



PARABLES

STORIES THAT SHAPE US



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WEEK ONE MARK 4:30-32

WEEK TWO MARK 12:1-12

WEEK THREE LUKE 15:11-32

WEEK FOUR MARK 4:1-20

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This daily study guide is designed to use the SOAP method of studying Scripture to lead you through the season of Lent and our Parables series. The SOAP method invites you to study Scripture through the lens of a four-step process including Scripture, Observation, Application, and Prayer.

Although we have split each step into a single day, we invite you to read the accompanying Scripture each day.

Throughout this study guide, you will read observations, applications, and prayers written by many different people from our church. Our hope is that this format will serve as an example and an invitation for you as you continue to intentionally study God's Word.



THE PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED

FEBRUARY 22 - 28

SUNDAY: SCRIPTURE

MARK 4:30-32

³⁰ Again he said, "What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? ³¹ It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. ³² Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade."

MONDAY: OBSERVATION

Jesus chooses something very small and ordinary, a mustard seed, to reveal the extraordinary Kingdom of God. At first, the seed appears insignificant and almost unseen. Yet, once planted, it grows into something strong and visible. Through this simple picture, Jesus teaches that God often begins His greatest work in unseen and humble ways. What seems small to us can become something meaningful when placed in God's hands.

TUESDAY: APPLICATION

The parable reminds us that God works through the small things. A prayer, an act of kindness, talking with a friend or neighbor, or acting in obedience when you feel prompted by God to do something. These things may feel minor, but God delights in using small seeds to produce big transformation. For children, this might look like choosing kindness or including someone who feels left out. For adults, it may be offering a word of encouragement or trusting God with a small step forward. God grows His Kingdom through faithfulness, trust, and simple acts of obedience one step, or seed, at a time.



THE PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED

WEDNESDAY: PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank you for reminding us that you work powerfully through even the smallest of things. Teach us to trust you with the little things in our lives and to plant seeds of faith, love, and obedience each day. Give us patience as you grow those seeds according to your perfect plan. Amen.

THURSDAY: OBSERVATION

Jesus clearly knows his audience and has real intention in using the image of a mustard seed. So, what do we know about mustard seeds? Mustard seeds are incredibly small, and for this audience, these would be the smallest seeds that they would directly sow. Mustard is known for its ability to grow quickly and spread. Mustard plants get big and are a great refuge for animals and, in Jesus' parable, birds. It also enriches the soil with nitrogen! The mustard plant is a clear choice for Jesus to share of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God Jesus is bringing in does start small. Jesus had his disciples who learned from him and were given the power and authority to spread the Good News! It soon multiplies in ways that we see from the book of Acts to today! What starts humble and small ends up having massive impact.

So now we know that mustard is large and can become all-encompassing. A plant with these characteristics creates a perfect environment for animals and birds. The birds find refuge in the mustard's branches. They feel safe, secure, and sound. Is it just one kind of bird? Likely not. Jesus paints a picture of Jews and Gentiles being included in the safety of the mustard's branches. And mustard enriches the soil! The Kingdom of God not only invites others in, but it transforms us from the inside out. We become people who are inwardly sound and others focused. We are people who seek the glory of God by being transformed and renewed by Him.



THE PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED

Jesus saw the Kingdom of God as a growing, living, vibrant, and all-encompassing way of life. What an invitation and honor to be a part of the Kingdom of God!

FRIDAY: APPLICATION

Jesus tells us that the Kingdom of God often begins in ways that seem small or insignificant – just like the mustard seed. Even small acts of faith can lead to incredible growth. Today, look for one simple way to plant a “mustard seed” in someone’s life. It can look like praying for someone, preparing and sharing a meal, or even sending a message of encouragement. Where can you step out in obedience with your eyes focused on the Kingdom of God?

Today, the world can feel chaotic, dark, and even like it’s unraveling. Jesus paints the picture of the mustard plant being a place of refuge and safety. How can you reflect that picture? What can you do to be an agent of hope, light, and refuge?

SATURDAY: PRAYER

Today, take time to reflect on the Kingdom of God – its growth, its inclusiveness, and its promise of refuge. With that image in mind, turn your thoughts into prayer. Pray for the world:

- *Pray for the people groups who have not yet heard or accepted the Good News of Jesus.*
- *Pray for those we might consider enemies, asking God to transform hearts and bring peace.*
- *Pray for individuals who may be in places of refuge yet never truly feel safe or at home.*

Let your prayers echo the Kingdom’s vision: a place where all find belonging, safety, and hope under God’s care.



THE PARABLE OF THE TENANTS

MARCH 1 - 7

SUNDAY: SCRIPTURE

MARK 12:1-12

¹ Jesus then began to speak to them in parables: “A man planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a pit for the winepress and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and moved to another place. ² At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants to collect from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. ³ But they seized him, beat him and sent him away empty-handed. ⁴ Then he sent another servant to them; they struck this man on the head and treated him shamefully. ⁵ He sent still another, and that one they killed. He sent many others; some of them they beat, others they killed.

⁶ “He had one left to send, a son, whom he loved. He sent him last of all, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’

⁷ “But the tenants said to one another, ‘This is the heir. Come, let’s kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.’ ⁸ So they took him and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard.

⁹ “What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others. ¹⁰ Haven’t you read this passage of Scripture:

“The stone the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;

¹¹ the Lord has done this,
and it is marvelous in our eyes’?”

¹² Then the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders looked for a way to arrest him because they knew he had spoken the parable against them. But they were afraid of the crowd; so they left him and went away.



THE PARABLE OF THE TENANTS

MONDAY: OBSERVATION

What words come to mind when you hear the word “landowner”? How about “tenant”? I think at times landowner can come with some negative first thoughts: rich, greedy, high status. Words that come to mind for tenant could be: caretaker, slave, insignificant. As a farmer, these terms resonate as I am both a landowner and a tenant. Our sinful human nature can lead to disrespect, a sense of entitlement, and a longing to be the “Landowner.” One of my 2-year-old’s favorite words right now is “MINE”. We easily forget that we are all tenants and the fruit is not ours! In the parable, God, the Landowner, goes to great length to provide everything needed for success: a protective wall, a winepress for productivity, and a watchtower for security. He then entrusts it to us as tenants, expecting stewardship and fruit.

We are also reminded in this parable of God’s extreme patience and generosity. He showed repeated mercy, sending servant after servant to the tenants, even after their violence. Then, in the ultimate act of mercy, He sends His Son. In their greed and entitlement, the tenants plot to kill the son for his inheritance. This no doubt foreshadows the sacrifice that Jesus would soon make.

TUESDAY: APPLICATION

We are all tenants, and that is not a negative thing! After all, God is our Landowner. Reflect on our role as tenants (stewards) of God’s vineyard. What has God entrusted to you? Talents, time, resources, or opportunities? Are you producing fruit that honors Him, or have entitlement, rebellion, and complacency come in the way? Look for your next opportunity to yield more fruit. God expects a return on His investment in us.



THE PARABLE OF THE TENANTS

WEDNESDAY: PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank you for being our ultimate Landowner. Forgive us for hoarding your blessings and for our actions of entitlement. Help us to be faithful tenants who produce fruit that glorifies you. In Jesus name, Amen.

THURSDAY: OBSERVATION

In this parable, the landowner (God the Father) plants a vineyard (Israel - God's people) and rents the vineyard to tenant farmers (Religious Leaders of Israel) and then moves away. At harvest time, the landowner sends servants (Prophets and Messengers) to collect what is due to him from the harvest. The tenants reject the servants, abusing or killing each one, even the landowner's son and heir (Jesus Christ). The landowner's response is to come and kill the unfaithful tenants and give the land to new tenants (Loyal Believers).

FRIDAY: APPLICATION

God wanted His fruit. He patiently sent messenger after messenger, but the rebellious tenants would only be satisfied with killing and stealing.

In what areas might you be rejecting the patient messengers of God? Are there places of resistance? Does it feel more natural to kill and steal, rather than trust and obey?

SATURDAY: PRAYER

Father in Heaven, thank you for caring for me with great patience and commitment. Help me loosen my grip on the things that do not belong to me. Make me aware of the places where I am rejecting your leading so that I might choose to follow you. Help me to love you in heart, soul, mind, and strength. In Jesus name I pray. Amen.



THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL

MARCH 8 - 14

SUNDAY: SCRIPTURE

LUKE 15:11-32

¹¹ Jesus continued: “There was a man who had two sons. ¹² The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them.

¹³ “Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. ¹⁴ After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

¹⁷ “When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! ¹⁸ I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.’ ²⁰ So he got up and went to his father.

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

²¹ “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

²² “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴ For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.



THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL

²⁵ “Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ²⁷ ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’

²⁸ “The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. ²⁹ But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’

³¹ “‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. ³² But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’”

MONDAY: OBSERVATION

Can you think of a time in your life where you have had a “younger brother” experience? A time when you arrogantly and thoughtlessly caused deep hurt to someone you love with careless and selfish words? A time where you thought money, and the pleasures it could buy, were what life was all about? Or maybe, a time where you hit rock bottom? Where you realized that the path you were on, that you had invested so much into, is a path that leads to nowhere. Is it possible that you are still on that path and don’t even realize it?

Have you ever wondered to yourself, how did I get here? Sometimes it is a slow drift. Other times, like the younger brother in this story, it can be a willful turn. After wasting his inheritance on wild lavish living, the younger brother finds himself starving to death. His money is gone, and so are his party friends. Now he longs to eat the slop of the pigs in his care.



THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL

TUESDAY: APPLICATION

You don't have to hit rock bottom to turn around and choose another path...the path that actually leads to life and flourishing. Verse 17 says, "when he came to his senses" he remembered his father's house and his father's goodness. Would you take an honest look at the path you are on in life? Is it the path that leads to Jesus or a path that leads away from Him? No matter what you have done, no matter how bad it has gotten, you can turn to Jesus. He is waiting for you with open arms, longing to give you a new life.

WEDNESDAY: PRAYER

Jesus, forgive me. I want to come home. Jesus, free me from my shame, and give me the courage to accept your grace. Amen.

THURSDAY: OBSERVATION

In the cinematic medium, the clearest depiction of the power of sin can be found in the movie *The Lord of the Rings*. The transformation of Sméagol over centuries into the creature Gollum displays how the power of sin overtakes us. The desire to possess the ring, the greed to protect it at all costs, and the treachery to keep it for himself literally consumed him.

We think this is an overly dramatized picture of the impact of sin, but the reality is that this is what happens to all of us. Jesus illustrates the power of sin in a very relatable way in this story known as the parable of the prodigal.

Sin overwhelms us and can overtake our daily lives. This story shows an ancient example of the consuming power of sin. Sin drives us to destroy relationships, sacrifice our future, and dissolve our hope.



THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL

FRIDAY: APPLICATION

We'd like to believe that sin and the pursuit of it don't lead to death, but without completely turning away from sin, totally relinquishing the hold it has on you, death is the only result. What leads to life is the grace and mercy of Jesus. Gollum never fully turned away from the power the ring had over him. He never recognized sin was destroying him.

The pathway back to the father in this story was the son's recognition that the life he was living wasn't what he wanted. The younger son wondered aloud, "Wouldn't it be better to be a servant in my father's house? I don't want to do this anymore."

What may be surprising to some is the response of the father in this story. He didn't say, "I told you so." He didn't say, "How dare you." He ran out to meet his son. He was watching for him to return, and he ran to him when he saw him coming. He wanted to celebrate his return. The son was dead in his sin, but now he is alive!

The same is true for us. We are dead in our sin, until we repent and turn away from the sin that has consumed us. Which do you choose, life or death?

SATURDAY: PRAYER

God, show me where sin is consuming my life. Show me how I need to repent and return to you. Teach my heart to let go of my selfish desires and cling to your love and grace. Amen



THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

MARCH 15 - 21

SUNDAY: SCRIPTURE

MARK 4:1-20

¹ Again Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water's edge. ² He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said: ³ "Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. ⁴ As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. ⁵ Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. ⁶ But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. ⁷ Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. ⁸ Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times."

⁹ Then Jesus said, "Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear."

¹⁰ When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. ¹¹ He told them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables ¹² so that,

"they may be ever seeing but never perceiving,
and ever hearing but never understanding;
otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!"

¹³ Then Jesus said to them, "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? ¹⁴ The farmer sows the word. ¹⁵ Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. ¹⁶ Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy.



THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

¹⁷ But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. ¹⁸ Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; ¹⁹ but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. ²⁰ Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown.”

MONDAY: OBSERVATION

As farmers, we understand that good soil doesn't just happen—it's cultivated through hard work, patience, and care. In Mark 4:1–20, Jesus' Parable of the Sower speaks directly to that truth. The seed—the word of God—is always good. But the harvest depends on the condition of the soil, just as our spiritual growth depends on the condition of our hearts.

We've all seen what happens when seed falls on hard ground—it gets devoured before it can take root. Rocky soil may show a quick sprout, but without depth, it withers under the sun. Thorny patches might look promising at first, but weeds soon take over. Only when the soil is soft, deep, and cleared of weeds can the seed grow strong and bear a rich crop. Isn't that just like our lives? When we let pride, worry, or distraction take over, God's word can't grow, but when we humble ourselves, clear out the clutter, and let Him work the ground of our hearts, His word produces a harvest far beyond what we could imagine.

This parable reminds us that faith isn't a one-time planting—it's a lifelong process of tending, watering, and weeding. Each season gives us a new chance to prepare the soil of our hearts for God's truth. If we stay faithful and keep our hearts ready, the harvest—both in our lives and in the lives we touch—will be abundant. The question is: are we preparing our fields for God's seed to thrive?



THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

TUESDAY: APPLICATION

Spiritual growth requires intentional effort—just like raising a healthy crop. Good soil doesn't happen by chance; it's the result of consistent care. In the same way, a heart that bears fruit for God must be cultivated daily.

We can start by identifying and removing the “weeds” in our lives—habits, distractions, or attitudes that choke out time with God. Just as a farmer checks the field for rocks, weeds, or pests, we should regularly examine what's keeping God's word from taking root in us. Setting aside time each day to pray, read Scripture, or simply be still before God is like a gentle rain on a field or garden—it keeps our hearts soft and receptive.

When storms come or growth feels slow, we can remember that deep roots take time to form. Farmers trust the process because they know the harvest will come if the field is cared for. Likewise, we must keep trusting God and stay consistent, even when we don't see quick results.

The practical takeaway is simple: spiritual fruitfulness is not accidental—it's cultivated. By daily tending our hearts through prayer, obedience, and perseverance, we prepare the soil for God's truth to grow strong in us and to bear fruit that blesses others. The harvest of faith, peace, and love will follow those who keep their hearts open and ready for God's word.

WEDNESDAY: PRAYER

Lord, thank you for planting your word in our hearts. Help us become good soil that is open, soft, and ready to receive what you want to grow in us. Show us the weeds—our distractions, worries, and habits—that choke out your truth, and give us the courage to remove them. Teach us to be consistent in prayer, faithful in obedience, and patient as you form deep roots within us. Strengthen us when growth feels slow, and remind us that you are always working beneath the surface. May our lives bear fruit that reflects your love and brings blessing to others. Make our hearts a field where your word thrives. Amen.



THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

THURSDAY: OBSERVATION

When Jesus told a parable, the topic was easily understood by the people who were listening. In the parable of the Sower, we need to realize that 80 – 90% of the Galileans were farmers. As with our community, most of the people listening would have been acquainted with farming practices. In Galilee, all the farming was done by hand. When sowing seed, the farmer would take a handful of seeds and spread them over the ground ahead of him as he walked. In Jesus' story, the seed lands on four different types of soil. How could a good farmer attempt to plant seeds on a path, in the rocks, or in the weeds? Why would he waste seeds on places he knew would not grow?

To understand this, you need to realize that the farming plots in Galilee were small squares surrounded by a walking path. So, when the seed lands on the walking path, it lands on ground that has been trampled flat with no soil on top, and the birds could easily find the seeds and eat them. Between the hard path and the good soil was an area of rocks and weeds. The rocks had fallen off the path, or maybe were pushed out of the field. The weeds surrounding the field grew there because their seeds had fallen off the people's feet and garments as they walked on the path and taken root there. When the Sower was dispersing the seed on his field, he would want the entire field to be seeded, even to the very edges of the field. In doing so, some of the seeds may land on the path, in the rocks, or in the weeds. When Jesus mentions these types of soils in His parable, the people could visualize exactly why this was happening.

FRIDAY: APPLICATION

In Jesus' story, the Sower is God, and He is sowing the seeds of His Word. The types of soil are the hearts of the people who are listening. God desires His seeds to germinate in soft soil, to grow, and to produce abundant crops. He desires that our hearts are



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well-tilled and soft to hear His Word and respond in obedience. If we are hardened by sin in an area of our life, like the soil on the path, we will not hear or respond to the Word, and Satan will quickly snatch away any contact we might have with the Word. If our hearts are like the soil in the rocks, we may be excited to hear the Word and attend church every Sunday, but when trouble comes, we run away from God, not to Him for guidance. If our hearts are like the soil among the weeds, we may desire to read and obey God's Word, but life is so busy. How can we make time to read the Word, memorize it, or focus on God? Good intentions do not produce results. God desires us to hear the Word, and act on it. God desires our hearts to be soft, ready to hear His Word.

Are Bible reading, Bible study, and time for reflection on Bible passages a part of your daily routine? Is your heart soft to receive God's Word? Is studying God's Word a priority in your life? It's been said that to become more loving, more generous, more gracious, more like Jesus, you must read and study His word.

SATURDAY: PRAYER

Heavenly Father, this parable is so relevant to us in an agricultural community. First, may we be the good soil. May our hearts be open, humble, and receptive to your word. May we truly listen to your word and hear what you are saying to us. May we accept your word, not just intellectually, but may it pierce our heart and allow it to have influence over all our lives and daily walk with you. And then may it produce a crop of obedience, love, joy, good works, and passion for you. Second, may we be the sower (farmer). Give us a desire to spread your word and share the good news with those new to town and far from Jesus. Give us the opportunity and boldness to share you with others and allow the Holy Spirit to work in the lives of those that don't know you, so they too may have a saving relationship with you that allows you to be Savior and Lord. Help us, Lord Jesus! It is in your name we pray. Amen.



THE PARABLE OF THE BAGS OF GOLD

MARCH 22 - 28

SUNDAY: SCRIPTURE

MATTHEW 25:14-30

¹⁴ “Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. ¹⁵ To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. ¹⁶ The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. ¹⁷ So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. ¹⁸ But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.

¹⁹ “After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. ²⁰ The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.’

²¹ “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’

²² “The man with two bags of gold also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two bags of gold; see, I have gained two more.’

²³ “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’

²⁴ “Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. ²⁵ So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’



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²⁶ “His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? ²⁷ Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.

²⁸ ““So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. ²⁹ For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. ³⁰ And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

MONDAY: OBSERVATION

There’s a lot going on in this parable, and sometimes we can’t see the forest for the trees.

At Centerpoint Church, we exist to make Christ known. We say it all the time. Those words are plastered on our walls at each campus, and they are lived out daily by our people in all the places they live, work, and play.

Why? Because this is what God’s desire is for his people.

Consider this parable. What we see in the Parable of the Bags of Gold is this reality – faithful risk-taking and active stewardship of God’s gifts brings praise and reward in God’s kingdom. The act of using what God has given you to make Christ known is the call.

We see in the parable that God gave different gifts – or different amounts – to each person. What we can infer is that God has given each of us gifts, skills, talents, and passions, and God wants us to use those gifts for the sake of the kingdom – to make Christ known.

The point of the parable is that the size of the gift is not what



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matters. Rather, faithful stewardship of what we've been given is what's important. The master in the parable praises those who actively engage and invest their talents and rebukes those who hide their gifts out of fear.

TUESDAY: APPLICATION

Deep down, every person wants to glorify God and enjoy him forever. If we realize that God has indeed given each of us gifts, skills, talents, and passions – and that the Spirit of God is with us when we use them to make Christ known, the kingdom of God will grow exponentially.

In a way, each one of us has a God-given bag of gold. Those who have been given gifts have the responsibility to share those gifts with a watching world. We are called to actively invest our gifts – in discipleship, leadership, service, tithes, and worship – to make Christ known locally, regionally, and globally.

Identify at least one gift you possess here. Write it down:

How will you share that gift with another this week?

WEDNESDAY: PRAYER

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Thank you for this parable. Thank you for helping us see that faithful risk-taking and active stewardship of your gifts bring honor and glory to you. Help us, O God, to recognize our bags of gold and to be available and generous in sharing them with those around us. Amen



THE PARABLE OF THE BAGS OF GOLD

THURSDAY: OBSERVATION

In this parable, Jesus tells the story of a master who entrusted his property to his servants before he left for a long journey. He gives each servant a different amount of gold to take care of in his absence. To one servant, he gives one bag of gold; to another, two bags; and to the third, five bags. Each servant is entrusted with something of great value. People estimate that in Jesus' time, these bags of gold could have each been worth around twenty years' wages.

Two of the servants take the bags of gold that they have been given and use them to earn more gold for their master, but the servant who is only given one bag of gold hides it in the ground out of fear.

When the master returns, he commends the two servants who used the bags of gold that they had been given to earn more gold for their faithful stewardship of his resources. When the master hears that the other servant had, out of fear, buried his gold in the ground and done nothing else with it, he condemns that servant, takes back the gold that he had given, and gives it to one of the other servants.

FRIDAY: APPLICATION

This parable draws a clear parallel with the lives that we live today. As we interpret this story, it is clear that Jesus is depicting himself as the master who has entrusted things to us, as his servants, to steward while we wait for His return.

Although Jesus didn't give us bags of gold to steward, He has given each of us gifts of great value. We have all been entrusted with time, resources, and talents, and Jesus' desire is that we would be faithful stewards investing what he has given us in things that bring growth to His kingdom and glory to His name.



THE PARABLE OF THE BAGS OF GOLD

When the master in the story returns, he commends the two servants who invested wisely for their faithfulness with what he had given them. Spend a few minutes today thinking about how you are investing the time, talents, and resources that Jesus has entrusted to you. Are you being faithful with what you have been given?

As we await the day when Jesus returns, may we be faithful stewards of both the small and the big things that he has entrusted to us so that when that day comes, we might hear His loving voice say, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

SATURDAY: PRAYER

Lord, remind us today that all that we have is a gift from you. Help us to be faithful stewards of the gifts that you have given, investing them in ways that glorify your name. Free us from the fear that causes us to hide or hoard these gifts, and help us desire, above all else, to hear you say, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” Amen.



THE PARABLE OF THE GREAT BANQUET

MARCH 29 - APRIL 4

SUNDAY: SCRIPTURE

MATTHEW 22:1-14

¹ Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: ² “The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. ³ He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come.

⁴ “Then he sent some more servants and said, ‘Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.’

⁵ “But they paid no attention and went off—one to his field, another to his business. ⁶ The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. ⁷ The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.

⁸ “Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. ⁹ So go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.’ ¹⁰ So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, the bad as well as the good, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.

¹¹ “But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. ¹² He asked, ‘How did you get in here without wedding clothes, friend?’ The man was speechless.

¹³ “Then the king told the attendants, ‘Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

¹⁴ “For many are invited, but few are chosen.”



THE PARABLE OF THE GREAT BANQUET

MONDAY: OBSERVATION

Weddings in our culture are a big deal, as they should be. When a man and a woman covenant together as husband and wife, a ceremony and reception are a wonderful way to celebrate with them. In Jesus' time, weddings were a big deal too. The couple to be married were first betrothed to each other, like present-day engagements. To begin this process, the groom's father would pay the bride's father for his daughter's hand in marriage and send invitations for the upcoming celebration to the guests. Then the groom would go back to his father's house and build a place to live with his bride near his father's house. Meanwhile, the bride was to prepare herself for the wedding, not knowing exactly when her groom would come for her. Her attendants would stay with her each night, for weeks or even months. When the groom came with his own attendants to "kidnap" the bride and her attendants and take them from her home to his, he would arrive around midnight, with no advance warning. The groom's father would then send a servant to each guest to announce that the time had come to join in the wedding feast. The wedding feast could last up to 7 days, and all the people who attended extended kind wishes to the couple.

The Parable of the Banquet in Matthew 22 begins once the preparations were completed and the guests were told to come. However, all the guests refused the invitation. They were too busy, too tired, or too distracted to celebrate with the new couple. This was a very rude thing to do in Jesus' time, just as it would be today. So instead of having the preparations wasted, the groom's father goes out into the streets and gathers everyone who would like to join the feast. These people were outside the groom's father's property...probably bystanders who were watching the festivities. Suddenly, they were invited into the festivities. What a joyous occasion for them! It was also customary for the invitees to be dressed for the feast. In the parable, the man choosing not to dress for the celebration was cast out into the darkness. To



THE PARABLE OF THE GREAT BANQUET

understand why this was terrible, we need to understand that to the Jewish people, darkness was dreaded. Lamps remained lit all night long in Jewish homes. To be cast out to “outer darkness” would cause a Jew to tremble.

TUESDAY: APPLICATION

Understanding the wedding customs of the Jewish people of Jesus’ time gives us a deeper understanding of why Jesus chose to tell this parable and why it was easily understood by His audience. Also, understanding that this parable was given when Jesus was in the temple during His last week on earth gives us an example of God’s grace. Jesus was giving the Jewish rulers every opportunity to believe in Him before it was too late, yet they still rejected Him.

In this parable, Jesus is the king who had prepared a wedding feast. The invited guests were the Jewish people, in particular the Jewish religious leaders. They knew the scriptures and had had every opportunity to understand who Jesus was...the promised Messiah. Yet, they had chosen not to believe this truth. Instead of attending the feast Jesus had prepared, they were too busy, too stubborn, too proud, too independent to attend. They refused Jesus’ invitation to believe in Him. So, Jesus went out to ask those bystanders, people who believed in Him and followed Him, and invited them into His feast. Because they believed He was the Messiah, He clothed them in His righteousness, so they were dressed properly to celebrate with Him. The guest who was not clothed properly had followed Jesus, but had never really believed in who He was. He was a religious person, but not a true believer, so he didn’t receive Jesus’ righteousness as his wedding garment. This person was cast from Jesus’ sight into total darkness, as He promised in Matthew 25:13.

This parable brings to mind an important question: Who am I



THE PARABLE OF THE GREAT BANQUET

in this parable? Am I one of the religious leaders who knew all about Jesus but don't believe in Him? Am I the bride, preparing myself for the great feast Jesus has prepared for me, ready at any time to joyfully respond to His invitation? Am I a true believer in Jesus as the Messiah so He will clothe me in His righteousness and invite me into His feast?

Or am I a believer in deeds and head knowledge only, without a heart relationship with Jesus? Am I too busy, too stubborn, too proud, or too independent to be invited to Jesus' wedding feast? Matthew 22:14 reminds us, "For many are called, but few are chosen." Are you one of the chosen?

WEDNESDAY: PRAYER

Father and God, you have prepared us a feast. Through Jesus, You have sent us an invitation to the banquet. But because we think we have more important priorities, or think we can get to it later, we don't take Your invitation seriously and walk away from You. Lord, You are so generous, but we need to accept the invitation, repent, turn towards You, and live a life that has You at the center not just for a day or a week, but for a lifetime. God, help us to live a life that is deserving to be at the banquet each and every day. Only with Your help, in Jesus name we pray. Amen

THURSDAY: OBSERVATION

How do you determine your priorities? What is most important to you and your life?

Something that we don't consider a priority for us, we won't make time for or invest in. And even if we don't prioritize something, we may still feel entitled to the rewards associated with that thing.

Sometimes we don't prioritize taking care of our health, but we



THE PARABLE OF THE GREAT BANQUET

want the rewards of choosing that. We don't prioritize continuing to exercise our minds, but we want the sharpness that comes from continuing to learn.

Sometimes, when we feel entitled, we take for granted the gifts we have been given. In this parable Jesus is being critical of those who aren't prioritizing the Kingdom He has presented. The people He initially came to want the reward of the celebration but they don't want to prioritize Jesus to get it.

The last line of the text says, many are invited but few are chosen. Everyone has access to the Kingdom of God but who is going all in to surrender everything to the Lord? Few.

FRIDAY: APPLICATION

Jesus makes it clear in this parable that there are consequences for rejecting the King. There are consequences for not prioritizing God over the everyday things in life. We don't want this to be true. We want to have our cake and eat it too. We want to prioritize the things of the world and still be able to access the reward that Jesus offers. Jesus makes it clear that isn't how it works.

He wants us to let go of the world and grab a hold of what He offers us with both hands. What does that look like for you? What do you need to let go of in order to take hold of all that Jesus offers us?

What process do you need to go through to figure out what you need to let go of in your life? Are you willing to start it today? We don't know when the Kingdom of God will take over. It's totally up to God. We may believe we have time, but the time is now. The urgency is real.

Will you do whatever it takes to be present at the ultimate banquet God is preparing for you? All it takes is surrender, total surrender.



THE PARABLE OF THE GREAT BANQUET

SATURDAY: PRAYER

Father God, thank you for the grace and mercy you heap upon us. You want what's best for us even when we don't want it for ourselves. Make clear for us what is best. Help us to hear directly from you what you require of us. Keep us tuned into your voice, your love, and your rest. Amen.

