

Jesus and the Religious Leaders



Table Talks

Luke 14:1 One Sabbath day Jesus went to eat dinner in the home of a leader of the Pharisees, and the people were watching him closely.

He went into the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath: Even though Jesus had some of His greatest disputes with the Pharisees, He still associated with them— not to be one of them, but to show them a godly example.

Take the Lowly Place 14:7-14

8 “When you are invited by anyone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in the best place, lest one more honorable than you be invited by him; 9 and he who invited you and him come and say to you, ‘Give place to this man,’ and then you begin with shame to take the lowest place. 10 But when you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place, so that when he who invited you comes he may say to you, ‘Friend, go up higher.’ Then you will have glory in the presence of those who sit at the table with you.

But Jesus was watching them:

7 So He told a parable to those who were invited,

Take the Lowly Place 14:7-14

Key: 11 For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”



What follows is a parable, a real-life illustration set alongside a Biblical truth to give an example.

Parables are not fables; Jesus didn't tell fanciful stories with morals.

He took real-life situations familiar to all, and used them to illustrate God's truth. It's point was to elicit a response.

Radical Inclusion

12 Then He also said to him who invited Him, “When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid.

Jesus addresses the host (the Pharisee) directly

Jesus’s had observed that those who had been invited were the rich and powerful, relatives and friends.

Radical Inclusion

Key: 13 But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. 14 And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just.”

Do not ask is actually "do not habitually ask." It isn't wrong to ever invite your friends, your brothers, and so on; but it is wrong to only invite such people. Do we associate only with people who can "advance" us or give something to us? Or are we willing to be "givers" in relationship also? It is easy for us to limit our "guest list" to a few comfortable, easy people, instead of reaching out to others.

Parable of the Great Feast 14:15-24

15 Hearing this, a man sitting at the table with Jesus exclaimed, “What a blessing it will be to attend a banquet in the Kingdom of God!”

The statement that prompted the parable is key. The man who, in verse 15, looks forward to dining in the Messianic kingdom probably subscribed to the popular notion that only Jews would be part of that kingdom. The parable Jesus tells is aimed at debunking that notion, as the following explanation makes clear:

Excuses, Excuses!

16 Jesus replied with this story: “A man prepared a great feast and sent out many invitations. 17 When the banquet was ready, he sent his servant to tell the guests, ‘Come, the banquet is ready.’ 18 But they all began making excuses. One said, ‘I have just bought a field and must inspect it. Please excuse me.’ 19 Another said, ‘I have just bought five pairs of oxen, and I want to try them out. Please excuse me.’ 20 Another said, ‘I just got married, so I can’t come.’

The excuses for skipping the banquet are laughably bad.

All three excuses in the parable reveal insincerity on the part of those invited.

The interpretation is that the Jews of Jesus’ day had no valid excuse for spurning Jesus’ message; in fact, they had every reason to accept Him as their Messiah.

Luke 14:21-22

21 “The servant returned and told his master what they had said. His master was furious and said, ‘Go quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and invite the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.’ 22 After the servant had done this, he reported, ‘There is still room for more.’

These were the types of people that the Pharisees considered “unclean” and under God’s curse (cf. John 9:1-2, 34). Jesus, however, taught that the kingdom was available even to those considered “unclean” (cf. Acts 10). His involvement with tax collectors and sinners brought condemnation from the Pharisees, yet it showed the extent of God’s grace (Matthew 9:10-11).

Invite the Marginalised

23 So his master said,
'Go out into the
country lanes and
behind the hedges
and urge anyone you
find to come, so that
the house will be full.

24 For none of those I
first invited will get
even the smallest
taste of my banquet.'"

In extending the search
further afield meant that the
most lowly of the poor were
included. The homeless if you
like!

The people who lived in the
lanes and hedges were the
poorest of the poor – they
didn't even have a house to
live in

Lost Sheep

Parable of the Lost Sheep Luke 15:1-7



15 Tax collectors and other notorious sinners often came to listen to Jesus teach. 2 This made the Pharisees and teachers of religious law complain that he was associating with such sinful people—even eating with them!

Luke 15:1-7

4 "If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them gets lost, what will he do? Won't he leave the ninety-nine others in the wilderness and go to search for the one that is lost until he finds it? 5 And when he has found it, he will joyfully carry it home on his shoulders. 6 When he arrives, he will call together his friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep.' 7 In the same way, there is more joy in heaven over one lost sinner who repents and returns to God than over ninety-nine others who are righteous and haven't strayed away!

The Pharisees divided men into two classes: the unclean and the righteous, and they would have nothing to do with the "unclean." Of course, many followers of Jesus do the same today.

Seeking the lost

Jesus seeks to bring sinners to repentance (5:32), but not once does Jesus actually scold or correct a sinner. Instead, he eats with them. Four times Luke reports (a) meals in which (b) Jesus receives criticism for (c) his relationship with sinners, but (d) Jesus never once comments on the sinners' behaviour (5:27-32; 7:36-50; 15:1-32; and 19:1-10).

The rabbis believed that God would receive a sinner who came to Him the right way. But in the parable of the shepherd and the sheep, Jesus teaches that God actively seeks out the lost.



The Lost Coin

8 “Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Won’t she light a lamp and sweep the entire house and search carefully until she finds it?

Parable of the Lost Coin Luke 15:8-10

The first and most striking thing about this parable is its main character: a woman! Remember that these parables are directed at the Pharisees and scribes. A speaker in Middle Eastern culture cannot compare a male audience to a woman without giving offense. Jesus does it nonetheless.

Great Joy

9 And when she finds it, she will call in her friends and neighbors and say, 'Rejoice with me because I have found my lost coin.' 10 In the same way, there is joy in the presence of God's angels when even one sinner repents."

Jesus makes clear in the parables that he is talking about repentance. So what did the coin do to earn restoration? Nothing! The coin was restored because one who valued it searched with great difficulty to find it. So when verse 10 says there will be much joy "over one sinner who repents," who is the celebration ultimately about? The finder.



The Grieving Father

11 To illustrate the point further, Jesus told them this story: “A man had two sons.

12 The younger son told his father, ‘I want my share of your estate now before you die.’ So his father agreed to divide his wealth between his sons.

Parable of the Lost Sons Luke 15:11-32

The parable is often called the parable of the Prodigal son, but there are two sons in this story; the younger son and the older brother.

The parable could just as easily be called the parable of the grieving father. At least 11 times father is mentioned?

Goodbye

13 “A few days later this younger son packed all his belongings and moved to a distant land,

“He packed everything up and left home.” What is so wrong with packing a suitcase? Well, as the modern translations make clear, he did more than pack a suitcase. Where he was going he had more use for cash than fields, so he sold everything and stashed the proceeds in his carry-on luggage. But what is wrong with that? Is there a law that says one cannot sell land and invest one’s wealth in other things, like maybe friends and fun? I think the younger son might well have defended his actions like this!

Unexpected consequences

and there he wasted all his money in wild living. 14 About the time his money ran out, a great famine swept over the land, and he began to starve.

“A severe famine came over the whole country.” And exactly at the time he ran out of money, too! Sure he should have prepared for the possibility, but how could he know that there would be an economic downturn? We can’t blame the younger son for the famine, can we?

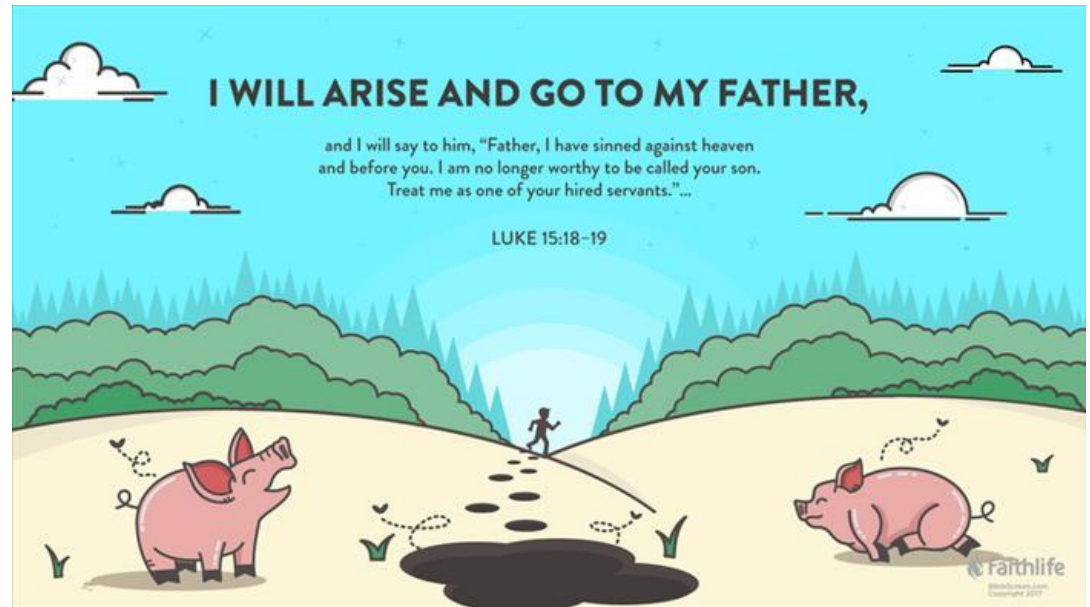
Rock Bottom

15 He persuaded a local farmer to hire him, and the man sent him into his fields to feed the pigs. 16 The young man became so hungry that even the pods he was feeding the pigs looked good to him. But no one gave him anything.



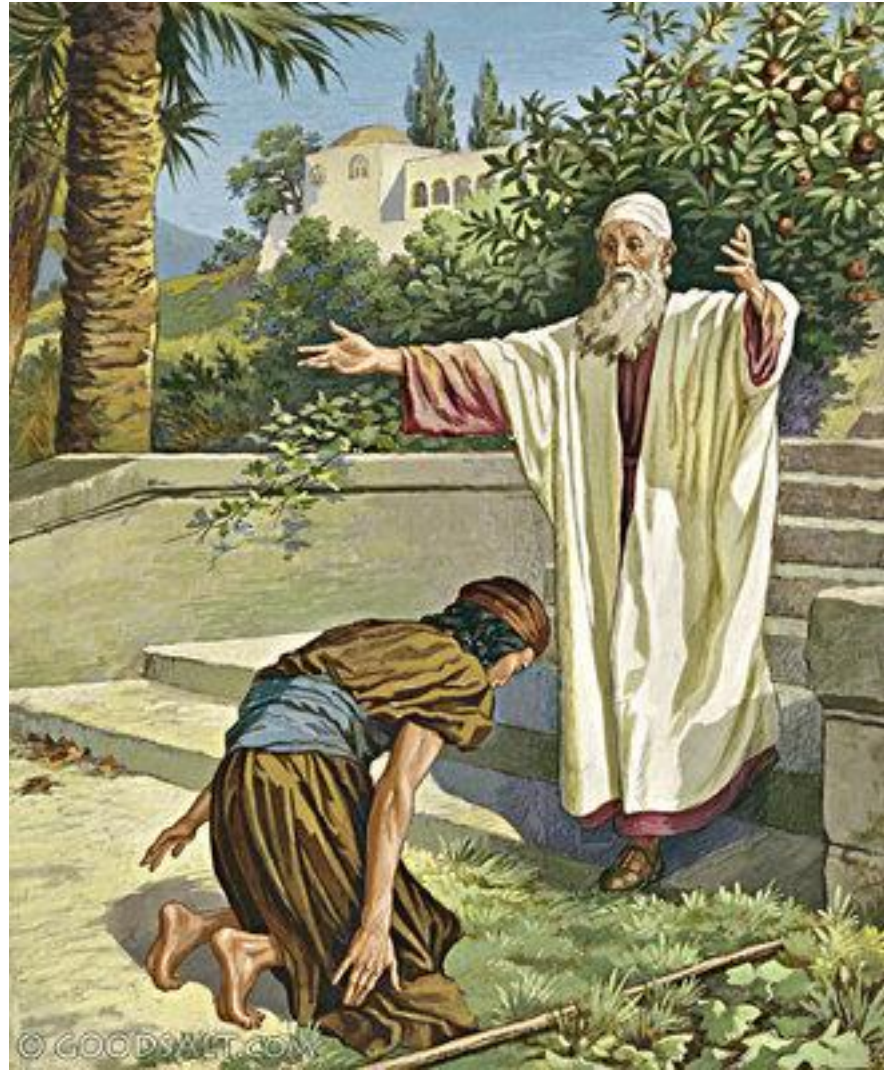
Realisation hits home

17 “When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, ‘At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger! 18 I will go home to my father and say, “Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, 19 and I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired servant.”’”



The Father's Love

20 “So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him.



Summary

All three of the parables in Luke 15 also answer the question raised by the Jewish authorities and typified by the older brother in the third parable—whether it was appropriate for Jesus to care about and even mingle with sinners. The parables show that God does care about humans and rejoices when they are rescued from trouble. And so should we.

The main character in the parable, the forgiving father, whose character remains constant throughout the story, is a picture of God. In telling the story, Jesus identifies Himself with God in His loving attitude to the lost. The younger son symbolizes the lost (the tax collectors and sinners of that day, Luke 15:1), and the elder brother represents the self-righteous (the Pharisees and teachers of the law of that day, Luke 15:2).

Repent

Jesus' emphasis on repentance was not a new subject for Him to address in these parables. He often spoke of the need for us to repent.

Repentance: a central tenet of Christ's teaching

Jesus often spoke of the need for us to repent. When He began His public ministry, Jesus said, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" (Matt 4:17,).

Summarizing four major elements of Christ's teaching

Repentance

The Pharisees and the teachers of the law did not see their need of repentance



Mark recorded Jesus telling people: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15).

And on two occasions when people died of unexpected events, He noted: “Unless you repent you will all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3, 5).

Parable of the Shrewd Manager Luke 16:1-13

The parable of the unjust steward is but one part of a larger whole. The entire 16th chapter of Luke revolves about the central theme of material possessions. A brief outline of the structure of the entire chapter:

- (1) The Unjust Steward—Vv. 1-13
- (2) The Pharisees' (who loved money) Protest & Jesus' Response—Vv. 14-18
- (3) The Rich Man and Lazarus—Vv. 19-31

The entire chapter, then, revolves around one's attitude toward and use of material possessions. Our story, the parable of the unjust steward, is not the sum and substance of Jesus' teaching on the subject. It is just one part of the piece of chapter 16. Beyond this, chapter 16 is but a part of the much broader teaching of our Lord on the subject of possessions throughout the entire gospel of Luke (followed up by Acts).