Belligerent “functional guilt” was heaped upon the woman as she entered the house, but did not lead to anything productive other than her knowing how she had lived her life against what was moral.

Soft “functional guilt” was leveled against Simon the Pharisee only after his judgmental attitude revealing how poor a host he had been towards Jesus.

Neither of these “functional guilt” aspects of the story changed anything.

Neither the woman nor the Pharisee were changed because of the “functional guilt.”

Yet, the woman certainly felt “value guilt.” It overwhelms the woman as she washes Jesus’ feet and dries them with her hair. It was the “value” guilt which changed her life when she met Jesus Christ.

The Bible describes that we can arrive at the point of “value guilt” through at least three different avenues. The Bible describes three different ways that “value guilt” can be of benefit in our lives. To be honest, I do not think “functional guilt” ever helped anyone out of any hole they have ever dug themselves into:

The Bible first (#1) describes that we can be brought to “value guilt” by our conscience. I want to first let you know that our conscience is something that is God-given to every human being, but is different for each person. Our conscience is molded by our environment, parents, teachers, TV, religion, society, politics, reason, logic, will, and a whole host of other factors. Conscience is universal, but it is not the same conscience for each person. It all depends on how the conscience has been maintained. For example, a person who grew up in a society where lying was considered virtuous, would not have a twinge of guilt from their conscience when lying.

Most of the time, however, our conscience is a help. In fact, Acts 2:36-37 shares with us that when Peter was preaching at Pentecost, the consciences of the audience played a major part in their turning to faith in Jesus Christ. Acts 2:37 says, “*Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”*”

The cutting to the heart is the conscience and can be the engine warning light of your life that “value guilt” uses. “Value guilt” can be

brought on by your conscience which tells you that you have violated a command or standard and guilt is the result. This can happen to us at any time. Our conscience can speak to us and we can be cut to the heart about something we have done or said or not done or not said.

The Bible secondly (#2) describes that we can be brought to “value guilt” by the Scriptures. We find a passage in 2 Kings 22 which describes such a situation. The people of God somehow lost the Scriptures and while renovating the temple, come across a long-lost copy.

2 Kings 22:8-13 (ESV) says: *“And Hilkiah the high priest said to Shaphan the secretary, ‘I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the Lord.’ And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it. 9 And Shaphan the secretary came to the king, and reported to the king, ‘Your servants have emptied out the money that was found in the house and have delivered it into the hand of the workmen who have the oversight of the house of the Lord.’ 10 Then Shaphan the secretary told the king, ‘Hilkiah the priest has given me a book.’ And Shaphan read it before the king. 11 When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his clothes. 12 And the king commanded Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Achbor the son of Micaiah, and Shaphan the secretary, and Asaiah the king’s servant, saying, 13 ‘Go, inquire of the Lord for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that*

*has been found. For great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us.”*

The picture we get is that King Josiah tore his robes because he realized how guilty he and the other people of God were in relation to the standard that was just read to him.

The Scriptures relay to us the standard of God.

This can happen to us even today.

The Scriptures can show us our error in a church service or in a Bible study or in Sunday School. If we truly want to be God's people and we want to become more Christ-like, then studying the Scriptures and accepting the standard found there is an active part of our lives.

The Bible thirdly (#3) describes that we can be brought to “value guilt” by good people. Now this one is a little slippery. Remember, “functional guilt” is guilt that other people heap upon is because of their judgmental attitudes and really serves no purpose other than to point out our sin and errors and make us feel bad about ourselves.

Yet, the Bible does describe people being an instrument of God to show us our error for our benefit. That is “value guilt.” For example, the prophet Nathan was a good friend of King David who eventually

confronted David about adultery, murder, and lying that he had committed.

2 Samuel 12:7-12 (ESV) shares with us, “Nathan said to David, “You are the man! Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul. 8 And I gave you your master’s house and your master’s wives into your arms and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah. And if this were too little, I would add to you as much more. 9 Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in His sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife to be your wife and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. 10 Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.’ 11 Thus says the Lord, ‘Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house. And I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. 12 For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun.’”

I would like to share with you verse 13 which demonstrates to us the “value guilt” that Nathan is sharing. King David says first in verse 13, “I have sinned against the LORD.” That is the most important part of this. Nathan showed David his error not to make him feel bad or to be judgmental, but so that his relationship with God might be

mended. The result of the person coming to David was movement towards God.

My point about guilt is this: guilt can come in two forms, both “functional guilt” and “value guilt.” I want you to be encouraged today to ignore people and their “functional guilt” and the judgmental attitudes that may come your way. It is the “value guilt” that we need to be concerned with because it is that guilt which is directly tied to sin and our relationship with God. That is the guilt that is God-given. We can be made aware of “value guilt” in our lives through our conscience, The Scriptures, and godly counsel.

**COMPLICATION:** In the midst of all that is going on... the dinner, the woman crying and anointing Jesus' feet, the discussions about her... Jesus decides to tell a parable.

Jesus describes two men who owe money. These men are in debt. In customary fashion, Jesus compares the two by saying one owes a lot and one owes a little. Both of their debts are canceled by the one who holds the debt. Jesus asks a very logical question of Simon the Pharisee after He tells the story: “*Now which of them will love him more?*” (verse 42). Which of them will be more thankful for the forgiveness of the debt?

Simon the Pharisee is by no means stupid man and thinks about the story and rightly judges the parable's answer. The person who had

the greater debt forgiven would be more thankful because it was such a large amount.

This is logical.

This is reasonable.

Jesus relates that parable to the situation playing itself out at the dinner table. Jesus directs the Pharisee's attention to the weeping lady. Jesus does not direct him to look at her and judge, but look at her in light of the parable He just told.

Verse 47 records Jesus saying, "*Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.*" Jesus knows the hearts of all the people in the room (verses 39-40). He knows that her actions are simply an expression of the thanks she feels for having been forgiven her sin-filled life.

The situation is one filled with guilt. Jesus complicates the entire situation by telling a parable all about forgiveness. The end result is that we need to take a look at guilt in terms of forgiveness. Jesus pushes our judgment, logic, and reason to the limit. It seems logical that among the people in the room, the prostitute should be the worst person there.

Yet, there is forgiveness.

It seems logical to think like Simon the Pharisee and to judge as he does, but there is forgiveness. Forgiveness is a holy God-given complication in life that we need to grab onto and be so thankful for.

**RESOLUTION:** I know that most of us would categorize guilt as a negative emotion that brings nothing but pain and anguish in our lives. Yet, “value guilt” that drives us to forgiveness and leads us back to a right relationship with God is a God-send and a huge blessing in our lives.

Forgiveness brought on by “value guilt” begins with repentance. The woman in our passage is more than just awe-struck when it came to Jesus Christ. She was moved to repentance. Had this woman been a prostitute? Sure seems like it, but when it comes to Jesus... that doesn't matter! She was convicted of her sin and moved to make it right. That is repentance in a nutshell... being convicted of sin and acting to make it right.

Repentance involves several elements:

Repentance involves conviction which says that “I was wrong. I have sinned against God and against others.” It also means that we do not blame anyone else but ourselves for the choices that we have made.

Repentance means we grow up and accept responsibility.

Repentance involves contrition in which our heart is broken because of what we have done and said. Usually tears and sorrow are the result because we realize the pain and anguish we have caused ourselves, others, and our God.

Repentance also involves change. I am not talking about perfection here, but I am talking about real action which moves a person away from sin and towards God. This will be different for each person depending on the circumstances, the sin, who is involved, etc. True repentance involves action.

The woman in our passage today was moving her life away from what it was towards Jesus Christ. Her actions showed it.

Some people (ok... some preachers) might say at this point that Jesus doesn't care what you have done and that He will forgive you for whatever it is you have done. I don't agree and say that they are half right. In fact, Jesus **DOES** care what you have done and He offers forgiveness anyway! That is the wonderful thing about Jesus Christ! He **DOES** care and **DOES** know and yet He still offers Himself on the cross for you and for me! Jesus cared what the woman did who was anointing Him, but He chose to forgive her. He chose to accept her repentance and said to her eye to eye, "*Your faith has saved you; go in peace*" (verse 50).

Speaking of “peace,” that is the result of listening and accepting “value guilt” in our lives and moving to repent of the actions, attitudes, and emotions that brought us to the guilt. Inner peace is the result of true repentance in response to “value guilt.” We do not know what the result was for others that day in the Pharisee’s house. We don’t know if Simon the Pharisee was changed. We don’t know if others watching were changed. We do know that this sinful woman encountered Jesus Christ, was moved by her “value guilt,” ignored the “functional guilt” of others, and she had peace. She had a past that was now erased and had a future that would be different.

**SUMMARY:** It makes sense to me that as you have been reading these words that God may have been dealing with your heart in terms of “value guilt.”

Spend a few moments in prayer dealing with the “value guilt” that God has placed on your heart

Nail that guilt to the cross.

Declare to God that you are done with this sin and you are repenting to make it right.



# KINGDOM TALES

## TOBY AND DATA ENTRY

Toby sat at the desk and stretched his muscles. He had been putting names and addresses into the computer all morning. He had volunteered to come and put donor information into a computer for the Walk for Life. The Walk for Life supported an abortion alternative ministry that Toby's church supports. They asked for volunteers and so here he sat for hours on end filling in first name, last name, address, phone number, and amount.

Over and over and over.  
It was so boring.

Anyway, Toby had spent all morning typing and marking on lists when he felt tired and wondered if what he was doing was even all that helpful. He felt like he wasn't really helping anyone by what he was doing. A few nurses walked by... they definitely help people. A counselor walked by and said "thank you," but she was definitely someone who helped to save babies. The director who started the whole thing walked by and said "thank you" and Toby knew that guy had made a difference in a lot of people's lives.

It came time for lunch and Toby grabbed his lunch and went into the room where the volunteers were eating. One of the ministry workers

was there. She said thank you to all the volunteers who were inputting names and addresses and pledges into the computer.

She asked: "Have any of you wondered if what you are doing makes a difference?"

Toby slumped in his chair thinking she was a mind reader and felt guilty that perhaps he had acted in some way to make her think that.

"You being here," she continued, "allowed me the freedom to work with a young woman this morning who came unsure of what to do. She is pregnant. She is scared. We talked. We prayed. She saw her baby on the sonogram. She chose life today for her baby girl. You are part of that. You inputting pledges into the computer allows us to do what we do. We saved a baby today... a whole life!"

Everyone in the room clapped and cheered. Toby hurriedly ate the rest of his lunch and went back happily inputting names and addresses and phone numbers and every single pledge.

End

Micah 6:8 (ESV)

*“He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”*

Matthew 23:12 (ESV)

*“Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.”*

James 4:6 (ESV)

*“But He gives more grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”*

1 Peter 5:6 (ESV)

*“Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time He may exalt you.”*

  **KINGDOM TRUTH**  

The Kingdom of God is an economy of submission where there is no place for pride. Pride is not rewarded or wanted. Humbleness and service is the currency of Heaven. Denial of self is the order of each and every day.

  **KINGDOM TRUTH**  

The Kingdom  
of God is like  
aloe on a  
sunburn on fair  
skin in Yuma,  
Arizona.

**PARABLE OF JESUS:****Persistent Prayer****Luke 18:1-8**

Peter Piper prayed a peck of persistent prayers,  
 A peck of persistent prayers did Peter Piper pray;  
 If Peter Piper prayed a peck of persistent prayers,  
 Praytell the payoff of the peck of prayers Peter Piper prayed?

Before we jump headlong into our passage in these apges in Luke 18, we need a little bit of background in two different areas for the passage in Luke 18 to make sense for us.

First, what is prayer?

John Piper, a well-known minister in the United States, when preaching on Colossians 4:2-4 defines prayer (in a way I like) as: "Mainly it means asking God for things. By "things" I don't mean objects - stuff. I mean, generally, whatever your heart desires or needs. And, of course, what your heart needs most is God - to know Him and trust Him and love Him and obey Him. I know that we should come to God with more than asking. We should come confessing sins and giving thanks and praise. In a broad sense, prayer includes all that. But, speaking precisely, prayer is requesting, asking... But prayer, in the strict sense, means requesting. So, I define it as asking

God for things... the essence of prayer is the expression of our dependence on God through requests.”<sup>7</sup>

I like that definition of prayer a lot.

It can mean adoration and praise. It can mean confession. It can be thanksgiving and also asking. It can mean all those things. The purpose of any prayer is to praise God, but at the same time we also need from Him as so we have that tug in our minds and hearts.

He is the Almighty God!

He is the One who Forgives.

He is our Provider!

So now we know what prayer is and we are all on the same page as we think about prayer: “Prayer is the expression of our dependence on God through requests.”

In addition to a definition of prayer, we secondly need some background on how rabbis often taught in Jesus’ day. This will come in handy when we tackle Luke 18:1-8.

One of the ways that religious teachers in Jesus’ day would teach would be to argue or teach something “from the lesser to the greater.”

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<sup>7</sup> <http://pipersnotes.com/piper2k/1-9-00.htm>

In Latin it is called “argumentum a fortiori” and has been around many centuries in philosophy, law, and educational circles.

What does that mean? It means that the teacher makes the case with something that is tangible and easy to understand and then applies the same principle to something greater and abstract and difficult to understand.

For example, in Matthew 6:27-34, Jesus teaches the crowds not to worry by giving the example that God takes care of birds and grass which mean little (lesser) and so God will take care of His people (greater). Both are true and informs us about the huge and incomparable love God has for us.

Another example is found in Matthew 7:8-11, when Jesus is teaching about the character of God. He relates that human fathers give proper and good gifts to their children (lesser) and so our Heavenly Father gives proper and good gifts to His children (greater). Both are true and teaches us about the abstract character of God.

Another great example from the teaching of Jesus is in Matthew 12:11-13. Jesus was faced with a decision to heal a person or not on the Sabbath day. Jesus argued that someone would help a stranded sheep on the Sabbath (lesser) and so He should help a man with a shriveled hand (greater). The lesser was true and so

Jesus healed a human being and showed true compassion and taught about the Sabbath all at the same time.

Now we have a bit of background as we read Luke 18:1-8, but wait, there is more we need to get into our minds and hearts before we read the passage! A Central Question: Does God want us to pray about something over and over and over again?

Don't be too quick to answer on this one.

The answer could be 'yes' or 'no.'

It could be 'yes' in the sense that God doesn't mind that we ask for things and ask repeatedly.

It could also be 'no' in the sense that if we keep asking... where is our faith that God is taking care of us?

To me this seems like a sticky situation regarding prayer. Does God want us to pray about something over and over and over again?

In order to answer this 'yes' or 'no' question, we are going to look at two passages and see what the Word of God says. God's Word should always be our first resource when answering questions about God.

God's Word informs what we think.

God's Word is better than what society tells us.

God's Word outdoes what our moms and dads taught us.

God's Word surpasses what self-help books state.

IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: 1 Samuel 1 is a heartbreaking story that centers on a woman named Hannah. Hannah had no children and desperately wanted to have them.

1 Samuel chapter 1 describes her husband and that he “*used to go up year by year from his city to worship and to sacrifice to the LORD of hosts at Shiloh*” (1 Samuel 1:3, ESV). His wife would go with him and pray that her womb would be opened and she would have a child. There were other factors which caused her grief, but needless to say, 1 Samuel 1:7 tells us plainly and repeats the reality that this, “*went on year by year.*”

1 Samuel 1:10 (ESV) further describes the situation in that, “*She was deeply distressed and prayed to the LORD and wept bitterly*” and later in 1 Samuel 1:15 (ESV) she tells Eli the high priest, “*I have been pouring out my soul before the LORD.*”

Was this important to Hannah?

I think it is clear that it was... she poured herself out to God in prayer.

Was she persistent?

Year after year she consistently prayed for the same thing.

Was she praying about something worthy of God's might and power?

God IS the designer of such things.

Was she praying humbly?

She was praying before the Lord in worship and sacrifice... so, yes.

What was the result of Hannah's prayers? Did the priest scold her for praying so hard for a child? Did the Word of the Lord come down that she should knock off asking for the same thing over and over? Did she ask once and then never give it another thought? Did she ask and get upset when there was no answer and stopped worshipping God?

The answer is "no" to all of those questions.

In fact, 1 Samuel 1:17-19 (ESV) says:

*"Then Eli answered, "Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition that you have made to Him." 18 And she said, "Let your servant find favor in your eyes." Then the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad. 19 They rose early in the morning and worshiped before the LORD; then they went back to their house at Ramah. And Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and the LORD remembered her."*

In the end, God answered her prayer and she conceived and bore a son. Her son would be the great prophet Samuel.

Does God want us to pray about something over and over and over again?

What does the Old Testament in 1 Samuel 1 tell us the answer is?

I think 1 Samuel 1 tells us that 'YES,' God does want us to pray about something over and over and over again. He does not mind. The passage does not paint Hannah in a negative light even once, but rather shows her as confident, persistent, humble, and a person of continual prayer.

I wonder if the same is true in the New Testament?

I am so glad you asked! Let's look in the New Testament and Luke 18:1-8 and see what Jesus Christ teaches about prayer, persistent prayer

Luke 18:1-8 (ESV):

*"And He told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. 2 He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. 3 And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.' 4 For a while he refused, but afterward he said*

*to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor respect man, 5 yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.' 6 And the Lord said, 'Hear what the unrighteous judge says. 7 And will not God give justice to His elect, who cry to Him day and night? Will He delay long over them? 8 I tell you, He will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?'*

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**IN THE NEW TESTAMENT:** At the beginning of Luke 18, Jesus is teaching His disciples about prayer. Remember our definition of prayer: "Prayer is the expression of our dependence on God through requests."

Jesus is teaching His disciples about prayer and chooses to do so in Luke 18 by sharing a parable which teaches based on the lesser to greater principle.

Jesus tells the disciples a parable about a widow who makes a request of a judge. We need to take note that the one seeking and making the request in this parable is down and out. She is a woman,

a widow, and most likely poor. All three of these descriptions would have made this woman undesirable and completely on the back burner for most people in Jesus' day. She would not have been at the front of any lines or at the top of anyone's list. She was facing an "adversary" of some kind who obviously knew that she had very little chance of getting any kind of help.

Jesus describes a callous and hard judge as the other character in the parable. I don't know why this person is described as such, but perhaps for no other reason than to show us that this poor widow did not have much of a chance even in a court of law. The unjust human judge is definitely the "lesser" example in comparison to God.

Verse 5 shows us that this poor widow's persistence with the judge pays off and she is able to secure justice for herself. Jesus Christ is teaching us that if a cruel and heartless judge can and will eventually help a poor widow and give her justice (lesser), how much more will our righteous and holy Heavenly Father listen to us and stand ready to help us in our times of need (greater).

The greater truth is that our God is faithful and just and hears all our prayers. The greater truth is that if an earthly judge will grant a persistent request that certainly our Heavenly Father will.

So, 'yes or no,' Does God wants us to pray about something over and over and over again?

What does the New Testament in Luke 18:1-8 tell us?

Keep in mind verse 1 which says the purpose of this parable was: *“they ought always to pray and not lose heart”* (ESV).

I hope you see that Jesus' lesson from the parable of the persistent widow is that the answer is 'yes.' God does want us to pray about something over and over and over again. He does not mind. God listens each and every time we pray to Him and He answers according to His will.

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There is one other area where we can draw truth about this particular question. While it is not the best place for us to gather answers, as long as personal experience matches up with Scripture, it can be of benefit for us and help us see the truth. The Old Testament says 'yes' we should persistently pray and the New Testament teaches us 'yes' we should persistently pray and even our lives can share this same answer.

IN PERSONAL EXPERIENCE: I have found that persistence in prayer is good and valuable and true in my own life.

Many many years ago, Kelly and I made the decision that when our children were born, that she would stay home with them if at all possible. We were able to put that plan into action by the time Ian was born if I remember correctly.

Kelly and I decided that she would start working outside the home again when the kids were older and they are all in school. It made sense. She got a great job at a lawyer's office which was definitely a blessing, but it wasn't the right fit for her since they asked her to lie and manipulate folks on a regular basis.

She started praying and praying. I was praying as well for a part-time job. I mean, as a minister, you can either sell drugs or do extra weddings and funerals. The drug trade dried up and you can't plan on weddings and funerals to pay off extra bills you have. I prayed and was blessed with the wonderful opportunity to teach at Florida Christian College which used my degree and it fit well in my ministry schedule.

Kelly's job wasn't changing. She kept praying. Like I said, her job wasn't a good fit for her. She answered an ad on Craigslist (of all places) for a position at another church in our area. I told her it was

probably a scam because no one posts a real job on Craigslist! This church did!

She got the job and worked there 8 years and it was a super blessing.

She kept praying and kept persistent and the Lord answered yes in His timing. In His timing the law office moved way north after Kelly left and it would have been a great hardship to continue to work there. It was His timing because she “happened” to have off Mondays, which is the day I taught.

God worked it out all in His timing and in His ways.

This time He said “yes.” Persistence in prayer paid off. Yes, God wants us to pray about something over and over and over again.

What does personal experience tell us? I think personal experience varies, but in this instance, experience tells us that it is true that God does want us to pray about something over and over and over again. He does not mind. I never got the sense, neither did Kelly, that we were acting in doubt or impatience by bringing the same issue to God over and over again. He did not mind Kelly and I praying for ways to make extra money to pay off bills.

Does it always work out that way... for the positive in the exact way we want? I have to be honest and answer no, but God does always

listen and He does always work for my good... even if that is a “no” or a “wait” or a “I have something else planned.”

**IN PERSONAL EXPERIENCE:** If you ask anyone in my family, 2018 and 2019 were the hardest years for our family.

The church leadership that I previously served in Tampa decided they did not want me as their pastor anymore and so on a Tuesday night, the eldership called me in and fired me on the spot. It was an emotionally jarring time and one that was unexpected and hurtful.

I prayed and prayed if I was supposed to remain in ministry. I prayed and prayed that God would heal my heart and my mind and my soul. I prayed and prayed for the next place to serve. I want you to guess how many churches I applied for from October of 2018 to May of 2019. Any guesses? 119. Because of the nature of how search committees work, Cincinnati Christian Church was 102 on the list of 119 churches, Christian colleges, and Christian organizations I applied for. 58 told me no either right away or after some time and 50 just never got back to me or said anything at all.

Do you know how hard it is to hear ‘no’ 108+ times?

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Answered prayer.

**SUMMARY:** Does God want us to pray about something over and over and over again? 1 Samuel 1 tells us 'yes.' Luke 18 tells us 'yes.' Personal experience tells me 'yes.'

I do not know what you are dealing with today. Perhaps you are having boyfriend or girlfriend stresses and the relationship is not going as you planned or maybe you are heading in a wrong direction sexually. Perhaps you are praying for a family member to come to know the Lord. Perhaps you are praying for healing for someone or for recovery from an illness or surgery. Perhaps you need a new job or have bills to pay or anxieties are getting the better of you.

No matter your requests to God or how often you pray, know that He doesn't mind you asking. No matter your requests to God, know that He doesn't mind you asking over and over. Please do not stop praying. Please do not stop expressing your dependence on God through requests. He loves us and wants to hear from us!

I want to leave you with one more passage of Scripture which illustrates that God indeed hears us, answers us, and does not mind us coming to Him over and over.

The Prophet Jeremiah writes in Lamentations chapter 3:49-58 (ESV): *“My eyes will flow without ceasing, without respite, 50 until the Lord from heaven looks down and sees; 51 my eyes cause me grief at the fate of all the daughters of my city. 52 “I have been hunted like a bird by those who were my enemies without cause; 53 they flung me alive into the pit and cast stones on me; 54 water closed over my head; I said, ‘I am lost.’ 55 “I called on Your Name, O Lord, from the depths of the pit; 56 You heard my plea, ‘Do not close Your ear to my cry for help!’ 57 You came near when I called on You; You said, ‘Do not fear!’ 58 “You have taken up my cause, O Lord; You have redeemed my life.”*

When we cry out to God, He hears us and is near.

Yes.

Yes.

Yes.



# Kingdom Tales

## THREE LITTLE PIGS 1

Once upon a time there were three little pigs named Porky, Porkie, and Wilbur. Porky, Porkie, and Wilbur lived with their mother and the time came for them to leave home and seek their fortunes. Porky, Porkie, and Wilbur had to have a pioneering spirit if they were going to make it outside of the pig pen. The three little pigs got into a three little pigs huddle, made a plan, and left the pig pen into the world.

The first little pig, Porky, built his house out of straw because it was the easiest thing to do. His house was up in no time and he was sipping on sweet tea in a hammock in no time.

The second little pig, Porkie, built his house out of sticks and spent a little more time on fashioning his home. Once he was done, he rested in his easy chair drinking a soda. The house of sticks was a little bit stronger than the straw house and he was feeling pretty good about himself.

The third little pig, Wilbur, built his house out of bricks and took a long time and a lot of effort to make his home. Wilbur's brick house also took a long time to build because he made a friend with a spider named Charlotta and went to the county fair.

Anyway, all three little pigs made their houses and rested from their labors.

What Porky, Porkie, and Wilbur didn't know was that they moved into a neighborhood with a Big Bad Wolf. He loved to have little pigs for dinner, not to invite them over for dinner mind you, but to literally have little pigs for dinner.

The Big Bad Wolf was quick to anger. He got angry they were in the neighborhood. He got angry that they were different from him. He got angry that they smelled tasty when they walked by. He decided in his anger that he would eat the little pigs, but first he would scare them by toppling their houses over.

One night the Big Bad Wolf, who had a hankerin' for little piggies, sat on his front porch and saw one of the little pigs trot by on his way home. It happened to be Porky and he had just gone to the market and had roast beef and then went wee wee wee all the way home to his straw house.

The Big Bad Wolf got so angry and hungry and went along and saw the first little pig in his house of straw. He said: "Let me in, Let me in, little pig or I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house down!"

Porky said back, "Not by the hair of my chinny chin chin."

So the Wolf huffed and he puffed and he blew with mighty breath and he blew the house down in anger and the first little pig escaped and ran to his brother Porkie's house made of sticks.

Porky ran from his toppled straw house to Porkie's house made of sticks. He banged on the door for Porkie to let him in. He knocked and knocked and Porkie did not come to the door right away. While he was knocking and knocking he smelled a strange odor coming from the house. Porky looked inside the window and was horrified.

Porky's brother Porkie was eating a BLT. Yes, a BACON, lettuce, and tomato sandwich! Porkie knew he had been discovered and was ashamed and angry and sad all at the same time. Porkie with bacon breath opened the door angry and yelled at his brother for imposing on him.

"I am not angry at you for eating a BLT," Porky said to his brother, "We obviously need to have a chat where you talk and I listen. I will be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry."

Porkie confessed his love of BLTs and that he had been eating them for some time.

Porky told his brother all about the angry Big Bad Wolf and how he blew down his house made of straw. The two pigs became afraid of

the angry Big Bad Wolf. Then they heard heavy steps outside that could only be the Big Bad Wolf.

The Big Bad Wolf had indeed followed Porky right to his brother's house of sticks. "Let me in, Let me in little pigs or I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house in." The Big Bad Wolf could smell cooked bacon and could almost taste the fresh piggies he would have for dinner.

He was hungry!

He was angry!

He was hangry!

"Not by the hair of our chinny chin chins," said the little pigs loudly.

So the Wolf huffed and he puffed in his anger and he blew with mighty breath and he blew the house down and the first and second little pig escaped and ran to their brother's house made of bricks.

Porky and Porkie ran from the toppled house made of sticks to Wilbur's house made of bricks. They fearfully and vigorously banged on the door for Wilbur to let them in. They knocked and knocked and Wilbur let them in. Porky and Porkie both oinked at the same time and Wilbur could not understand either of them.

Wilbur said calmly: "We obviously need to have a chat where you both talk and I listen. I will be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry."

First, Porky told Wilbur all about how the angry Big Bad Wolf huffed and puffed and blew his straw house down.

Second, Porkie told Wilbur all about how the angry Big Bad Wolf huffed and puffed and blew his sticks house down.

They both agreed the Big Bad Wolf was angry. They both agreed he was hungry. They both agreed he was hangry! It wasn't long until the angry Big Bad Wolf tracked the two pigs to the house of bricks. "Let me in, let me in" cried the Big Bad Wolf. He beat on the door and he said: "Or I'll huff and I'll puff till I blow your house in."

Just as he was on the porch banging on the door, a girl with golden blonde hair walked by holding hands with three bears. The Father Bear looked and saw that the Big Bad Wolf was angry and hungry. The Mother Bear looked and saw that the Big Bad Wolf was angry and pounding on the door. The Baby Bear looked and saw three scared pigs in the window. Goldie Locks, for that was the golden blonde-haired girl's name, wanted to help.

Goldie Locks went up to the Big Bad Wolf and got his attention and said calmly: "You seem very angry. We obviously need to have a

chat where you talk and we will listen. We will be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.”

The Big Bad Wolf asked, “Why should I listen to anything you have to say?!”

Goldie Locks said, “Once upon a time there were three bears who lived in a house in the neighborhood just over there. One morning, their breakfast porridge was too hot to eat, so they decided to go for a walk in the neighborhood. I was wandering around and found their house. I knocked on the door and pushed it open and went inside. I sat in each of the three chairs at the table and I ate all three bowls of porridge. You see I was homeless and I hadn’t eaten in days.

Then I went upstairs, where I found three beds. There was a great big bed, a middle-sized bed and a tiny little bed. I wasn’t going to waste my time like in some nursery rhyme so I picked the tiny bed that was just my size. In no time at all, I fell asleep. I can’t get any sleep on the street, I’m too scared.

In a little while, the three bears came back from their walk in the neighborhood. They saw at once that the door of their house had been opened and all the breakfast was eaten. The bears went upstairs and the Little Bear looked at his bed and said in his small squeaky baby voice, ‘Somebody is sleeping in my bed!’

He growled so loudly that I woke up!

Even though I broke into their house and ate their food and made them feel unsafe by sleeping in their kid's bed, the Big Bears said, 'We obviously need to have a chat where you talk and we will listen. We will be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.'

That was last week and they let me stay with them and today we are all out for a walk together."

The Big Bad Wolf didn't know what to say.

The three pigs in the window were in awe of the crazy story told by Goldie Locks.

Goldie Locks again went up to the Big Bad Wolf and said: "You seem very angry. We obviously need to have a chat where you talk and we will listen. We will be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry."

On hearing that someone would genuinely listen to him, the Big Bad Wolf's anger dissipated and he was willing to talk to Goldie Locks and the three bears. The group of them sat down right there on the porch and crisis was averted.

The three little pigs were in such shock that they all three fell over and died.

Mother Bear decided to use all the pork to make a pizza at her restaurant and called it "Divine Swine." It is a customer favorite to this day.

End

Proverbs 25:12 (ESV)

*“Like a gold ring or an ornament of gold is a wise reprov-er to a listening ear.”*

James 1:19 (ESV)

*“Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger.”*

  **KINGDOM TRUTH**  

The Kingdom of God should be filled with people who suspend judgement of one another and focus on listening and understanding each other. Listening often and pushing out anger from our hearts and speech is a step in the right direction as citizens of Heaven prepare for Heaven.

  **KINGDOM TRUTH**  



# Kingdom Tales

## THREE LITTLE PIGS 2

Once there was a mother pig who had three little pigs. The pigs left their mother's pen to live out their lives in the best way possible.

The first little pig had not gone far when he decided to base his life on the pursuit of happiness. The pig did whatever made him happy. He got credit cards and bought all kinds of designer mud baths, ate like a pig should, and bought everything that had bells and whistles. He did what made him happy. Any little Miss Piggy he came across he jumped into her pen. He had a few piglets here and there, but did not really feel responsible for them. He did what he wanted. It made him happy. The first pig drank, smoked, and frolicked.

One night he sat in his house full of everything that he thought would make him happy. Along came a wolf. The wolf loved to tempt pigs and create havoc in their lives.

He knocked at the door of the little pig's house and called, "Little pig, little pig, I have a question!"

But the little pig answered, "Well what is it?"

The wolf questioned, "Are you really happy?"

The question made the little pig think for he had based his life on what would make him happy. He had no lasting relationships. The material things were not a lasting happiness. He ended up addicted and sick rather than happy. He felt empty inside. Nothing he had done had made a firm foundation. Then the wolf said, "Ha! I'll huff and I'll puff, and I'll blow your house in!" So he huffed and he puffed until he blew the house in and it fell with a great crash, and ate up that little pig.

The second little pig had not gone far when he decided to base his life on success. He married a Miss Piggy who came from a good family and had some money. They had a few piglets to make her happy and to make the father-in-law happy. Plus, kids often showed others that you were successful at home. He excelled at his job. When his job required him to be away from home, he did it without a second thought. At times, success meant cheating a little and he did it because it was what would make him successful. A few other Miss Piggies along the way had caught his eye and they helped him get the successes he wanted. He got raises. He got promotions. He climbed the barnyard ladder and did whatever was required. He bought the biggest pig pen on the block to show off his success.

Along came a wolf. The wolf loved to tempt pigs and create havoc in their lives. He knocked at the door of the little pig's house and called, "Little pig, little pig, I have a question!"

But the little pig answered, "Well what is it?"

The wolf questioned, "Are you really successful?"

The question made the little pig think for he had based his life on what would make him successful. He did not really know his kids. He had a trophy piglet wife but there was nothing there. He had no self-respect or integrity. The material things were not a lasting happiness and somebody always had a bigger pen. He had ended up successful in business but a failure at life. He felt empty inside. Nothing he had done had made a firm foundation.

Then the wolf said, "Ha! I'll huff and I'll puff, and I'll blow your house in!" So he huffed and he puffed until he blew the house in and it fell with a great crash, and ate up that little pig.

The third little pig traveled in his life and wondered what the point of life really was. Was it fame? Was it fortune? Was it success? Was it happiness? Was it people? What should a little pig build their life on? What should be the foundation?

The little pig said to himself, "I think I shall base my life on God and the things He desires." The pig met a Miss Piggy who shared his faith. The pig remained faithful to his wife and had children that he tried to raise with Biblical values. He tried to balance family, church, giving, serving, business, politics, and all aspects of his life with Biblical principles. He went to church, but more than that, he read the Bible and tried to actually live out what it taught.

Along came the wolf. He knocked at the door of the little pig's house and said, "Little pig, little pig, I have a question!"

But the little pig answered, "Well what is it?"

The wolf questioned, "Are you really going to base your life on God?" The question made the little pig think for he had based his life on God. He had a wife who loved him. It was hard, but they were in it for the long haul. He had kids who he raised as best as he could. His finances were a struggle, but God always provided. He ran his business with integrity and respect. He was active in his community which brought him joy. His relationship with Jesus Christ was the foundation of his life.

Then the wolf said, "Ha! I'll huff and I'll puff, and I'll blow your house in!" So he huffed and he puffed until he blew on the house and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on God.

The wolf came by often to tempt the pig but never could knock down the whole house because the pig had found that a foundation on God was best.

End

  **KINGDOM TRUTH**  

Opposition to citizens of the Kingdom of God will come from enemies sent by the Enemy to doubt and question and twist what God has declared as His will for the foundation of life. God is the only sure foundation for life.

  **KINGDOM TRUTH**  

The Kingdom of  
Heaven is like an  
orphan who  
bounces from house  
to house and finds a  
home with parents  
who permanently  
adopt them.

## PARABLE OF JESUS:

Lostness

Luke 15:1-32

What does it mean to be lost?

In 2008, an action movie came out that spurred 2 more movies after it and all because of one speech. 7 sentences is the crux of one movie and allowed them to make two more after it. One speech in the movie is what "Taken" hangs upon. 7 sentences upped Liam' Neeson's paychecks in Hollywood because in the movie, Bryan Mills a former government operative, is trying to reconnect with his daughter, Kim (Maggie Grace). His worst fears become real when human traffickers abduct Kim and her friend shortly after they arrive in Paris for vacation. With just four days until Kim will be lost forever, Bryan Mills must use every skill he learned in black ops to rescue her. Towards the beginning of the movie we have a phone call.

It is THE phone call. He says:

"I don't know who you are. I don't know what you want. If you are looking for ransom I can tell you I don't have money, but what I do have are a very particular set of skills. Skills I have acquired over a very long career. Skills that make me a nightmare for people like you. If you let my daughter go now that'll be the end of it. I will not look for

you, I will not pursue you, but if you don't, I will look for you, I will find you and I will kill you."<sup>8</sup>

Duh duh duh!

For these few pages we are in Luke 15 where Jesus shares with us three parables that all have the same theme and all really share the same meaning.

*Luke 15:1-7 (ESV): "Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear Him. 2 And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, "This Man receives sinners and eats with them." 3 So He told them this parable: 4 "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? 5 And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. 6 And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' 7 Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance."*

What does it mean to be lost?

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<sup>8</sup> 20<sup>th</sup> Century Studios

If you were to simply look up the word 'lost' in the dictionary you would find that it is a surprisingly complicated word. There are a lot of small changes to the word lost that make it a significant word and depending on the context it can mean something different.

I looked up the word on the internet. Oddly, when googling the word 'lost,' the first 7 entries are about the 6 season ABC show 'Lost' which does not necessarily help us.

What does the word 'lost' mean? (merriam-webster.com)

- \* It means 'not made use of or claimed' such as 'lost opportunity'
- \* It means 'no longer possessed or known' such as 'lost sock'
- \* It means 'ruined physically or morally' such as 'a lost soul'
- \* It means 'unable to find one's way' such as 'lost in the city'
- \* It means 'absorbed in something' such as 'lost in the music'
- \* It means 'not appreciated' such as 'the joke was lost on me'
- \* It means 'unattainable without hope' such as 'a lost cause'

On the surface, the word 'lost' most of the time simply means "unable to find one's way" usually in whatever context it is used in one way or another. Almost all of the definitions are a twist or a little shade different of being unable to find something or someone or ourselves.

The word 'lost' is used in the Bible and in churches because a person without God or someone who has serious doubts about God is 'lost' because we spiritually cannot find our way to faithful footing.

'To be lost' is to be without God, in the same way 'to be found' is to be with God.

When I moved to Tampa some years ago, I was staying at a hotel and my sister was coming to visit me. I was staying in a Howard Johnson Hotel on one of the main roads in Tampa. She texted me that she was almost to my hotel and so I stepped outside to greet her and to hop in her car because we were going to eat.

A few minutes passed and she called me. She asked if I was at my hotel. I told her I was standing outside my room waiting on her like I told her I would be. She stated that she was parked right outside my room and I was not standing there.

We compared notes.

I was at the Howard Johnson on Dale Mabry.

She was at the Howard Johnson on Dale Mabry.

I was in front of the room.

She looked and noted the same room number in front of her.

If I remember correctly, she also texted me a photo of my hotel door with me not standing in front of it. She began to describe the hotel she was at which was very run down and sketchy which was why she was on edge in the first place. I was at a modest hotel, but not what she described.

We figured out that there were 2 hotels with the same name on the same road that were about 5 miles apart. She was at a different hotel and felt completely lost. I knew where I was and I also felt lost!

The passage and three parables that we are going to look at in Luke 15 have everything to do with being lost. These are parables that Jesus gives as He is trying to defend Himself against the Pharisees and their condemnation of His interest in the tax collectors and sinners.

Jesus was seeking out these sinful people and was making a difference in their lives because they were 'lost' and did not have God.

That was the mission of Jesus. That is still the mission of Jesus! Luke 19:10 (ESV) says: "*For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.*"

The Pharisees saw the overall mission of Jesus and were offended and condemned Jesus for even eating with these types of lost people. The beginning of Luke 15 tells us, "*Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear Him. 2 And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, 'This Man receives sinners and eats with them.'*" (verses 1-2, ESV).

Jesus wants these religious leaders to understand God's attitude about "sinners" and those that are lost because it is His attitude. He likens God to a shepherd who seeks a lost sheep with skill and determination. Jesus wants to explain why His time is spent with people whose lives have taken a turn into sin and seem to reject God and are lost. He shares with us that God cares deeply when we are lost and away from Him. Jesus wants to share the heart of God. He lets us know that God is like a shepherd that seeks and finds those lost to Him.

In 1995, a jewel of a movie was released starring Kevin Costner. It is titled 'Waterworld' and only gets 8% on Rotten Tomatoes and was a complete flop, but I love it. I love the story and the idea.

After the melting of the polar ice caps, most of the globe is underwater. Some humans have survived, and even fewer still, notably the character called the Mariner (Kevin Costner), have adapted to the ocean by developing gills. Weird, but ok. A loner by nature, the Mariner reluctantly befriends Helen (Jeanne Tripplehorn) and her young companion, Enola (Tina Majorino), as they escape from a hostile artificial island. Soon the sinister Smokers are pursuing them and capture Enola in the belief that Enola holds the key to finding the mythical Dryland. All hope seems lost.

As spunky captured Enola faces the evil ones, she says that her friend the Mariner will come for her and the bad guys will be very

sorry. She says with confidence: "He doesn't have name so death can't find him. He doesn't have a home or people to care for. He's not afraid of anything, men least of all. He's fast and strong like a big wind. He can hear a hundred miles and see a hundred miles underwater. He can hide in the shadow of a noon sun. He can be right behind you and you won't even know it til you're dead! He'll come for me. He will!"<sup>9</sup>

With a speech like that, the movie goes like you think it will!

Let's keep reading in Luke 15 on Jesus' parables to the Pharisees and those gathered there. He wants the religious leaders to understand God's heart about those that find themselves lost and shaken by their own decisions in life. He has already explained that God seeks after and finds those who are lost. How does Jesus continue?

Luke 15:8-10 (ESV):

*"Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? 9 And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.' 10 Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents."*

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<sup>9</sup> Universal Pictures

What does God feel about those who are lost?

There are people that can be described as “spiritually lost”. The Pharisees of Jesus’ day just called those people “sinners.” Jesus would proclaim just a few chapters later in Luke 19, in the house of a man named Zacchaeus, “*For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost*” (Luke 19:10, ESV).

God is so passionate about those that have lost their way that He sent His Son to find them and reveal the best way. God loves those that are stuck in a lifestyle of sin that He died on the cross so that their debt of sin would be paid. God seeks out those that are lost with such fervor that Jesus describes the woman in His parable as diligently and painstakingly searching her house for the lost coin. Every corner is swept out and every dark place is investigated. No piece of furniture is left standing in her efforts to find the lost coin.

It is the same with God.

The parable is about God.

God is the woman searching for the lost coin.

We are the lost coin.

God searches for us. God makes a great effort in seeking those that are lost to Him. The effort and intensity should not be missed in this parable. Psalm 14:2 reiterates this thought for us: “*The LORD*

*looks down from heaven on the children of man, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God" (ESV).*

The picture we get from Jesus Christ is that each and every person is very important to God. Every single soul is an image bearer and can become a child of God. We get that from this parable and also the previous parable. Don't forget that the shepherd goes after the one lost sheep because of its importance.

You are extremely important to God and Jesus wanted you to know that.

Somebody needs to read this today: You are extremely important to God and Jesus wants you to know that.

Let's keep reading in Luke 15 (verses 11-32) to the end of the chapter all about Jesus' parables to the Pharisees and those gathered there.

Luke 15:11-32 (ESV):

*"And He said, "There was a man who had two sons. 12 And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.' And he divided his property between them. 13 Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. 14 And when he had spent everything, a*

severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. 16 And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything. 17 "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! 18 I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants."' 20 And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. 21 And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' 22 But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. 23 And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. 24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate. 25 "Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. 27 And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.' 28 But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, 29 but he answered his father, 'Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave

*me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!’ 31 And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. 32 It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.’”*

What does God feel about those who are found?

*Verse 7 says: “Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.”*

*Verse 10 says: “Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”*

*Verse 20 says: “And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.”*

*Verse 24 says: “For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate.”*

*Verse 32 says: “It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.”*

The word that is used most often in these two similar parables is the word “rejoice.” Rejoicing means the presence of joy. The presence of gladness. Extreme happiness. Elation. The KJV says that “*joy shall be in heaven*” (Luke 15:7) when someone is found. In the Bible, singing is associated with rejoicing (Psalm 5:11; 32:11). The playing of instruments like flutes is associated with rejoicing (Isaiah 30:29). Shouting is also associated with rejoicing (Isaiah 35:2; Jeremiah 31:12).

The image that we get is a huge celebration in Heaven when someone turns to faith in Jesus Christ and comes to God. There is singing and shouts of joy and the clamor of instruments each time a person is “found.”

It is a huge celebration.

It is a big deal.

Jesus Christ was trying to explain to the Pharisees and anyone else who would listen and He is trying to explain to us... that Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. Period. Jesus was looking for those who had wandered away from God.

God wanted them. He loved them. It was Jesus' purpose to make a way for those lost ones to find their way to their Heavenly Father.

God still wants them. He still loves them. It is still Jesus' purpose to make a way for those lost ones to find their way to their Heavenly Father.

God wants you. He loves you. It is Jesus' purpose to make a way for you to find your way to your Heavenly Father.

How does God feel?

- \* Joyous like the shepherd who finds the lost sheep.
- \* Joyous and celebratory like the woman who finds the lost coin.
- \* Relieved and full of joy just like the father in the parable.

**SUMMARY:** I believe one important truth about Jesus Christ that I also want you to believe: #1 Jesus is the answer to all our lostness.

Jesus claims us as His own and so none of us are ever lost.

Jesus never loses us and keeps our souls in the palm of His hand.

Jesus is literally the only way for our souls to be found.

Jesus gives us meaning and we are never lost without Him.

Jesus is our anchor and we are never lost to the garbage of this world.

Jesus is our mediator between us and God and makes all things right.

Jesus makes peace and hope and strength attainable.

#1 Jesus is the answer to all our lostness.

Besides the parables which teach us this truth, Jesus fulfills all the cool movie quotes:

"I don't know who you are. I don't know what you want or what you have done. If you are looking for ransom I can tell you, Jesus Christ paid it already with a very particular holy life and horrible death and miraculous resurrection. The life and death and resurrection of Jesus make Him a nightmare for Satan and evil and maybe even people like you who want to reject God.

He has the Name above all Names and death has no hold on Him. He owns it all and is the King of Heaven and loves everyone unconditionally. He's not afraid of anything, devils least of all. He's fast and strong like a big wind because He created the wind. He can hear a hundred miles and see a hundred miles underwater because He created hearing and sight. He made the shadow of a noon sun and willingly died in the middle of it. He can be right behind you and you won't even know it til you're saved! He'll come for you. He will!"



# Kingdom Tales

## THE RABBIT STORY

Once upon a time, there was a big fluffy rabbit with two big ears and a huge fluffy tale. A cute rabbit. An innocent rabbit. Normal in every respect except it was the hugest rabbit that anyone has ever seen. Biggest eyes anyone had ever seen. Biggest feet anyone had ever seen. A big ol' rabbit. This rabbit decided to take a walk down the street of his town. It was a nice day for a walk.

The rabbit started down the street and was enjoying his walk. He greeted his neighbors and they greeted him. He got to the end of his block and the neighbor that lived closest to him was sitting in his front yard...just sitting there in the grass looking dejected and sad. "What is the matter neighbor?" the big ol' rabbit asked.

The neighbor looked up with sadness. "I have had a run of bad luck. Now I know it was my own fault. My wife left me. My children don't like me. My truck broke down. Even my dog died. Yes, my life is a sad country music song." Now as the neighbor was telling the tale of his woes and bad luck, he began to get a small smile on his face.

"Gosh," the rabbit said in response, "I am so sorry. I wish there was something I could do."

“Well,” the neighbor said getting up on his feet and eyeing the rabbit’s feet, “you know rabbit’s feet bring good luck. Everybody knows you are the biggest rabbit ever and so the good luck one of your feet would bring me is worth two lifetimes.”

The rabbit stared.

The neighbor stared.

“Yes, I will.”

With that, the neighbor cut off one of the rabbit’s feet and reveled in his newfound luck. He went back in his house as happy as he could be leaving the three-legged rabbit in his front yard. The rabbit hopped on three legs down the street and continued his walk through the town. More neighbors saw him and greeted the ol’ rabbit.

The rabbit got a few blocks down the street and some other neighbors were on their porch. They were crying and trying to console one another. “What is the matter neighbors?” the big ol’ rabbit asked.

The neighbors looked up with tears in their eyes. “Our roof is leaky. Every time it rains the water leaks into our house and drives us crazy! We cannot fix our roof. It drizzles. It drips. It drops. A big rain is coming tomorrow and we don’t know what to do!” Now as the neighbors were explaining about their roof, they began to get small smiles on their faces.

“Gosh,” the rabbit said in response, “I am so sorry. I wish there was something I could do.”

“Well,” the neighbors said getting up on their feet and eyeing the rabbit’s ears, “you know your ears are the biggest rabbit ears ever. One ear could cover the front of our roof and the other ear could cover the back of our roof. We could cover our roof with your ears and our roof would not leak.”

The rabbit stared.

The neighbors stared.

“Yes, I will.”

With that, the neighbors cut off both of the rabbit’s ears and immediately slung them over their home to cover the leaks in their roof. They went back in their house happy as could be leaving the three-legged no-eared rabbit in their front yard. The rabbit hopped on and continued his walk through the town. More neighbors saw him and greeted the ol’ rabbit though some began to stare.

The rabbit continued his leisurely walk down the street though now it was much more difficult. The rabbit slowly went down the street and came to another townsperson at their mailbox. She was getting her mail and was just shaking her head in despair. “What is the matter neighbor?” the big ol’ rabbit asked.

The neighbor looked up with sadness. “I have a cleaning business to run and I just don’t make enough to pay my bills. I could work harder, but that would not help. I am just stuck and just can’t run my business in a way that is profitable. My bills are all coming due and I cannot pay. Now as the woman was telling the tale of her business woes, she began to get a small smile on her face. “Gosh,” the rabbit said in response, “I am so sorry. I wish there was something I could do.”

“Well,” the woman said coming around her mailbox to the wounded ol’ rabbit, “you know you are the biggest rabbit anyone has ever seen and your bushy tale is the biggest and bushiest. I could use your tale to clean lickety-split and my business would be profitable.”

The rabbit stared.

The woman stared.

“Yes, I will.”

With that, the woman cut off the rabbit’s big bushy tale and went back into her house happy as could be planning how she might expand her cleaning business. The rabbit hopped on and continued his walk through the town but was dragging along now more than hopping and was moving very slow. More townspeople saw him and greeted the ol’ rabbit though some began to stare and many pointed. Some shook their heads.

Arriving at a crossroad the rabbit was waiting for the light to change so he could cross and continue his journey though it was becoming more and more difficult to hop or move. As the big ol' rabbit was waiting for the light to change, a young girl walked up beside him and was waiting as well. They stood. They waited. They both had to cross the busy street. She was shivering for she had no coat. The girl looked at the rabbit and eyed the warm fur. The rabbit looked at the girl and noticed her shivering.

The rabbit stared.

The girl stared.

“Yes, I will.”

With that, the girl skinned the rabbit and took the rabbit's skin for a coat. The light changed. She walked on and crossed the road not shivering. The rabbit was left at the crossroad. He could just barely move and so had to wait for the next light to change. People walked by and saw the skinned rabbit. Many ran quickly past. Some ignored him completely. Others shielded their children's eyes. Some felt sick at his appearance. Some were offended. The light changed and the rabbit slowly moved across the road and continued on his journey.

The big ol' rabbit was slowly limping and sliding along the sidewalk when he heard some steps behind him. He turned as best he could and saw a whole family walking behind him. The ol' rabbit hopped

forward and the family would follow. The dad looked haggard. The mother's face was sunken in because she had not eaten. The son and daughter looked like they had not eaten in a while and needed a good meal. The ol' rabbit hopped forward and the family would follow. The rabbit turned a corner. The family turned the corner as well and followed. The rabbit turned to face the family.

The rabbit stared.

The family stared.

"Yes, I will."

With that, the family killed the rabbit and took him home, cooked him, ate, and had their fill.

End

Romans 5:8 (ESV)

*“But God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*

Hebrews 9:12 (ESV)

*“He entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of His own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.”*

1 John 2:2 (ESV)

*“He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.”*

  **KINGDOM TRUTH**  

Entrance into the Kingdom of God was paid for by the life and blood of Jesus Christ and there is no other way to access the Kingdom of God but through Jesus.

  **KINGDOM TRUTH**  

The Kingdom of  
God is like a  
letter sent from a  
far distance that  
always arrives at  
its destination.



# KINGDOM TALES

## LUCKY THE SHEEP

Once upon a time, there was a herd of sheep in a safe green cozy valley. You know sheep... fluffy... eat a lot... gets haircuts to make clothes for people. This herd of sheep was pretty large and was taken care of by a young shepherd. The young shepherd was bored. Always bored. He longed for an exciting life. He would play with the sheep. He would sing to the sheep. He even named the sheep. Each and every sheep had a name and he knew them all.

One day he was watching the sheep... just bored out of his skull... and he came to a decision. He stood up. He went over to the sheep named "Lucky" and took his head in his hands.

"Lucky," he said in a firm voice, "the grass is always greener on the other side of the hill. I am done. I name you Lucky the Sheep Shepherd. You are in charge now. You lead the sheep. You sing songs to them. You name them. You be the one who is bored. I am out of here." And with that, the shepherd boy stood up and walked away over the next hill to change his life.

A whole week passed and the shepherd boy did not come back.

Lucky the Sheep realized that he indeed was in charge of the flock. He started to sing to them, but none of them listened. He tried naming them, but no one cared. He did notice, that wherever he went, they all followed. He would graze in one place and they would all gather. He would graze in another place and they would all gather. He was definitely the shepherd or at least the mutton-in-charge.

Lucky starting grazing towards the top of the hill and wondered what was on the other side. They had always been in the same place. They had always been here. Yet, what was on the other side of the hill? What had the shepherd boy said? "The grass is greener on the other side of the hill."

Lucky slowly marched up the hill and looked over the hill. What was on the other side? Green grass. Lots and lots of green grass. He started to eat that grass and all of the flock followed him over the hill. They were now on the other side of the hill.

Pretty soon, Lucky looked up from eating and counted all his fellow grass eaters. There seemed to be less than there was before. Lucky needed to get a better view so he walked up the side of the next hill. He looked out over his brothers and sisters and friends and cousins and frenemies and counted.

There were some missing!

Lucky started to wander around looking for them. The flock followed and grazed on the grass. He soon discovered, not too far away, what had happened.

Laying with their bellies very full were 3 large wolves. They must have eaten several sheep because they were all in some kind of feast coma. They snored and rubbed their bellies with delight. Lucky the Sheep slowly backed away from the three sleeping wolves and walked up the side of the next hill. Maybe it would be better and safer over the next hill.

So Lucky the Sheep led the flock over the next hill.

Over the next hill, Lucky the Sheep and the flock felt a lot safer. Lucky could see that the grass continued over the hill, but also noticed that the wolves did not follow. The grass here seemed greener. The grass here seemed more plentiful. They were safe from the wolves which was a good thing. The sheep munched and grazed and munched and grazed. Lucky even sang to the sheep, but no one cared. He tried to count the sheep, but that made him sleepy. So, he just walked and ate grass.

Pretty soon, Lucky looked up from eating and counted all his fellow grass eaters. There seemed to be less than there was before.

Not again!

He looked and looked and did not see any wolves. Lucky needed to get a better view so he walked up the side of the next hill. He looked and noticed that some of the sheep on the one side of the flock had not moved. Everyone else had followed him. He looked and to his horror noticed they were all sinking into the ground. The ground over there was soft and they had not known it.

Sinking.

Sinking.

The sheep were sinking.

Lucky the Sheep slowly backed away from the sight of the sinking sheep and walked up the side of the next hill. Maybe it would be better and safer over the next hill. "The grass is always greener on the other side of the hill." Maybe it is always safer too! So Lucky the Sheep led the flock over the next hill.

Over the next hill was uncertain. They had been safe and secure and provided for and blessed and cared for where they had come from over the hills. He had wanted to see what was on the other side of the hill and had led them into the sights of 3 wolves. He had led them over the next hill and some had sunk into the ground. Now they were here. Here seemed ok, but so did the other places.

The sheep grazed there. They grazed there the next day as well. A whole week went by and they were safe and secure from all alarm. He

started to sing to them, but none of them listened. He tried naming them, but no one cared. Lucky starting grazing towards the top of the hill and wondered what was on the other side.

He remembered the wolves.

Oh, they had not been that bad.

He remembered the sinking ground.

Oh, that had not been that bad.

Lucky the Sheep felt like they had always been in the same place. They had always been here. Yet, what was on the other side of the hill? What had the shepherd boy said? "The grass is greener on the other side of the hill."

Lucky slowly marched up the hill and fell off a cliff.

End

Luke 12:15 (ESV)

*“And He said to them, “Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”*

Philippians 4:11-13 (ESV)

*“Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”*

1 Timothy 6:6-8 (ESV)

*“But godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.”*

  **KINGDOM TRUTH**  

The Kingdom of God is an economy of submission where there is no place for greed and self-indulgence. ‘Lust of the eyes’ is not rewarded or wanted. Contentment and peace are the currency of Heaven. Denial of self is the order of each and every day.

  **KINGDOM TRUTH**  

The Kingdom of  
Heaven is like a  
white t-shirt  
cleaned of a stain  
that you were sure  
would never come  
out.

## PARABLE OF JESUS:

Ownership

Matthew 25:14-29

What is the most famous parable that Jesus ever told?

Many people would answer that it is the “Parable of the Prodigal Son” or “Parable of the Good Samaritan.” Both of those are perfect stories. I am pretty sure they have been told and retold around the world many times.

The point of every parable is to hit home to us some great spiritual truth and teach us about ourselves and about God’s expectations of us. Parables reveal Truth to us. Parables apply to our lives today just like they did to the original hearers. Parables share with us how God acts and reacts and even more convicting how we act and react.

We are going to be looking at the Parable of the Talents in these pages. You can find it in Matthew 25:14-29 in the New Testament. This parable has some principles of ownership that it teaches that should not be missed.

As we begin to think about... “ownership”... we may have competing perspectives in our minds.

**OUR PERSPECTIVE:** It is very easy in our society to think of ourselves as owners of everything we see and everything that is in our homes. When we went to the store to buy the vacuum cleaner, picked it out, stood in line, and we paid for it. When we look on the bills that come in for cars, vans, boats, houses, and other items... it is our name that appears as responsible. Our name means it is ours.

**HIS PERSPECTIVE:** Psalms 24:1: *"The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it."* Leviticus 25:23: *"The land is Mine and you are but aliens and My tenants."* Haggai 2:8: *" 'The silver is Mine and the gold is Mine,' declares the Lord Almighty."* 1 Corinthians 6:19-20: *"You are not your own; you were bought at a price."* Exodus 19:5: *"All the earth is Mine."* Deuteronomy 8:18: *"Remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you the ability to produce wealth."* Romans 11:36: *"For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things..."* 1 Corinthians 4:2: *"Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful."* Deuteronomy 10:14: *"Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the highest heavens, the earth and all that is in it."* Job 41:11: *"Who has a claim against Me that I must pay? Everything under heaven belongs to Me."* 1 Timothy 6:7: *"We have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either."* Genesis 14:22, *"Abram said to the king of Sodom, 'I have sworn to the Lord God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth..."* Exodus 9:29: *"Moses said to him [Pharaoh], 'As soon as I go out of*

*the city, I will spread out my hands to the Lord; the thunder will cease, and there will be hail no longer, that you may know that the earth is the Lord's." 1 Chronicles 29:11, 14-16: "Yours, O Lord, is... everything that is in the heavens and the earth... who am I and who are my people that we should be able to offer as generously as this? For all things come from You, and from Your hand we have given You. For we are sojourners before You, and tenants... all this abundance that we have provided to build You a house for Your holy name, it is from Your hand, and all is Yours." Psalms 50:12: "If I were hungry, I would not tell you; for the whole world is Mine; and all it contains." Psalms 82:8: "Arise, O God, judge the earth! For it is Thou does possess all the nations." Psalms 89:11: "The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours; the world and all it contains, You have founded them." Psalms 95:4-5: "In Whose hands are the depths of the earth; the peaks of the mountains are His also. The sea is His, for it was He who made it; and His hands formed the dry land." Psalms 104:24: "O Lord, how many are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all; the earth is full of Your possessions." 1 Corinthians 10:26 "For the earth is the Lord's, and everything that is in it."*

God is the only One who gets to say "Mine" and mean it.

God is the One who has ownership.

God gives us the ability to earn and work.

THE CORRECT PERSPECTIVE: The correct perspective from the Bible rests on four principles:

#1 God is the owner of everything

#2 God as the owner has generously entrusted His resources to us

#3 God as the owner can entrust the resources as He sees fit

#4 God as the owner can direct how those resources are used

The Parable of the Talents shares this Truth with us.

Matthew 25:14-30 (ESV)

*“For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. 15 To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. 16 He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. 17 So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. 18 But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. 19 Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. 20 And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me five talents; here, I have made five talents more.’ 21 His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’ 22 And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me two talents; here, I have made two talents more.’ 23 His master said to him,*

*‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’ 24 He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, ‘Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, 25 so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here, you have what is yours.’ 26 But his master answered him, ‘You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? 27 Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. 28 So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. 29 For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. 30 And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’”*

At the very beginning of this parable it plainly says that HE entrusted HIS wealth to THEM. That word “he” establishes ownership and shows a top down ownership of everything that is described in the parable.

The servants belong to the Master.  
The property belongs to the Master.  
The money belongs to the Master.  
It is all HIS.

He entrusts it to his servants, but he maintains ownership rights. The servants now are responsible for what they have been given even though the servants and the property and the money all still belong to him.

Really, this issue of “ownership” is the key to understanding and practically applying what the Bible says about money in this passage, but it’s one that we often miss. We get so caught up and focused on the practical issues of budgeting and financial management and even being good stewards that we miss this theological truth about money and the correct perspective.

Here is it is: It doesn’t belong to you; it all belongs to God.

## PARABLE OF JESUS: Principles from a Parable We Don't Like Luke 16:1-13

Stories can have positive impacts on us and also can have negative impacts on us. The parables of Jesus are positive and help us spiritually, but there are one or two we are not so sure about and are very challenging.

The one we will look at in these next few pages is one of those we have deep questions on. This parable is told at the beginning of Luke 16.

Luke 16:1-15 (ESV)

*“He also said to the disciples, “There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his possessions. 2 And he called him and said to him, ‘What is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your management, for you can no longer be manager.’ 3 And the manager said to himself, ‘What shall I do, since my master is taking the management away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. 4 I have decided what to do, so that when I am removed from management, people may receive me into their houses.’ 5 So, summoning his master’s debtors one by one, he said to the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’ 6 He said, ‘A hundred measures of oil.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.’ 7 Then he*

said to another, 'And how much do you owe?' He said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.'

8 The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light. 9 And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings. 10 "One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. 11 If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? 12 And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? 13 No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money."

This parable is one of those that we do not often understand because of a misreading or misinterpretation in verses 8-9. We think we read something that we really do not. Let's take a look at this parable of Jesus and get His point correct in our minds and apply it to our hearts.

**THE SITUATION:** I think that this parable is one of those Jesus told to make a very specific point. In fact, I don't even think that Jesus had to make this story up because it is plausible that it could have happened.

It could be that Jesus was telling His disciples about some events between a rich man and his manager to help drive home a lesson for them and for us about priorities. It would almost have to be based on real events because in the story the rich man commends his manager for being dishonest which feels like something a person might actually do. We know that's not something Jesus would have in a story of His own, but He is using this story for a very specific reason. Whether or not Jesus made up the parable or describes something that actually happened, the point remains the same.

Our story centers on a steward in the services of a rich man. A steward is a manager. This manager probably functioned much like Joseph did in the Old Testament in Potiphar's house in Genesis 39 or even Doeg the Edomite for King Saul in 1 Samuel 21 or Higgins in Magnum PI (1980, 2018). He was the supervisor over meals, household finances, other servants, flocks and herds, and tilling of the fields. He managed much. He was pretty much the #2 man over the estate of the rich man. It was the area of finance that he came into trouble. He was accused of wasting his master's resources and faced an audit and a dismissal. He lost his job because he was dishonest! We are talking embezzlement, fraud, misappropriation of finances, and negligence.

I can imagine him shrinking to a corner by himself trying to figure out what he should do. For him, there is no unemployment line to go stand in to get help. There is no union. There is no way to immediately get

another job given that probably his reputation is even trashed. Once he's fired he's on his own. He thinks and thinks and then has a plan. He calls in several of the men who owe his master and reduces the amount that they owe him. The picture we get is that he probably does this for everyone who owes his master money.

Make no mistake, he does this to make friends.

He decides that if all of these farmers and businessmen and vendors and debtors owed him favors then when all is said and done that these people would surely take him in or give him a job when he's on the street. He helped them out and so they should in return help him out. The master then gets wind of what this man has done and commends him for being shrewd. The master saw that even though he was firing this manager, this manager had prepared places for himself to go and used his influence for his own gain.

It feels like Jesus' parable is about a dishonest man who is commended for being even more dishonest and we aren't sure what to do with that.

**THE COMPLICATION:** The complication and the problem are that we don't really understand what this parable means because it feels like Jesus is using a dishonest person to teach a spiritual truth. That doesn't make much sense to us and it does not sound like

Jesus. We often have lots of questions when it comes to this passage:

What does this parable explain to us about Jesus?

What does this parable mean for us and money?

What does this parable teach us about priorities?

What does “make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth” mean from Jesus?

What is the point of the parable?

Jesus Christ shares the parable in verses 1-8 and then in verses 8-9 adds the thought that the businessmen of his day, the sons of this world, were more wise, bold, and forward-thinking in the management of what they had than the people of God, the sons of light, were with managing what they had. It feels like Jesus says the evil sons of this world are better than the good sons of light. That is a strange statement coming from Jesus Christ.

It feels like Jesus used an obviously dishonest man as an example for His disciples. Yet, God sometimes uses evil things familiar to us to illustrate a point. The Apostle Paul used things like war and slavery

as illustrations of the Christian life and it makes us uncomfortable, but we get his point.

What is Jesus' point?

What do we do with this parable?

**THE RESOLUTION:** The key to understanding the whole parable in verses 1-8 and the strange statements of Jesus in verses 8-9 is Jesus explanation in verses 10-13.

We need to understand that most of the time when we have questions about the Bible or something that Jesus teaches, context is always helpful. The verses before it and after it are always helpful. Context.

There are several principles that Jesus teaches from this dishonest manager.

**Principle #1: Use Money for Spiritual Gain**

First, Jesus says "make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth." On the surface we may immediately think of having parties or buying our friends lavish gifts or taking people on vacation with us. We may think of those things. That was not what Jesus had in mind. Jesus meant to use our money properly by serving people. We have been trained to think that money goes towards buying things.

What about helping the homeless?

What about sending extra gifts of money to missionaries?

What about giving money to the local women's shelter?

What about supporting a local youth organization?

What about tithing to the church?

What about spending money on people and for people?

Jesus further explains in verse 10 (the context) that when we are faithful with little that we will be faithful with much and the opposite is also true. Consider that your job and income and wealth and money management are the little things and that spiritual matters are greater things. Jesus is teaching us to manage our earthly issues well so we can manage spiritual issues better. Jesus also teaches us that to mismanage our earthly issues means we also mis-manage spiritual issues.

Jesus' words have a whole new meaning when we think of helping, sending, giving, supporting, tithing, and spending like that! Jesus is telling us to use our money to help people, and in that sense, we will be gaining friends. And when our money is all gone, we will have eternal riches because we literally and figuratively and spiritually invested in eternity.

This is not the only time Jesus teaches this principle. He mentions this same Truth in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6. Matthew 6:19-21 (ESV) says: "*Do not lay up for yourselves*

*treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*

### Principle #2 (really 1b): Leverage What You Got

In Jesus' parable, the dishonest manager took advantage of his present position to arrange and leverage a comfortable future. Jesus' assessment is true: the sons of this world are shrewder in their generation than the sons of light. The man leveraged what he had and what he knew for his future. He was commended by his manager for it.

Kelly and I used to watch a TV show called *Leverage* (2008-2012). It was a show about criminals helping people and doing good. It feels a little bit like Jesus' parable. The opening of the show had a voice over which said: “The rich and powerful, they take what they want. We steal it back for you. Sometimes the bad guys make the best good guys. We provide... ‘leverage.’”

Leverage is powerful and influential and not necessarily tied to money and absolutely can be used for good. If we, the sons and daughters of light, pursued the Kingdom of God with the same vigor and zeal that the children of this world pursue profits and pleasure and manipulation, we would live in an entirely different world!

This world knows how to advertise and distribute and catch attention and entertain and indoctrinate and get footholds and change culture. We should be the experts in all that because we have the Gospel! We have a message worth sharing!

We need to leverage what we have for the Kingdom.

Being a servant of Jesus is not always about money. It is not always about using money for spiritual gain, but also about leveraging what you have for the Kingdom of God. It may be that you do not have extra money, but you might have a talent, passion, a skill, extra time, willingness to learn, or an expertise that God can and will use to spread the Good News about Jesus.

I could not help but see this principle working out in the life of the disciples. The Book of Acts is the story of the birth of the Church and the initial spread of the Gospel over the whole world. The third chapter finds the Apostle Peter and John face-to-face with a lame man. Now he is not lame because he is uncool, but was disabled from birth... that kind of lame. Note what happens in Acts 3.

*Acts 3:6-10 (ESV) says: "But Peter said, "I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!" 7 And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. 8 And leaping up, he stood and began to walk, and entered the*

*temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. 9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God, 10 and recognized him as the one who sat at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, asking for alms. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.”*

The Apostle Peter leveraged what he had for the Kingdom. What do you have that you can leverage for the Kingdom? Art? Baking? Cooking? Organizing skills? Poetry? Playing an instrument? Mentoring? Singing? Extra time to serve? Leverage what you got for the Kingdom!

### Principle #3: You Will Be Called to Account

Jesus tells a parable with a dishonest steward, but the dishonest steward does have an attitude that we also need to adopt. We should not adopt the cheating attitude or the entitlement to embezzle or the willingness to cheat our boss. We should not adopt the willingness to shortchange others for our own gain.

He did, however, know that he would be called to account for his life and he took that seriously.

Christians should take seriously the idea that we will be called to account by God, and that idea can be a joy if we are properly about our Master's business. Most of the time we wrongly think that those people who are Christians would somehow save us from Judgment

Day. That is not true! Every single soul will have to stand before God and give an account of our lives and what we have said and done and not done and not said. Everyone will be judged!

We will stand before God and we will see that our fines and penalties in sin are just as high as everyone else. We who believe in Jesus will stand before God and hear about all our sin and it is going to be embarrassing.

It will be soul-crushing.

It will be emotionally-unbearable.

The Bible is full of verses which share with us that we are all beholden to God and responsible to Him with how we spend our time, energy, and money. Jesus says in verse 13 (the context) that it matters what master we serve.

What else does the Bible say?

Matthew 12:35-37 (ESV): *“The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. 36 I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, 37 for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”*

Romans 14:12 (ESV): *“So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.”*

2 Corinthians 5:9-10 (ESV): *“So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please Him. 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.”*

Those that are in Christ have an advantage.

The advantage is that we know the Son of God.

We intimately know the Judge and are prepared for our trial. Our fines and penalties are just as high as everyone else, but our fines and penalties have been paid for by the blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God our Lord and Savior! We who believe in Jesus will stand before God and hear about all our sin. It will be soul-crushing. It will be emotionally-unbearable. It also ultimately will have no condemnation or shame for us because we are in Christ (Romans 8:1)!

**SUMMARY:** Luke 16 starts with a confusing parable that has some great principles for us. We are not to emulate the embezzlement of the manager, but we can take from it the overall point that it matters who we serve and what priorities we have in this life. It matters that we place Jesus as priority as well as the Kingdom of God when it comes to our money and talents. It matters how we use our money or

if our money uses us. It matters that we wisely and shrewdly leverage our time, energy, talents, skills, building, for Jesus.

APPLICATION: How do we apply this parable?

\* Use money for spiritual gain. If you don't already, start. It is important that a believer in Jesus have a proper view of money and what is most important. Jesus teaches us to invest and spend on spiritual treasures rather than only on earthly ones.

\* Leverage some time, a talent, or a skill for Jesus. If you don't already, it is time to start. It is important that a believer in Jesus wisely share the Gospel in as many ways as possible using as many talents, skills, and opportunities as He has given.



# Kingdom Tales

## SIMPLE SAM & HEAPIN HARV

I want to introduce you to two people. They are two people who approach life in very different ways when it comes to money, material things, and financial habits.

First, we have Simple Sam (it can be Simple Samantha if you like!). Simple Sam is a guy who makes a conscious effort to be the same on the inside as he is on the outside. His speech is truthful and honest and he makes decisions based off of faith and thinking. He finds security in his faith and loves the things of God for which he is blessed. Those are the things make him happy. He manages his money and does not let his money manage him. He never stresses over money. He has everything in his life he needs and more.

Second, we have Heapin Harv (it can be Heapin Henrietta if you like!). Heapin Harv is a guy who makes no effort to be the same on the inside and the outside. He flip flops often in what he says and what he wants and his opinions seem to change with the blowing winds. He makes decisions based on feelings. He finds his security in material things and calls covetousness ambition, calls hoarding... prudence and calls greed... industry. He wants nice things to make him happy. He is always a slave to money and has many bills. He

stresses and worries over money. He never seems to be content with anything.

Simple Sam needs a new chair for the living room. The old one has worn out and it is time for a new one. He arrives in the store to see all kinds of furniture and couches and chairs. The salesman shows him a chair that massages his back. The salesman shows him a chair that automatically checks his email when he sits down. He even saw a chair that sends a monthly text with the amount of pocket change in the cushions.

Simple Sam doesn't need all that and realizes he cannot really afford it anyway. He finds a chair that is mid-ranged in price and will not quickly wear and tear. He uses the "90 days same as cash option" and can pay the chair off easily without any stress. He has his new chair and loves it.

Heapin Harv needs a new chair for the living room. There is nothing wrong necessarily with the old one, but he just kind of wants one. He arrives in the store and sees all kinds of furniture for the inside and outside of his house. The salesman shows him a furniture set that has a chair, a couch, and a love-seat. Even though he only needs a chair, he wants all of them. He feels like he wants them. Not only that, he can get a combo deal for inside furniture and outside furniture for his back porch. He never sits out there, but it might be nice to have.

He uses his credit card because he definitely can't afford new inside furniture and outside furniture. He pays the delivery fees. He swipes his card and now has a bunch of new furniture he wanted and has a headache of a bill he cannot pay.

Simple Sam needs a new lawn mower for his house. He has a medium sized yard and a push mower will do. He goes to the local home improvement store and notices they have push mowers from \$94 all the way to \$499. Simple Sam has saved back around \$225 and buys a nice small mower with cash. Actually, they were having a sale and Simple Sam bought 2 mowers. The mower he bought is about the same size as his last mower so it fits nicely in the shed. Now he can mow his yard and it will look nice and neat.

He took the 2<sup>nd</sup> mower he purchased and gave it to his church which needed a new push mower. He then gave away his old mower to a neighbor who knew how to fix mowers and could use it himself. The fellow offered to pay, but Sam was eager to be generous and said no.

Heapin Harv needs a new law mower at his house. He has a medium sized yard and a push mower will do. He goes to the local home improvement store and notices they have riding lawn mowers from \$1299 to \$2699. He noticed his neighbor across the street has a new riding lawn mower that looks nice. He decided he wanted one of those to keep up with the neighborhood. He had the new mower

delivered and realized that it would not fit in the shed he already owned. He went back to the home improvement store and swiped the old credit card to buy a bigger shed to fit his lawn mower. Now, because of the bigger shed, he actually had less lawn to mow. Also, he sold his old lawnmower to somebody at his work. He charged the loser way too much.

End

Matthew 6:21 (ESV)

*“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*

Luke 16:13 (ESV)

*“No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.”*

Romans 8:5-6 (ESV)

*“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.”*

  **KINGDOM TRUTH**  

The Kingdom of God is an economy of submission where there is no place for greed and self-indulgence. ‘Lust of the eyes’ is not rewarded or wanted. Contentment and peace are the currency of Heaven. Denial of self is the order of each and every day.

  **KINGDOM TRUTH**  

The Kingdom of God  
is like an unmarried son  
telling his mother on  
Mother's Day during a  
practical joke that he  
got a girl pregnant and  
not getting killed for it.



# KINGDOM TALES

## THE DRAGON, THE PRINCESS, AND THE ARCHER

Once upon a time there was an evil dragon, a beautiful princess, and a skilled archer. Let me tell you how the story of the dragon, princess, and archer all intertwine.

The story begins with the beautiful princess and the fact that she was single, available, and her father the king wanted her married off. The call went out across all kingdoms that the beautiful princess was available.

A prince from a neighboring kingdom arrived, but his armor was too rusty and the princess rejected him.

A valiant knight from a kingdom by the sea came to ask for her hand, but he smelled like fish and she said... no.

A very rich merchant who had made his money honestly trading with far off lands came, but when the princess found out he would rarely be home, she said... no.

No. No. No. No.

The beautiful princes said no, no, no to countless suitors as they offered their hand in marriage.

One day an evil dragon appeared in the sky after hearing that the princess was available. I say the dragon was “evil” because he pursued unrighteousness with everything he did:

He prized schemes to cheat.

He prized gold above all things and would do anything to get it.

He had amassed quite a bit of gold that was not his.

He reveled in his wealth.

The dragon was rough, prone to anger, never kept his word, and was always blaming others for things not working out as planned. The dragon was an all-around bad egg.

The dragon arrived and asked for the hand of the princess in marriage. Adding this kingdom to his spoils was a tempting opportunity.

What did the princess say? She said ‘no’ of course just like every other time someone or now some-beast asked.

The dragon became enraged. He drew in his breath and let out fire. Knights came to defend the castle and were burned. The dragon roared with anger. The dragon, in his anger, scooped up the beautiful princess and flew towards his den in the mountains. While

flying away, the dragon huffed and puffed and caused fires all the way through the kingdom.

Farms burned.

Trees burned.

Animals died.

Homes burned.

As you can imagine, after the fires were put out, the heart and will of the king was to rescue his daughter. Not only that, the villagers wanted some kind of justice for all of their livelihood being burned. Even though she had said no, no, no, to every eligible bachelor that had come along, the king promised the hand of the princess to whomever would save her from the clutches of the evil dragon.

He would not let her say no to the hero that saved her.

First to attempt rescue was a huge lumberjack. His muscles had muscles. His beard was long and strong. He thought that his might and skill with an ax would win the day, but alas it did not.

Second, third, and fourth rescue attempts were brave knights who failed miserably. The princess saw all of these attempts and saw each one fail. Her heart began to grow sad.

Then an inventor made a machine that would fire huge dragon-killing javelins came along, but the inventor made the whole rig out of wood and it was burned to a crisp.

Failure.

Failure.

Failure.

This is the part of our story where the skilled archer enters the scene. His family farm had been burned by the dragon and he too wanted justice. He was also a single young man and thought he could win the hand of the princess if he rescued her. More than anything, however, he wanted to prove his skill as an archer. The archer approached the dragon. The dragon laughed and laughed as he saw that it was an archer that approached.

The dragon laughed out: "Your very small arrows cannot hope to penetrate my armored scales. Go away!"

The archer knew that the dragon spoke the truth. No arrow could penetrate the hide of the dragon and take him down. He did not come without a plan. It was a risky plan that would require focus and faith, but it was a plan nevertheless.

The dragon had the princess tied up with chains on a large pillar in the center of his den.

"I propose a challenge," said the skilled archer. "I propose that you set a gold ring on top of the head of the beautiful princess. I will attempt to shoot an arrow into the ring from any manageable distance you choose. If I shoot one of my five arrows into the ring, I take the princess with me. If I accidentally shoot her, you have lost nothing."

The dragon listened and then peered at the puny archer. "That seems like a bit of fun! Agreed," said the evil dragon.

The princess was beside herself with anger. She could not believe the archer had come all this way just to put an arrow in her. She felt doomed.

The dragon placed a gold ring above the head of the princess. It was not a large ring, but a smaller sized ring about the size of a man's hand.

The dragon laughed and laughed: "You did not specify the size of the ring!"

"You are correct," said the archer. He looked at the very small ring. It would indeed be a challenge. The archer took his place some distance from the dragon. He had five arrows. He had five chances to free the princess. He also realized he had five opportunities to accidentally shoot an arrow into the princess.

Only a perfect shot would free her.

The archer took aim at the ring. It was his first shot and his hands and arms were shaking with nerves. He had never made such an important shot before. He breathed out and let loose the arrow. The arrow flew in the air and missed the princess, the ring, and even the large column completely.

He would need to focus better.  
The dragon laughed a low growl.

The archer took aim at the ring. As he focused on the ring, his eyes fell to the face of the beautiful princess. She was indeed beautiful. Her hair was blond. Her eyes were sparkling green. Everything about her was perfect. Even dirty and smelly in the dragon's den had not diminished her beauty. He let loose the arrow, but realize too late he was distracted by the princess and the arrow plunged into the column right above the princess' shoulder. It was so close to hitting her.

The dragon laughed even more.

The archer took aim at the ring. He focused on the ring and calmed his nerves and ignored the distraction of the princess. Just as he was about to let loose the arrow, the dragon moved and blew fire over his head. The flames were hot and burning and though they did not even touch the archer, the distraction was unexpected and the arrow was shot well away from the princess and the column.

“You didn’t specify that I could not distract you,” the dragon confessed. “This is all a bit of fun isn’t it.”

The archer took aim at the ring. This was arrow 4 of 5. Only one left. That one was for something else. This had to be the shot. The archer took aim, calmed his nerves, ignored the distraction of the princess, ignored the dragon and any other surprises he might dream up, and let loose the arrow. The arrow sailed through the air and struck home above the head of the princess in the center of the gold ring.

“What?!” The dragon called out. “That means...”

“That means I take the princess with me. That was the deal,” said the archer with confidence. He was confident, but he also notched his last arrow.

One arrow left.

The archer moved to the princess and unbound her chains. The dragon was beginning to pace back and forth with anger. The princess was relieved and as all princesses do, she looked on her hero with love.

The archer and the princess got on his horse and began to ride away out of the dragon's den. They were just about out of the den when the dragon predictably changed his mind and flew to block the exit.

The archer had expected this. The archer brought up his last arrow and loosed the arrow. The arrow sailed through the air and right into one of the eyes of the dragon. The dragon howled in pain and flew to the back of the den.

The archer and princess on his horse rode out to freedom.

"How did you save me? How did you make that shot? How did you ignore all the distractions?" The princess had nothing but questions over and over as they rode away.

"It was all because of focus," said the archer. "Focus."

End

Psalms 119:15 (ESV)

*“I will meditate on Your precepts and fix my eyes on Your ways.”*

Luke 10:38-42 (ESV)

*“Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to His teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to Him and said, “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me.” But the Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.”*

1 Corinthians 10:13 (ESV)

*“No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.”*

  **KINGDOM TRUTH**  

In the Kingdom of God, faith is intense focus on Jesus.

  **KINGDOM TRUTH**  

The Kingdom of  
Heaven is a  
dinner designed  
only for losers  
and you realize  
that you were  
invited.



# KINGDOM TALES

FIZZLEWHISTLES x4

## FIZZLEWHISTLE IN KINDERGARTEN

It was her first day of kindergarten. Little Suzie Fizzlewhistle had waited not so patiently all morning while her parents got ready to take her to school. First, they needed coffee. Then the dog needed to be walked. Then they had to eat. Who needs to eat when there is kindergarten to get to?! Then they needed another cup of coffee for some reason. Adults must need coffee in the morning to walk out of the house. Then they got up her brother. They needed to forget about him and focus on getting her to school! She had already dressed herself and gotten ready for school and got her stuffed animals ready for school by the time it said 6-0-0 on the clock.

Finally, everyone got in the car. And she did want everyone. Her parents wanted to leave all her stuffed animals at home, but she cried until she got her way. She often cried until she got what she wanted. All of her stuffed animals were in the seat next to her on the ride to the school and were buckled in safe. She arrived. For some reason, all the parents were crying like babies and the kids were acting all growd-up.

Little Suzie Fizzlewhistle had been ready for school since forever.

The day did not disappoint.

There was finger painting. She made sure she was first in line to get paints. There were goldfish for snacks which were her all-time favorite. The teacher asked if anyone wanted seconds and she elbowed some boy out of the way to get some and was first in line.

There was even a for real goldfish as a class pet on the teacher's desk that during the middle of the day decided for some reason to sleep belly up.

There were songs. She liked their songs, but when it came to a few songs she didn't know, she sang whatever song she wanted no matter what anyone else was singing.

There were rules, but those didn't really apply to her. She was special. Her mother told her so.

A loud bell buzzed out over the whole school. It was lunch time. All the kids stood up and grouped at the door. Out came Little Suzie Fizzlewhistle with her bright pink sparkly lunchbox and shoved one girl out of the way. She shouldered some boy. She pushed her way all the way to the front and yelled at the top of her lungs, "Me first!"

## FIZZLEWHISTLE ON THE SPORTS FIELD

Connor Fizzlewhistle was excited for his first day of football practice. His first day of high school had gone fine, but it was the football practice after school that had his mind occupied. He was only a freshman, but his parents had told him he was good enough for the Varsity team.

He deserved to be on the Varsity team.

Connor walked out onto the practice field and smelled the grass. He felt the heat on his face. He wore the most expensive cleats money could buy because he wanted them. He had a headband and sweatband combo that was sure to make the cheerleaders look at him. He had his eye on a couple. Wink. Wink. He even made his mother buy him fancy receiver gloves from the NFL store. They were bright orange and the brightest item on the field.

After they had stretched and done some drills, they were playing a scrimmage. The coach was watching. They got into a huddle.

Before anyone else spoke Connor said to the quarterback: "Hey throw it to me first. I want to show what I can do." The play happened and Connor did not get the ball. There had been another play and the quarterback had not thrown him a pass. Two plays and he hadn't gotten the ball.

Connor Fizzlewhistle got angry.

They got in a huddle. Connor said to the quarterback: "Why aren't you throwing it to me? Throw it to me next time."

The designed play went off and Connor did not get the ball.

They got in a huddle. Connor said to the quarterback: "Why aren't you throwing it to me? Throw it to me next time. I want to show what I can do."

The designed play went off and Connor sensed that he was not going to get the ball. He broke from his receiver route the play called for and he intercepted the ball from his own teammate and ran for a touchdown. He celebrated. He danced his pre-practiced touchdown moves. He turned around and everyone was standing still on the field and looking at him.

The coach was shaking his head as he came up to him. "What were you thinking?" the coach asked in a bewildered tone, "You intercepted the ball from your own teammate?"

Connor looked at the coach and said, "He should have thrown it to me first."

## FIZZLEWHISTLE IN THE CAR LINE

Becky Fizzlewhistle had one of those days. It was a very emotional day. Her oldest had gone to high school for the first time as a freshman. Her youngest had gone to kindergarten for the first time. O a day of firsts!

She felt emotional.

She felt stressed.

Becky had occupied her time by doing her errands. At the local grocery store, she got what she needed for the annual back-to-school dinner. She had lots of things in her cart, but she was in a hurry, so she went in the express lane even though she had way more items than the sign said. The clerk said nothing. The long line of people behind her just glowered. Whatever.

The rest of her important errands were all successful and then it was time to pick up her precious daughter from her first day in kindergarten. She got to the school and the line was stretched out around the school. So many cars waiting.

They moved one inch.

Then another inch.

Then another inch.

She was not going to wait. She gunned the gas of her GMC Yukon Denali extended full-sized SUV and went up over the curb and into the front yard of the school. She thought about parking in the front yard, but instead resolved herself to get where she was going. She drove through the yard and went down over the next curb into the lane right in front of the school. She laid on the horn and inched her way into the line.

People were yelling and honking!  
Teachers were on radios.  
Kids of all ages were pointing.

Once in the line, she parked. The car in front of her moved, but she got out instead getting her beautiful daughter. The rest of the people would have to wait. She went to the door and there was her daughter.

“Ma’am,” a teacher called out, “you need to wait in line! There are others!”

Becky Fizzlewhistle just ignored all the protests as she drove away.

## FIZZLEWHISTLE AT CHURCH

The Fizzlewhistle family was on their way to church a few days later. It was Sunday morning and as usual. Joe was driving. What a great first week of school it had been! The family was talking all about their classes and teachers and expectations for the year as they drove down the road.

The family SUV passed the church. They had left a few minutes early and Joe went through the drive thru and got himself coffee. He did not offer or order anyone else anything. It took the one-eyed one-armed one-legged fast-food worker half a minute longer than it should have to get his order and he yelled at her for wasting his time and making him late for church.

They drove on down the street.

“Hey,” Suzie cried out, “we passed the church!”

“Oh we don’t go to that church anymore,” Becky said to her daughter.

“Why not?” Suzie asked.

“Well,” said Joe, “we just don’t feel like we are being fed at that church. We go every week and it doesn’t always apply to us. The

sermon should always apply to us and when it does, it shouldn't make us change too much. Just change the little things. We want somewhere that always feeds us. It is all about us you know."

"Plus," Becky said, "they always want us to serve or join a group. We just want to go and sit. We want to check the boxes and have people leave us alone. They just won't leave us alone to do what we want when we want. Plus, the minister read a passage from the Bible the other Sunday that homosexuality was a sin. That is so offensive."

At this point Connor chimed in, "Plus the youth minister never does what I want. Plus, the soda machine is always out of the kind of soda I want and no matter how rude I am to him it never gets better. I want a youth group that does what I want. And to top it all off, he picked someone else to lead youth group in a couple weeks and it wasn't me. I wanted to be the leader."

Joe also added: "We noticed that they are trying new songs. We don't like that. We don't like the music so we don't want to go to the church. It just doesn't do it for us. Last week they even used upbeat videos of Christian songs we hear on the radio at the beginning of the service and we didn't like it. So... we are leaving."

"And sweetie," her mother added also, "they expect us to give a tithe. That is our money and for some reason they keep saying the Bible

says we should give 10% back to God. That is our money. Your dad works very hard for our money and we do with it as we please.”

“I am so glad,” Little Suzie Fizzlewhistle chimed in, “they don’t even have goldfish for snacks. They better have them at the next place.”

End

Psalms 119:36 (ESV)

*“Incline my heart to Your testimonies, and not to selfish gain!”*

Matthew 16:24 (ESV)

*“Then Jesus told His disciples, ‘If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.’”*

Romans 12:3 (ESV)

*“For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.”*

Philippians 2:3 (ESV)

*“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.”*

James 3:16-17 (ESV)

*“For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.”*

  **KINGDOM TRUTH**  

The Kingdom of God is NOT ABOUT YOU.

  **KINGDOM TRUTH**  

The Kingdom  
of Jesus  
is  
the  
backspace  
key.



# KINGDOM TALES

## LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD

Once upon a time there was a little girl; we'll call her Little Red Riding Hood, who was heading to her grandmother's house to make muffins. Little Red and her grandmother both loved fresh baked muffins right out of the oven. It was the plan for Little Red to pick up some extra special supplies for the muffins on her way to grandma's house.

Her grandmother was the expert on blending just the right ingredients to make the perfect muffins.

Her grandmother gave her the plan and the places to stop for the best ingredients.

Her grandmother also always talked over her path with her from one house to the other.

Her grandmother laid out the perfect plan for her whenever they would get together for muffin-making.

Little Red was excited and could not wait for fresh muffins. Little Red set out from her house on the pre-planned path to her grandmother's house. It was not a short walk or a long walk, but a normal walk for a little girl.

As soon as Little Red left her house, a strong wind began to pick up. The wind ushered in some very mean dark clouds. Would rain come? Would wind blow her away down the street? She had just left her house and was considering turning back already. The wind whipped and whirled and whistled. The wind seemed to go right through her red hooded cloak and cut right to her little bones.

Little Red Riding Hood continued to walk bravely into the wind. The wind ushered in some very dark clouds, but it also in just a few moments, the wind ushered them away again. The wind went from whipping and whirling and whistling to a steady calm.

“I think I will just follow the plan! I will just stay on the path!” she said to herself.

Little Red had not gotten far from her house when she came to a cross street with a berry stand. Mr. Farmer always had the best berries for muffins! Little Red selected fresh blueberries and strawberries, paid Mr. Farmer, and put them in her basket. Her grandmother knew the way to mix berries for perfect muffins every time. Then she had to cross the street. It was not a busy street or a street with no traffic, but a normal street she had to cross.

Standing on the street corner was a Wolf. The Wolf smelled the fresh berries in her basket.

“Little girl,” the Wolf called out, “I smell your berries from here! Could I trade you some berries for some of my magnificent walnuts? They are most excellent for baking!”

Little Red Riding Hood thought for a moment... they could add nuts to the muffins. There is certainly nothing wrong with adding some nuts... even though it was never in the official plan. She started to go over to the Wolf to trade some of her berries and then remembered her grandmother. Little Red stopped in her tracks and realized she could not sell any of her berries.

“I must follow the plan! I must stay on the path!” Little Red called out. She went on.

Little Red turned a corner on her journey and she spotted her neighborhood playground. The swings looked fun. Her friends were sliding down the slides and giggling. They beckoned her to come and play. O how she wanted to play! Little Red loved the merry-go-round and how it made her head swim and twirl. She started towards the playground, but as she approached remembered her grandmother.

“I must follow the plan! I must stay on the path!” Little Red called out.

All of the other children briefly called out and made fun of her for not coming and playing with them. She skipped away and didn't mind.

Right after the playground she stopped into a corner store and picked up a new bag of baker's flour. The best ingredients were required for grandmother and their muffins! She walked up the aisle and grabbed the baker's flour. This was exactly what she needed!

As she moved to the front of the store, she waited for her turn to check out. She was minding her own business when she saw it... the brand-new Triple Chocolate Ooey Goopy Super Carmel Doodad Bar. O she had waited to try that new candy bar! She knew she had several more things to buy for the most excellent muffins.

She could buy less flour and get the candy bar.

She could eat the new Triple Chocolate Ooey Goopy Super Carmel Doodad Bar and no one would know.

It would make her not want muffins. That would be okay! She turned and walked back to the aisle with the flour. She then remembered the smell of the most perfect muffins as they came from her grandmother's oven. That was not to be missed!

She whispered to herself, "I must follow the plan! I must stay on the path!" She turned quickly and went back to the check out. She bought the right amount of flour and turned up her nose willfully at

the new Triple Chocolate Ooey Goey Super Carmel Doodad Bar.

After the corner store, Little Red was getting closer and closer to her grandmother's house. Little Red's legs were getting tired from the walking. She had picked up her pace after...

... almost losing her way with the enterprising Wolf

... and the playground

... and being tempted by the candy bar.

Now her legs were tired from her quicker pace. Then she saw it... the General Store. The General Store had the best butter for muffins. Her grandmother had told her that. She got to the front of the store and saw a nice wooden bench. It was not a large bench. It was not a small bench. It was a normal bench for sitting. Little Red decided to sit down for a moment. Her feet hurt.

She set the basket next to her and closed her eyes for a moment. The moment lasted longer than she realized. All of a sudden she bolted upright from the bench and exclaimed to no one in particular, "I must follow the plan! I must stay on the path!" She grabbed her basket full of berries and flour and rushed into the General Store.

After only a moment, she had butter in her basket and went on.

Little Red turned the final corner and her grandmother's house was in view. Across the street she could see her grandmother's house with the shutters. She could see the flowers out front. She could see the swing on the porch. And on that porch sat her grandmother! Little Red Riding Hood could barely contain her excitement. She called out and waved! Her grandmother heard the voice of her granddaughter and called out and waved in return.

All of a sudden a long line of cars began to drive past in the street. It was a long procession of cars. This never happens! Her grandmother lives on a quiet street.

Little Red could not cross the street.

One after another.

Car.

Truck.

Car.

Car.

Truck.

Big truck.

One after another.

She could not cross the street and was getting flustered. She finally had gotten the ingredients her grandmother wanted and now she could not cross the street to her final destination. The call of the warm perfect muffins made her want to jump out into traffic.

Surely, they would stop.

Surely, they would see her in her bright hooded cloak.

One car after another just seemed to zoom past. Little Red finally took a deep breath and just waited. After a few minutes, the constant buzz of cars and trucks died down and she was able to cross the street safely.

Little Red ran across the street and reached the house and embraced her grandmother tightly.

"I am so glad you came dear," Grandmother said. "Did you follow the plan I laid out for you?"

"Yes grandma" Little Red Riding Hood said respectfully.

"I am so glad you made it without incident," Grandmother said. "Did you stay on the path we discussed?"

"Oh yes grandma. I did not turn to the right or the left. But I have to tell you it was not without incident. It seems like the whole world was against me getting to you. There was wind and a wolf and friends and an ooey gooey bar and the temptation to rest and then traffic!"

"I am glad you found your way and you did give up," her grandmother responded as they went into the house.

“Oh,” said Little Red with exasperation, “there were so many temptations along the way, but I just had to follow your plan and stay on the path!”

End

Joshua 1:7 (ESV)

*“Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses My servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go.”*

Matthew 7:13-14 (ESV)

*“Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. 14 For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.”*

Galatians 6:9 (ESV)

*“And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.”*

James 4:7 (ESV)

*“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and He will flee from you.”*

  **KINGDOM TRUTH**  

The Kingdom of God is about always staying on His narrow path.

  **KINGDOM TRUTH**  

The Kingdom  
of God is the  
tingling feeling  
on your cold  
fingers as they  
warm by the fire.

## PARABLE OF JESUS:

Count the Cost

Luke 14:25-33

The teachings of Jesus are not for the faint of heart. Some of the points that Jesus makes are quite controversial and make us wonder. They are controversial because they shock us. They are controversial because they are at times opposite of what we want to do (perhaps most of the time). They are controversial because they seem upside down to us in our expectations of God.

Jesus presents ideas and makes statements that would have made those listening quite uncomfortable... and to be honest... make us quite uncomfortable as well.

For example, He said:

Matthew 5:22 (ESV):

*“But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire.”*

Matthew 5:44 / Luke 6:27 (ESV):

*“But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you...”*

Matthew 5:39 (ESV):

*“But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.”<sup>10</sup>*

John 6:53 (ESV):

*“So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.”*

Many times we reflect on some of the teachings of Jesus and we question... “What!?” We also think, “that doesn’t make sense.” And most commonly and truthfully we say, “I don’t want to do that.” The seemingly upside down passage that we will look at in a moment also gives us the same thoughts.

In Jesus’ day, many people wanted to follow Jesus, especially in the middle of His ministry. Jesus was gaining popularity and was doing miracles and news was spreading about Him and people wanted to be a disciple of Jesus.

He was the “it” thing going on.

Large crowds would follow Jesus from town to town to listen and see what He would do next. People were asking what it took to be a disciple of Jesus. People are still asking that same question!

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<sup>10</sup> | only have 2 cheeks. After that, it’s on.

I hope you are asking that question!

To be honest, the answer is not one that we like.

To be even more honest, most of us are not willing to do what He says.

The answer is as controversial and uncomfortable as turning the other cheek and loving people who hate us. What does He say?

Luke 14:25-33 (ESV):

*“Now great crowds accompanied Him, and He turned and said to them, 26 “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. 27 Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. 28 For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? 29 Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, 30 saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ 31 Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? 32 And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. 33 So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be My disciple.”*

That. Is. Intense.

In Luke 14, Jesus Christ lines out for us several truths about Christian discipleship that are important for us to understand. These truths are at times difficult for us to swallow. They are at times opposite of what we want to do.

What does Jesus say about discipleship? Discipleship (or following Jesus) requires complete commitment, honest personal sacrifice, and all-encompassing loyalty.

Jesus explains to us in these verses that He requires complete commitment from those who state they will be His followers. The first example Jesus uses to explain this idea of complete commitment is our relationship with our family. This explanation seems to go against the law of love that Jesus teaches. Jesus understands that family ties can come between a person and God.

This is difficult for us because caring for one's family, honoring our father and mother, loving our spouse, and raising our kids is noble and good and God ordained. The interests of the Kingdom of God are for a person who is in an active authentic relationship with God are priority #1. Everything else is secondary.

What Jesus says is meant to be shocking because He is trying to get our attention about the actual demands of being part of God's

Kingdom. Jesus says in these verses that our family should not come between us and God. Commitment to God even supersedes your own life. Our love and commitment to God should be so evident and so passionate that compared to everything else... it looks like hate.

Real involvement and complete commitment to Jesus Christ is effort and time consuming.

Real involvement and complete commitment to Jesus Christ is personal and deep and emotional.

Real involvement and complete commitment to Jesus Christ means you will bear fruit.

Jesus says in John 15:8, *“By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be My disciples”* (ESV).

Jesus also mentions two metaphors about counting the cost of being His disciple. A contractor and a general both must count costs and weigh their decisions. Jesus is saying, “Don’t follow me without realizing what it will involve.” Jesus tells them to count the cost. Jesus tells us to count the cost. Jesus is telling us that we need to take into consideration all that He requires before deciding to be His disciple. Discipleship is complete commitment because God deserves the #1 spot in our lives and it costs us in different ways to follow Him.

Jesus says in verse 27, “*Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.*” We should remember that the cross was the most horrible way to die in Jesus’ day. To say that His disciples must carry a cross, meant that they would endure harshness. Jesus was in fact telling them that following Him would not always be pleasant, but would have struggle. Discipleship means the same for us. We must be willing to make honest personal sacrifice for Him.

Discipleship means giving up what we want and taking on what God wants. He or she that speaks the same, acts the same, holds the same values, and is the same on the inside as a non-Christian person is sorely missing the point of discipleship. They look good on the outside. They look holy.

Jesus dealt with people like that in His day who were one way on the outside and another way on the inside. They were called Pharisees. Jesus said, in Matthew 23:26-28, “*You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean. 27 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people’s bones and all uncleanness. 28 So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness” (ESV).*

There are times we are not willing to sacrifice for Jesus and personal sacrifice is what is needed to be a true follower.

We don't sacrifice our finances or consult Biblical principles about managing our money.

We don't sacrifice our TV habits and we just watch what everyone else is to fit in.

We don't sacrifice our pride or our right to be right.

We don't sacrifice people that lead us astray and we keep bad company around.

We don't sacrifice our time for God.

We don't sacrifice our comfort.

Many times we don't sacrifice anything for God and we expect that we will still be considered a disciple. That simply is not the way His Way works.

Jesus concludes speaking about discipleship in verse 33, "*So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be My disciple*" (ESV). Christ Jesus also says in Mark 8:35-36 (ESV): "*For whoever would save his life will lose it, but*

*whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. 36 For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?"*

The Apostle Paul says the same thing in Philippians 3:7 (ESV):  
“*But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.*”

Though Jesus was not demanding poverty from His listeners, a follower must be willing to forsake everything for the Lord.

Jesus defines for us in this passage the overwhelming difficult truth that He comes first in every single area of our lives. Him first. Always. God comes first. God's way trumps our way. God's way of dealing with people is what we do instead of what we want to do. We forgive even when we don't want to. There is so much to this because all-encompassing loyalty to God means He gets to direct us in all things at all times.

**SUMMARY:** Discipleship is broad and tough and requires complete commitment, personal sacrifice, and all-encompassing loyalty, but is possible with the presence of Christ in us.

Matthew 11:29-30 reminds us: “*Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.*”

As you read through these verses in Luke 14, two questions pop up:

Question: What is my commitment level to Jesus Christ?

Question: What gets in the way of my relationship with Christ?



# KINGDOM TALES

## PICCADILLYDISCIPLES

Imagine if you will a place to eat where you can have almost anything under the sun and where you serve yourself... young'uns that place is called a "cafeteria"... and I don't mean the one at school! You walk in, grab a tray, and laid out before you are more options than you could eat at any one time.

The point of this place is options options options.

Each option costs as you fill up your tray. You can have ham and turkey. You can hold the gravy or get 2 kinds of gravy. You can get a salad or just sliced tomatoes. You can get the special of the day or make your own meal. You have a choice between red, blue, green jello which for some reason seems to be a specialty in almost all of these kinds of places. Not only that there seems to be 6 different kinds of pudding in little cups.

Each item costs and so as you add each item to your tray the cost of your meal goes up. After going through the whole line, the items are added up and you pay for your meal. Once you sit down, there is no waiters or waitresses usually. You just eat and leave.

Imagine if you will a cafeteria scene where people have trays and before them are lots and lots of options for them to choose from to fill up their trays.

This is not, however, a normal cafeteria, but one in which people fill up their trays with the elements of the Christian life. They are filling up their trays with discipleship as they move through the line and then check out to live out the Christian life.

The first person comes through and they grab two servings of Sunday services, skips the Sunday School bowl and moves on. The person behind them grabs four servings of Sunday services.

“Why are you not getting four servings?” they ask.

“Well,” the person says, “the kids want to go camping and I want to go golfing with my brother and sometimes Sunday is my only day off and sometimes I want to go to the beach with my spouse and sometimes I want to run a 5k with my friends and sometimes the kids just don’t want to come. Besides, family always comes first you know. Two is good enough.”

The person behind both of them coming up the line grabbed four servings of Sunday services and grabbed the Sunday School bowl. Then they instructed their family who had trays behind them to do the same. They also instructed the kids to grab youth group salad

and the two adults grabbed a Bible study cake. “God comes first,” they overheard, “then other things can happen.”

Another person comes through and they grab a bowl of tithing fruit, but picks off only one small piece from the bunch, puts it on their tray, and puts the whole bunch back onto the serving area. They push their way past a family and elbow their way to the area with lifestyle choice steaks. They pick what everyone else is picking, just as long as it looks good, but isn't so sure after standing there a minute. They ask the chef behind the line if they have anything like some of the other restaurants in the area... that is really what they want to eat... nothing in this restaurant, but menu items from elsewhere. Frustrated, the person shoves to the front of the line all with a smile on their face.

The cashier rings it up. They see the cost of the small piece of tithing fruit and the few lifestyle choice steaks they picked out and was incensed.

Why does this have to cost so much?

Why can't you have meals like everybody else?

Why can't I do what I want when I want?

The person paid for the items they chose and could not believe the high cost for what little they actually chose. They elbowed past Somebody who was there who offered to help. Then they went to the table and looked around, “Where is the service? Where is the

person to serve me? Where is the person to feed me?" It was not a pleasant experience for them at all at the cafeteria.

Another person comes through the line and grabs four servings of Sunday services, a bowl of Sunday School, personal Bible reading snack bars, a personal prayer salad, evangelism 'taters, forgiveness muffins, love soup, and piles and piles of joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control. Righteousness treats and truthfulness bars were also added. The whole tray was piled piled piled because discipleship is broad. It was piled so high and so heavy that the person could barely slide the tray along the counter to the checkout line.

The cost? The cost was huge.

The person tried to lift the tray, but could not. Right away, as the person was trying to make it from the checkout to the table, Jesus came along and lightened the load. Once He was there, the piles and piles and piles of discipleship felt manageable and they had power to do it through the Holy Spirit.

End.

Luke 6:40 (ESV)

*“A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher.”*

John 8:31-32 (ESV)

*“So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are truly My disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”*

Acts 2:42 (ESV)

*“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”*

1 Corinthians 11:1 (ESV)

*“Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.”*

  **KINGDOM TRUTH**  

Being in the Kingdom of God is a big deal. It is an all-or-nothing commitment for your whole life with all your soul.

  **KINGDOM TRUTH**  



# KINGDOM TALES

## EASTER FAMILY TIME

It is Easter time and a gathering opportunity for your whole family. Your family made a commitment to all get together this year at Easter to make sure you celebrated something this year as a family.

Grandma chose Easter and chose to rent a few beach houses for everyone to share. You are far and wide... spread apart all over the country, but each and every brother and sister and wife and husband and kid and grandkid is present.

Every aunt and uncle is present with every cousin in tow.

You all arrive on Thursday at the beach and Friday and Saturday are filled with egg hunts and family dinners and dangerous yard darts and water gun fights. Everyone has a beach blast bingo that will not soon be forgotten. Even crazy Aunt Sue manages not to interrupt any family times with harrowing tales of her 1970s exploits with LSD.

Ah... family.

It is now Saturday night. Everyone is getting their clothes ready for church and borrowing socks and comparing outfits. All except Uncle Bill. Everyone knows he won't go. He never goes. You talk with Aunt Sue and she says the whole family has given up asking him about churchy things.

When was the last time you asked him?

10 years ago.

You ask your mother.

15 years ago.

You ask grandma.

25 years ago.

It seems no one had spoken to Uncle Bill about spiritual things in over a decade. He's a good guy, just not a church going guy... you know. Another cousin said, oh yeah, he's a Christian he just never reads his Bible or goes to church or prays.

Huh?

It was all strange.

What do you do?

What do you say?

You know that you and he always have gotten along well. You know YOU have never had a conversation with him about God or church or spiritual things. You think about it and you decide to put it off.

Maybe after church.

Maybe a heartfelt letter when you get back home.

Maybe send a book from the Christian bookstore.

Maybe.

Everyone leaves the next day for church. The day started early with a Sunrise service, then a pancake breakfast, and then another church service. Everyone then headed back to the beach houses for an awesome Easter lunch prepared by the expert cooks of the family.

Fried turkey.

Mashed potatoes.

Redneck sushi.

You all arrived to the beach houses to find Uncle Bill dead on the back porch. He had a heart attack while sitting on the back porch looking out at the ocean.

Now the maybe conversation is a never conversation.

It is everlasting too late.

Why had you not taken the opportunity when you had the chance?

Perhaps because you felt that there was no real sense of urgency. There was no urgency about the news of the Gospel or urgency about the reality of death without Jesus and you did not share your faith.

End

Deuteronomy 31:6 (ESV)

*“Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the Lord your God Who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you.”*

Isaiah 51:12 (ESV)

*“I, I am He Who comforts you; who are you that you are afraid of man who dies, of the son of man who is made like grass?”*

Acts 1:8 (ESV)

*“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”*

2 Timothy 1:7 (ESV)

*“For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.”*

The Kingdom  
of God is like  
the Honus  
Wagner  
baseball card.



# Kingdom Tales

## THE CHRISTMAS CARD

Once upon a time, there was a little girl named Vera. She wanted to know what Christmas was all about. She went to her father and asked him, but he did not know. She went to her mother and asked her, but she did not know. She would have asked her brother, but he was 6 months old and could not talk. She would have asked her best friend, but her best friend was a volleyball named Coconut, and he never talked.

Vera walked out on the porch of her house and shouted into the sky...  
“Doesn’t anyone know what Christmas is really about?”

She looked around and saw nothing.

She looked around and heard nothing.

She went back inside and closed the door.

As soon as she closed the door, there was a light knock at the door. Wrap wrap wrap. The young girl turned around, opened the door, but no one was there. She looked around, but saw no one.

Vera looked down and there on the welcome mat was an envelope with her name on it. She picked it up. She quickly walked off her porch with the envelope in her hand hoping to see who dropped it off.

No one was anywhere.

She opened the envelope with curiosity.

The front of the card said... "This is what Christmas is all about."

She got excited.

Vera ravenously opened the card, but it was completely blank inside. No writing. No pictures. Nothing. Her excitement was quickly dashed. It was just a blank card. She stood there for a moment and then repeated her question aloud: "What is Christmas about?"

Boom!

Out from the card a small open-air barn appeared from the card into her yard. It had a thatched roof and stalls. There was a donkey and a few sheep. There was even a camel chewing with very bad manners. It smelled like a barn. There was hay there too. The sheep started to wander around her yard eating the grass.

Inside the card it said: "*there was no place for them in the inn.*"

"What is Christmas about?" she asked again.

Shazaam!

Out from the card two people appeared in the barn. One was a man. One was a woman. They looked like very nice people. The woman looked really tired like she had just been running a marathon or something. She was sweaty, but seemed very happy. The man looked relieved like something big had just happened, but everything was ok now. The man was comforting the woman.

Inside the card it said: *“And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.”*

“What is Christmas about?” she asked again.

Crack-a-doom!

Out from the card, a little baby appeared and went into the barn with the nice man and the nice woman. Vera walked into the barn to check out the baby. It was a boy and His face was smushed a little and had some red splotches on Him like when her brother had been born. This baby was the cutest. He had little teeny toes and little teeny fingers. Vera remembered when her brother was born.

He was so helpless... just like this baby.

He cried... just like this baby.

She looked down at the card and it said: *“And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn Son and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger.”*

The card also said: *“She will bear a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call His name Immanuel” (which means, God with us).”*

“What is Christmas about?” Vera asked.

Zip Zip Zip!

Out from the card and into the sky above the barn and above the man and the woman and the brand-new baby went a really bright star. It was the prettiest and nicest and neatest star she had ever seen. She walked out of the barn and looked up in the sky. It was almost like the light from the star was the brightest in the sky. It was also like the star was pointing to where the baby was.

She looked down from the sky at the card and it said: *“And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was.”*

This was so wonderful, Vera thought.

“What is Christmas about?” Vera asked again.

Zoom! Zoom! Zoom!

Out of the card flew angel after angel after angel and the angels congregated down the street from her house in the sky. There were so many angels in the sky she could not count them all. It was so bright in the sky around them.

She looked back to the card and it said: *“And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, And the angel said to them Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”*

This was so amazing. Every time she asked “What is Christmas about?” a part of the meaning of Christmas appeared in her front yard. This was amazing! She felt the need to ask the question one more time. The scene before her was almost complete.

“What is Christmas about?” Vera asked.

Zap! Zap! Zap!

Out from the card a bunch of guys appeared with even more sheep. Now there were people gathered around the barn looking at the baby and laughing and really looked quite amazed. There were sheep everywhere. There was even one on the roof of the porch walking around.

Vera laughed with joy and looked down at the card. It said: *“When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.”*

The front door of her house opened and out came her father. Out came her mother with her baby brother in her arms. “What is going on out here?” they asked in unison.

Vera ran up to her parents with complete joy. She absolutely knew what Christmas was all about. She could not contain the news, but told them immediately.

“This is what Christmas is all about! You see, the baby Jesus was born to Mary and Joseph. He is a very special child even though He was born in a barn with animals and laid in a feeding trough. He will save people from their sins because He is God with us. He is so important that a star marked His birth. He is so important that angels from Heaven announced His birth and people came to see Him.”

Vera and her family looked out from their front porch at the sky-lit manger scene in their front yard with the Baby Jesus at the center surrounded by His mother, Joseph, shepherds, and animals.

“Merry Christmas!” she yelled!

End

John 1:1-5 (ESV)

*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”*

John 1:14 (ESV)

*“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

1 John 1:1-3 (ESV)

*“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the Word of life— 2 the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— 3 that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.”*

The Kingdom  
of God is like  
the first  
exclamation  
point in writing  
Spanish.



# KINGDOM TALES

## THANKFULNESS

Once upon a time, Tom Turkey looked at what everyone else was doing and thought, “They’re all a bunch of turkeys.”

What was everyone else doing?

All of his neighbors were preparing for the annual Thanks Fest and each of them was preparing his or her favorite dish to share with the community. The annual Thanks Fest was just that... a festival of thanks. By the end of the day, all of the turkeys would gather in the center of the farm yard for a massive celebration of thanks. There would be games, fireworks, beak staring contests, and so much more. They would all sit at one large long table and enjoy each other’s company and share in a time of thanks.

Tom wasn’t so sure he had anything about which to be thankful. He thought about it and he just couldn’t come up with anything. He didn’t feel thankful emotions in his heart. He didn’t have thankful thoughts in his mind. There was nothing thankful in his drumsticks either. So, Tom decided he would walk around to see what other turkeys were doing.

Tom walked around and found Gizzard and Gible, two turkey twins, hard at work making their favorite apple pie. They farmed an apple orchard together and it looked like they had harvested every apple off of every tree that they had in their orchard. They had a huge pile of apples between them and both Gizzard and Gible were furiously peeling apples. Apple peels were flying everywhere. The sweat just poured off of them. Their apple pie was famous all over the farm yard and he was glad to see it would be at the Thanks Fest, but he didn't understand why they were working so hard.

Tom Turkey laughed out loud.

Gizzard and Gible looked at laughing Tom. They were both puzzled. "Why are you laughing?" Gizzard asked.

"You both are working so hard... and for what?!"

Gible answered without any hesitation, "We are working so hard because we want to make the biggest apple pie that has ever been made. We want one pie to feed the whole farm yard. It will be a spectacle, but not for us. You see, when we serve the biggest apple pie ever made, we are going to read a poem that tells people why we did it."

Gizzard asked, "Do you want to hear the poem early?"

“Sure,” Tom replied with a puzzled look on his beak.

Giblet stretched himself as tall as he could and cleared his throat:

“Apples Apples Apples  
Apples Apples Apples  
Apples Apples Apples  
God Alone gave us Apples.”

A silent moment passed.

“Is that the whole poem?” Tom asked.

Gizzard replied, “No, that is just his part. Here is my part. Gizzard stretched himself as tall as he could and cleared his throat:

“Give thanks to the LORD, call on His Name; make known among the nations What He has done.”

“So, let me get this straight,” Tom asked in a ridiculing manner, “You are making the biggest apple pie that anyone has ever made because you want everyone to know that God gave us all apples?”

“Yes,” the turkey twins answered in unison.

“That is so dumb,” Tom said as he walked away laughing.

“That is a sad excuse for a turkey right there,” the twins said to each other. Then they went back to peeling peeling peeling apples for their pie.

Tom next found Old Snood mumbling to himself and stoking a fire which heated up his baking oven. Old Snood was a baker. All over the open-air kitchen were little cakes in the shape of a heart. There must have been a hundred little heart-shaped cakes. There were chocolate ones and vanilla ones and what looked like pumpkin ones. Heart cakes everywhere. And Old Snood was just mumbling to himself.

Tom could not make out what Old Snood was mumbling.

He moved closer.

He moved closer.

He moved closer.

Finally, Tom could hear what Old Snood was mumbling. He was saying the same phrase over and over and over again. He was mumbling, “Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; His love endures forever.”

“Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; His love endures forever.”

“Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; His love endures forever.”

“Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; His love endures forever.”

Tom could not figure out why Old Snood was just mumbling that to himself over and over. He was an old turkey and a fine baker, but this was just weird.

First the turkey twins and now Old Snood. Everyone was preparing for the Thanks Fest and had God on their mind. Why would they keep God on their mind at a day of thanksgiving? Gizzard and Gibleet worked hard in their orchard. Old Snood got up early and baked each day. They worked hard and got what they deserved.

Tom could not bring himself to interrupt Old Snood from his labor of love, even though he thought the old bird was weird and crazy and was wasting his time. He just backed away from mumbling Old Snood and began to laugh at the old turkey for working so hard to highlight the love of God in his life.

“That is so dumb,” Tom said as he walked away laughing.

Old Snood paused for a moment when he heard the laugh, looked back, and said to himself, "That is a sad excuse for a turkey right there."

Tom walked around and around the farm yard for hours and found all of the turkeys hard at work. Uncle Caruncles was making his famous corn and winter nut chowder. He was stirring and stirring and every few minutes he would add spices and take a taste and say, "That's not good enough for Him." Tom assumed the 'Him' Uncle Caruncles was talking about was God.

Why would someone work so hard in thankfulness to God?

He then found Spur, who could not cook or bake or BBQ or make any type of food, making signs that read, 'Eat mor Beef.' He wasn't sure what that was about.

Beside Spur was another turkey named Franky Feather who was composing a list of item after item and turkey after turkey and situation after situation that he was thankful for. He put one item on an index card and was stacking them in front of him. He had a tower of over 100 cards! The stack was so high that it was swaying this way and that. A gust of wind sent Franky Feather's stack of thankfulness toppling over onto him and he was covered in thankfulness cards.

“That is so dumb,” Tom said as he walked away laughing.

“That is a sad excuse for a turkey right there,” Franky Feather said to Uncle Caruncles and Spur.

Tom Turkey walked all over the yard the whole day observing all the other turkeys and their preparations for the Thanks Fest. Each one was thankful for something. Each one was trying to show their thankfulness to God in some way. Tom just didn’t get it. He laughed and laughed at each of his fellow turkeys.

Finally, the time of the Thanks Fest came around. Turkeys from all over the farm yard were gathering for the Thanks Fest. The very long table was set up and all the turkeys took their place. Each turkey sat ready to gobble gobble up the food in front of them. On the table were all of Old Snood’s heart cakes. There was snake-eyed stew and chocolate covered grasshoppers. There were bowls of snails and slugs and worms for every turkey to eat. It was a fest to be remembered!

The Grand Wattle stood at the head of the table and cleared his throat. All of the turkeys went silent and looked to the Grand Wattle. He was their leader.

He would share good wisdom with them all. The Grand Wattle looked out at them all and said: “Now, our God, we give You thanks,

and praise Your glorious name. But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from You, and we have given You only what comes from Your hand.”

The Grand Wattle said this and all of the turkeys nodded their heads in agreement.

The Grand Wattle asked the turkeys to repeat with him his words so that they would sink into their hearts. They repeated the words: “Now, our God, we give You thanks, and praise Your glorious name. But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from You, and we have given You only what comes from Your hand.”

All of the turkeys around the table understood that giving thanks to God was not a private matter, but is an activity that must be public and not hidden. What good is thanks if it is not shared out loud?! All of the turkeys around the table understood that of the many things given to them by God, His love and goodness marked their lives in many places. They also all understood that everything on the table was from the hand of God.

Well, except Tom Turkey.

Tom wasn't sure what to think or feel. He had spent the whole day making fun of all the rest of the turkeys. Now it was time for the Thanks Fest and everyone was gushing with thankfulness except Tom.

With a ring of the dinner bell by the Grand Wattle, everyone dug into their food. Everyone commented on the tastiness of the slugs. The snake-eye soup was not to be missed. The heart cakes were a hit! Every bird even loved the turkey twins' poem and loved their apple pie even more. All of the turkeys were eating and having their fill. There was laughter. There were stories being told. Good food and good conversation was being had up and down the table.

Well, except for Tom Turkey.

Every bite he ate tasted sour in his mouth. He ate stew and soup and cakes and pies. All of it sat very sour on his stomach. The laughter around him hurt his ears. The sourness of his stomach now matched the sourness of his mood. Tom did not think he could last a moment longer at the big long table and he ran from the table in an awful hurry.

Tom wandered around the farm yard for a few minutes and then he heard the fireworks starting. All of the oohs and aaahs made their way to his ears. He could hardly stand it. He then heard another turkey approaching him.

It was the Grand Wattle.

Tom stood up strait.

“Tom,” the Grand Wattle said, “I noticed you left the table. Why?”

Tom looked at the Grand Wattle and decided not to lie. “I feel awful. I feel sick. I feel like this whole day is just a waste.”

The Grand Wattle looked at Tom and said, “It sounds like you are suffering from an ungrateful heart. An ungrateful heart, believe it or not, is a malady that leaks out all over a turkey and attacks his feelings, thoughts, and even his spirit. Ungratefulness is one of those things that can just grow and grow inside us.”

“Why am I ungrateful?” Tom asked the old wise Grand Wattle.

“There are several reasons that might be possible,” the wise bird pontificated, “Maybe you are comparing yourself or your life to others and you are envious of them. Maybe you have a great sense of self-entitlement and you feel you deserve all you have or all you want. Maybe you have experienced heart-ache and now your heart is always on guard and is hard. Maybe you don’t realize the true value of what is around you or who is around you. Maybe you’re a spoiled brat. Maybe all you see around you are unfulfilled needs in your life. Maybe you have unrealistic expectations of yourself and other turkeys.”

“I am not sure Tom,” the Grand Wattle continued, “but whatever the seed of ungratefulness is that has taken root in your heart, you need to get rid of it. Ungratefulness leads to pessimism, anxiety, hopelessness, a foothold for the Devil, and bitterness.”

The Grand Wattle went back to the long table and the fireworks to continue to enjoy the Thanks Fest.

Tom thought about his whole morning and about everything he had seen and heard. As Tom stood there, he began to surrender his heart to God. He asked God to thaw the ungratefulness that had frozen his heart.

He realized from all that the other turkeys had done that God deserved thanks.

He realized that God had extended love and goodness into his life which was the true basis for thanksgiving.

He looked around him at the table and turkeys and fireworks and understood that it all came from God.

And a seed of thankfulness grew in Tom Turkey’s heart that day.

End

1 Chronicles 16:34-35 (ESV)

*“Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; for His steadfast love endures forever! Say also: “Save us, O God of our salvation, and gather and deliver us from among the nations, that we may give thanks to Your holy Name and glory in Your praise.”*”

Colossians 3:15-16 (ESV)

*“And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”*

1 Thessalonians 5:8 (ESV)

*“Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”*

2 Timothy 3:2-5 (ESV)

*“For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, <sup>3</sup> heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, <sup>4</sup> treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, <sup>5</sup> having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people.”*

The Kingdom  
of Heaven is  
like non-stop  
mother's kisses  
on the worst  
boo boos.

## PARABLE OF JESUS:

### The Loving Father

Luke 15:11-32

The final Scripture we are going to look at can be found in Luke 15. Luke 15 contains three parables and we are going to look at the last one presented in the chapter.

We often call it the “Parable of the Prodigal Son,” but to be honest, that is a name given to it in the heading of most Bibles and not a title given to it by Jesus. The parable has many titles actually: “The Parable of the Two Brothers,” “The Parable of the Lost Son,” “The Parable of the Loving Father,” and “The Parable of the Forgiving Father.”

I think we could add perhaps: “Parable of the Pig Boy Who Goes Home” or “Parable of the Older Brother with an Attitude Problem” or “Parable of Why You Should Not Want to Be a Fattened Calf.” Any of those will do.

Let’s read from Luke 15.

Luke 15:11-32 (ESV):

*“And He said, ‘There was a man who had two sons. 12 And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.’ And he divided his property between them. 13 Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had*

and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. 14 And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. 16 And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

17 "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! 18 I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants."' 20 And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. 21 And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' 22 But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. 23 And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. 24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate.

25 "Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. 27 And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.' 28

*But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, 29 but he answered his father, 'Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!' 31 And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. 32 It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'"*

This parable of Jesus has three main people. The first person is the younger son who asks for his inheritance early and moves away to live the way he wants. The second person is the older son who dutifully stays home and works the farm obediently and does what is expected. The third person in the parable is the father of both boys. Depending on who you are or what is going on in your life, we are usually drawn to one of them more than the other two.

This parable of Jesus has two main actions or events. The first action is the younger son requesting his inheritance early and packing up and wasting all his money on wild living. The second action that is important to the story is the response of the father once that young wild son comes home after utter failure.

Sometimes when we read and meditate on this parable, we are drawn to the younger son of the man because he is rude and unwise and

misuses his inheritance. If we are honest, some days we are rude and unwise. He acts like a punk and we think he gets what he deserves for treating his father so poorly and misusing the blessing of an early inheritance. We see truths in this young man's life that chasing after pleasure or wealth or not having a moral center all lead to disaster. He reaps what he sows and that seems fair. We see an unwise person wise up after hitting bottom and we understand him. We also find him more than brave as he leaves the pig pen and heads home to deal with his father and the consequences of his actions.

We understand this young man:

- \* We understand not being content with the life given to us and feeling restless.
- \* We understand misusing the blessings we have been given.
- \* We understand wising up only after hitting rock bottom and having to live and learn.

Some of the times when we look at this parable we are drawn to the older brother because he seems better and more moral than the younger brother, he is definitely more responsible, and also makes really good points to his father with which we identify. The unfairness of the situation and the grace-filled treatment of the wayward younger son by the father sometimes rubs us the wrong way because it feels like justice is not done. Grace and compassion both rub us the wrong way if we are honest. Anyone who is an older sibling and feels like their younger sibling gets away with much identifies with

the older brother. While we notice that this older brother has an attitude problem, we see him in the right and so we aren't sure what to make of his attitude issues because then we'd have to look at our own attitude problems. He's a complicated guy in that he is obedient to his father and yet we don't like him very much which sometimes makes us not like ourselves when we see ourselves in him.

We understand the older brother:

- \* We understand the feeling that people should always reap what they sow.
- \* We understand the morally superior feeling to other people who make obvious bad choices.
- \* We understand the deep human need to say "I told you so."

Every single time we read and pray on this parable we are drawn to the father. He is a great example of fatherhood and ultimately gives us a glimpse into the character of God and this intrigues us. We see the father on the porch almost like he is on the lookout for his lost son because he sees him when he is a long way off. We see the father run to his son which is not something respectable men did in that day, but he does it anyway. We see the father embrace his son in compassion. We see him celebrate his son returning home which is good and right, but also amazing.

The father is someone in this parable we do not always understand. Actually, we think we understand him, but when we really think and

ponder and pray, we are more shocked and in awe than anything else. This father is grace. This father is compassion. To give away a little of the story... this father is a mirror for God!

\* We are shocked that the father liquidates assets and hands them over to his son.

\* We are gladdened to see that the father runs to his son and embraces him showing forgiveness.

\* We understand loving a child no matter what and wanting the best for them.

**GOD THE FATHER:** We have a father expressed in this parable by Jesus Christ that shares some similar qualities in that he has such compassion and grace to reach out to his lost son. The father welcomes his wayward son home and restoration happens.

This father is a good example for all fathers.

The father in the parable should make us think about our Heavenly Father.

We are shocked that the father liquidates assets and hands them over to his son. And yet, Romans 5:1-5 (ESV):

*“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Through Him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. 3 Not only that, but we rejoice*

*in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5 and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit Who has been given to us."*

Make no mistake, God has given us everything we need. He gave us His Son. He gave us His Spirit. His Son justifies us by faith and His Spirit marks us as His adopted children that are part of His Kingdom. God liquidated Heaven for our salvation and gave everything that we might be saved.

We are gladdened to see that the father runs to his son and embraces him showing forgiveness. We see in Romans 5:6 (ESV):  
*"For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly."*

If God had a porch, He'd sit on it waiting for you.

God is waiting and watching for us to hit rock bottom and come to our senses and have faith enough to trudge home. When we do, we find grace and mercy and compassion and a Father willing to run to us and embrace us. Forget any preconceptions you have about the Gospel... this is the Gospel! God runs to us and embraces us even though we turned our backs on Him in many ways. Christ died for the ungodly!

We understand loving a child no matter what and wanting the best for them. We see in Romans 5:10-11: *“For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by His life. 11 More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom we have now received reconciliation.”*

Three times in two verses we see God’s best for us... and that word is *“reconciliation.”* God does not want to be separated from us, but instead sent Jesus to die to make a way for what was broken to be made whole. Our Heavenly Father has compassion and mercy. That is the Gospel! Be reminded that God has love for us that has no bounds.

May you know that God, Our Heavenly Father is a good good Father Who has compassion when we mess up, grace when we fail, love unending, and gives the best blessings.

## Tips for Understanding and Interpreting Jesus' Parables

Understand the nature of the parables: Parables are tools to compare something physical to something spiritual. Jesus begins several parables by saying "The Kingdom of God is like..." so He could tie an abstract spiritual or Biblical concept (the Kingdom of God) to something more concrete and visible like a seed or a tower or a farmer.

Understand the purpose of the parables: Jesus taught with parables for two main purposes: to explain truth and also to keep truth hidden. How's that for a contradiction! Parables are meant to make us pray and seek and think and ponder.

Understand the context of the parables: When reading a parable, read the verses before it and those after it to see how the parable is presented in its entirety. Context is very important.

Understand that symbols and metaphors change over time: Some of the images have meaning to people in Jesus' time that are not as easy to recognize for those living and praying and seeking now. This is not an insurmountable thing... but is worth noting because language and cultures differ.

Understand that parables usually have one point and it was the point Jesus was making: The parable means what Jesus taught it to mean. Our task is to listen to Him and glean His meaning and not a devotional meaning or any other type of meaning (allegory) from the passage. It means what it means.

Understand that repetition, dialogue, and surprise elements are often a key to interpretation. What people said or repeated words or something unexpected is meant to grab our attention so we understand the meaning of the story.

May God Bless You.

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Website to which the author contributes regularly:

[www.dwellinginscripture.com](http://www.dwellinginscripture.com)

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