

# One Seed, Four Soils, and One Harvest

Luke 8:4-15



*Luke 8:4-8 Now when a large crowd was coming together, and those from the various cities were journeying to Him, He spoke by way of a parable: 5 "The*

*sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell beside the road, and it was trampled under foot and the birds of the air ate it up. 6 "And other seed fell on rock and as soon as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. 7 "And other seed fell among the thorns, and when the thorns grew up with it, they choked it out. 8 "And other seed fell into the good soil; and growing up, it produced a crop one hundred times as great." As He said these things, He would call out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."*

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**1. One Seed and One Purpose** Jesus describes a vivid image of a sower sowing seed in a field. He reveals that the seed is the word of God, the Gospel of the Kingdom. And the seed has one purpose: so that we might believe and be saved. There are three things we can learn concerning the seed that should give us comfort whether we are sowing or receiving the seed.

**The Seed is Good** For the one who is receiving the seed, there is no better seed out there. If you are waiting for a

better word, a better way to be saved and inherit eternal life, then that day will never come. There is no better seed, there is not better word available or coming. And for those who have been called by God to sow the seed, the gospel message you are to proclaim is perfect just the way it is.

**The Seed Does Not Depend on the Sower** For the one who is receiving the seed, it is not about how you received it, where you received it, or when you received it. All that matters is that you receive the gospel. And for those called by God to sow, all you have to do is spread the word. Our delivery of the gospel has nothing to do with how the soils respond.

**The Seed Will Not Return Void** The Parable demonstrates what God revealed to Isaiah: His Word will not return to Him empty. For those who receive the seed and for those who sow the seed, our faith and our labor is not in vain. God will accomplish His purpose both for those who "believe and are saved" and for those who faithfully spread the gospel.

**2. The Condition of Your Heart Matters** In this parable the problem is not with the seed, or with the sower, but the problem is with the soil. And Jesus says the soil is the heart of man. There will be some with a hard heart, others with a superficial heart, and others with a reluctant heart. But there will be those that have a good heart, who will hear the word, hold it fast in their hearts, and produce fruit with perseverance.

Jesus teaches us these truths in a great parable expressly to evoke a response from those that hear. It is a call to examine our hearts. And the mark of the disciple of Christ is the one who bears fruit with perseverance. I you need the gospel, receive it today. If you have the gospel, start sowing today.

# Good and Faithful Stewardship

## Matthew 25:14-30



Matthew 25:14-30  
"For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and handed over his possessions to them. 15 "And to one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each

according to his own ability; and he went on his journey. 16 "Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents. 17 "In the same manner the one who had received the two talents gained two more. 18 "But he who received the one talent went away, and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. 19 "Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. 20 "And the one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, 'Master, you handed five talents over to me. See, I have gained five more talents.' 21 "His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' 22 "Also the one who had received the two talents came up and said, 'Master, you handed two talents over to me. See, I have gained two more talents.' 23 "His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' 24 "And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed. 25 'And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is your.' 26 "But his master answered and said to him, 'You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I scattered no seed. 27 "Therefore, you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest. 28 "Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents.' 29 "For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have

an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. 30 "And throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

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In the Parable of the Talents, Jesus wanted His disciples to understand that He was going to leave, but that He would be coming back. And before He left, he wanted them and us today to learn a very import lesson about how we should faithfully prepare for His return.

**1) Everyone is a Steward of Christ Until He Returns** Everything we have in life came from the Lord and everything we are going to get will come from the Lord. Though the Lord is away, He did not relegate anything in your life for you to do with it what you please. As stewards, we are responsible to manage all the resources of life for the glory of Him, and to acknowledge Him as the source of everything we have until He returns. The question of the good steward is this: Is there anything in your life you are not valuing as something that belongs to the Lord and not you?

**2) Stewards are to Work Diligently Until He Returns** As we are watching for Christ's return, and patiently waiting for His arrival, we are to be diligently working all things according to His best interest and benefit. The good steward understands the value of what they have and what the Lord expects him to do with it. The question of the good steward is this: If Jesus was managing your life as His own, what would He be doing differently?

**3) Stewards are Rewarded Based on Effort and not Results** The Lord is going to return and settle accounts. But it is not the results in our life that gain our reward, it is effort we made in life to accomplish His purposes. The Lord does not expect the same results from His disciples, He does expect that we exercise diligence, care, and attention in our activities as the steward of His possessions. The question of the good steward is this: Is there any aspect of your life where your more concerned about results than about faithfully putting in the effort required by an obedient heart?

**Conclusion:** Jesus is coming back and when He returns it will be to settle accounts. The call to action is that we examine our lives, and ask ourselves; "If Jesus came back today, what kind of report would I give concerning my life?"

# ***The Good Samaritan Part 1***

**Luke 10:30-35**



*Luke 10:30-35  
Jesus replied and  
said, "A man was  
going down from  
Jerusalem to  
Jericho, and fell  
among robbers,  
and they stripped  
him and beat him,  
and went away  
leaving him half  
dead 31 "And a*

*priest happened to be going down on that road, and when he  
saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32 "Likewise a Levite  
also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on  
the other side. 33 "But a Samaritan, who was on a journey,  
came upon him, and when he saw him, he felt compassion. 34  
"And he came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil  
and wine on them, and he put him on his own animal, and  
brought him to an inn and took care of him. 35 "And on the  
next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the  
innkeeper and said, "Take care of him, and whatever more you  
spend, when I return I will repay you.'*

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It is not uncommon in life to find that we have been  
focusing on the wrong things. This can occur to the point of

being absurd, but when it happens we have two choices:  
change our focus or continue to completely miss the point of  
where we should be placing our efforts.

**1) A Lawyer Meets His Match** Anytime someone approaches  
Jesus or His Word with a self righteous and insincere heart  
they will never get the answers they want to hear. But what  
we want to hear and what we need to hear are two different  
things. Jesus and His Word will always bring to you what you  
need to hear, the question is are you going to allow His  
Word to change your focus or are you going to continue to  
miss the point.

**2) It's All About Love** When it comes to being obedient to  
God's word, we are wasting our time when our focus is on  
finding ways not to obey. Rather, our focus should always be  
on how we can obey Him better. The question is not about  
"who is my neighbor", but the question should be "how do I  
demonstrate neighborly love?" Not only does Jesus and His  
Word instruct us on what to do in life, but it also gives us  
practical ways on how we are to do it. When in doubt,  
demonstrate love. Love never fails.

The call for a response today in the parable of the  
Good Samaritan is that our love for one another should have  
no qualifications. Our mandate to love is not limited to only  
the people we like, but also the people we don't know, and  
yes, even our "enemies". Any time we approach Christ or His  
Word with a self righteous and insincere heart, we will never  
get the answers we want to hear, but we will always get the  
answers we need to hear. The question for us today  
becomes: are you allowing the person of Christ and the  
power of His Word to bring about correction in your life, or  
are you going to continue to focus on the wrong things as a  
pretext to justify your own disobedience?

## ***The Good Samaritan Part 2***

**Luke 10:30-35**



*Luke 10:30-35*

*Jesus replied and said, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went away leaving him half dead 31 "And a*

*priest happened to be going down on that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32 "Likewise a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 "But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him, and when he saw him, he felt compassion. 34 "And he came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them, and he put him on his own animal, and brought him to an inn and took care of him. 35 "And on the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, "Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, when I return I will repay you.'*

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God brings about conviction in our lives to draw us to Himself. When we respond to conviction with repentance, we are then restored to a right relationship with God. We

will never experience the heart condition necessary for demonstrating neighborly love if we allow sin to create a barrier in front of God's good work in our lives.

**1) The Truth Exposed** The scholar of the law wanted an answer to his question "who is my neighbor" and Jesus gives it to him. The very person you hate is exactly the very person God is calling you to love. Even though it is not a Samaritan who lies there dying and in need, but it is the mere presence of a Samaritan in the parable that would have cut the lawyer deep. This is exactly what "conviction" in action looks like. And when God produces conviction in the human heart it has one aim: to bring about repentance and restoration.

**2) Compassion Makes All The Difference** The difference between the Samaritan and the other two is the presence of compassion. Neither the priest nor the Levite felt compassion for the one who fell among robbers. Compassion is not something you can train yourself to have, or something you can get by reading a book. Compassion is only something you can experience if you have a tender heart. God cultivates compassion in our hearts in three ways: when we surrender our seat on the throne of our life over to Christ; when we let the word of God dwell in our hearts richly; and when we renew our minds daily through holy living.

Loving our neighbor as ourselves requires a compassionate heart. A heart of compassion demonstrates a sensitivity to the needs and well being of others. Compassion is not a function of a calloused heart of stone, but only comes about with a tender heart from God. God's call on our lives today is that if we lack compassion, turn to Him in repentance and faith. Be restored to God and equipped by God to love in a manner worthy of His name.

## ***The Good Samaritan Part 3***

**Luke 10:30-35**



*Luke 10:30-35  
Jesus replied and  
said, "A man was  
going down from  
Jerusalem to  
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*priest happened to be going down on that road, and when he  
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came upon him, and when he saw him, he felt compassion. 34  
"And he came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil  
and wine on them, and he put him on his own animal, and  
brought him to an inn and took care of him. 35 "And on the  
next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the  
innkeeper and said, "Take care of him, and whatever more you  
spend, when I return I will repay you.'*

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In the Parable of the Good Samaritan, Christ describes  
5 ways that we are to demonstrate the love of God towards  
our neighbor.

**1) It is a Love that Acts** When the Bible says "love God" or "love your neighbor" that love is grounded in action. Because love without the appropriate actions is just a hollow word. But true compassion leads to action and meets a need.

**2) It is a Love that Costs** The love of the Samaritan flowed from his provision, it cost him something to demonstrate love. The Samaritan became God's conduit to allow His blessing to flow through the Samaritan to the man in need.

**3) It is a Love that Sacrifices** There is a difference between a love that costs and a love that sacrifices. A love that costs can often be met out of the abundance of our leftovers. But a love that sacrifices means we take something that we believe we cannot live without, and give it up for someone else.

**4) It is a Love that Satisfies** A love that satisfies meets a need in full; it is not a superficial love. Superficial solutions are only temporary, and will eventually fail to satisfy the needs of others.

**5) It is a Love that Endures** There is no end and no limit to a love that endures. The kind of love that Jesus is calling us to is without conditions and is a love that never fails.

The response that Jesus desires for us today is that we allow these words of Christ concerning love to bring about correction in our lives and our relationships where our love has missed the mark. And to bring forth the necessary changes to get in step with His standard for our lives.

# Laborers in the Vineyard Part 1

## Matthew 20:1-16



*Matthew 20:1-7*  
*"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. 2 "Now when he had agreed with*

*the laborers for a denarius for the day, he sent them into his vineyard. 3 "And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the market place; 4 and to those he said, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.' And so they went. 5 "Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did the same thing. 6 "And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, 'Why have you been standing here idle all day long?' 7 "They said to him, 'Because no one hired us.' He said to them, 'You go into the vineyard too.*

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Jesus teaches His parable within the context of a statement: "many who are first will be last; and the last, first." This statement is revealing the truth of the gospel, that when God saves he does so completely for the first and the last. Our works and time spent in grace add nothing to our inheritance which is eternal life. Salvation is a gift and not a wage.

**1) The Confusion** The parable flows out of the confusion of a rich young ruler who believes he can work his way into heaven. Jesus tells him that if works are required, then those works need to be perfect. But man cannot save himself, this is impossible. But what is impossible for man is possible for God.

**2) The Concern** Peter is alarmed because he believes he has given up everything to follow Jesus and is worried about what he will receive in the end. Jesus assures him that for those who trust in Him, not themselves, their inheritance will be lavish and eternal.

**3) The Contract** That parable starts with a contract: a landowner hires laborers for a denarius a day. This is Christ's connection with the audience who believes salvation is earned, that the wage due for works is eternal life. But God owes no man a wage.

**4) The Clue** As the work day unfolds, a clue emerges, it is trust not works that will be rewarded. Those last to be hired have nothing of value to offer the landowner. Whatever they receive will be by the grace of the landowner not because they earned it, but because they trusted him to be gracious.

The good news of salvation is that Christ did everything, we can do nothing, and yet God will give freely the full benefit of adoption into the family of God and eternal life for those who trust in Christ for their eternity.

# Laborers in the Vineyard Part 2

## Matthew 20:1-16



*Matthew 20:8-16*  
*"8 'Now when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with*

*the last group to the first.' 9 'And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each one received a denarius. 10 'And when those hired first came, they supposed that they would receive more; but each of them also received a denarius. 11 'Now when they received it, they were grumbling at the landowner, 12 saying, 'These last men have worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.' 13 'But he answered and said to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius? 14 'Take what is yours and go, but I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. 15 'Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with what is my own? Or is your eye envious because I am generous?' 16 'So the last shall be first, and the first last.'"*

.....  
**1) The Contract** That parable starts with a contract: a landowner hires laborers for a denarius a day. This is Christ's

connection with the audience who believe salvation is earned, that the wage due for works is eternal life.

**2) The Clue** As the work day unfolds, a clue emerges, it is not works but trust that becomes the focus for the day. Those last to be hired have nothing of value to offer the landowner. Whatever they receive will be by the grace of the landowner not because they earned it, but because they trusted him to be gracious.

**3) The Contrast** Two groups emerge in clear contrast: the first and the last. If this parable was a lesson about fairness and works righteousness, then the last group would receive a fraction of what the first group received. But, this is not about earning a wage for works done, this is all about a landowner who chooses to dispense the same wage, the same grace, to both the first and the last. Works emerge as the effect of grace and not the cause for grace.

**4) The Consideration** The landowner reminds the laborers that he can and will do as he pleases with what is his own. His gracious generosity is no grounds for complaining. Grace is not a cause for envy, but should be a cause of rejoicing for all who receive it. We are reminded that every Christian should workout their own salvation with fear and trembling before God. We are to worry less about what God is doing in the life of others and worry more about what we should be doing in response to God's grace in our lives.

Good works absolutely have a place in the Christian experience. But they are the effect of our salvation and not the cause. We are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. The glory of which belongs to God alone. The call to action becomes: what am I doing with the grace I have received to advance the Lord's kingdom in my life?

# ***The Treasure and the Pearl***

## **Matthew 13:44-46**



*Matthew 13:44-46 "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid again; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and*

*buys that field. 45 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, 46 and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.*

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**1) Context:** The Coming Judgment It is in between two descriptions of a coming day of judgement, that Christ introduces these parables concerning a "hidden object". This object is so valuable, that once discovered, would cause a man to sell everything he owns to possess it. The only thing that would have any value in light of a pending day of reckoning would be salvation itself.

**2) The Kingdom Revealed:** The first thing we discover is that the knowledge of salvation is hidden. the treasure was hidden and the fine pearl had to be sought. Even though the Gospel is plainly available and publicly known, to the lost, it might as well be buried in a field or laying in a distant merchants storehouse. The knowledge of salvation must first be revealed by the Holy Spirit to all unbelievers.

**3) The Kingdom Received:** In both cases whether it was finding the treasure or finding the pearl, both men had to do something. Both individuals had to make a choice: receive the object of great value or reject it. Every person is personally accountable before God to accept or reject the revealed truth concerning Christ. We must personally receive the kingdom through faith.

**4) The Kingdom Reached:** These are two different men with two different routes that brought them to a knowledge of the kingdom of heaven. People are going to have different salvation experiences. All are saved the same way, through faith in Christ, but how people reaches the knowledge of truth will differ. The key to salvation is the gospel and our response, not the route God leads us on to get to there.

There is coming a great day when Christ will send forth His angels to sift the good from the bad amidst all of humanity. But God has made a way for every person, every where, to escape the coming wrath. He has sent forth His Son Jesus so that whosoever believes in Him will have eternal life and will not perish. It is not about being a member of the right church, coming from the right family, or possessing the right religious rituals. It is all about trusting in Christ for your salvation.

# ***The Prodigal Son Part 1: What it Means to Be Free***

**Luke 15:11-32**



*Luke 15:11-16  
And he said, "A  
man had two  
sons. 12 "And  
the younger of  
them said to  
his father,  
'Father, give  
me the share of  
the estate that  
falls to me.' So*

*he divided his wealth between them. 13 "And not many days  
later, the younger son gathered everything together and went  
on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered  
his estate living recklessly. 14 "Now when he had spent  
everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he  
began to be impoverished. 15 "So he went and hired himself  
out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into  
his fields to feed swine. 16 "And he was desiring to be fed with  
the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving  
anything to him.*

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There is an attitude in culture today that "to be free" means being able to do whatever we desire whenever we desire. And that is a very misleading attitude, because our actions accrue consequences; good and bad. There is a difference between bad freedom and good freedom. When you declare your independence from God, then that freedom will only result in bad. But, when you pledge your

allegiance to God, and obey His will and His purposes, then that freedom ultimately results in good.

**1) A Declaration of Independence** The parable opens with a young son who wants freedom from his father to live as he pleases. This freedom is born out of pride and greed. The son declares his independence from his father and demands his inheritance. And in response, the father lets him go. The result of this new freedom is separation from the father. This situation is not unlike how God deals with humanity. God does not drag anyone against their will into His fellowship. But every person must choose: to rebel against God and be separated from Him, or, obey God and be reconciled to Him.

**2) A Reckless Life** The son gets what he wants and soon begins to live recklessly, because reckless living is the inevitable condition of an independent heart. This results in him becoming impoverished. Now, his new found freedom quickly devolves into a life of basic survival. He loses his ability to choose, and the options available to him. His freedom becomes constrained. The son's pride wins out and he tries to solve a spiritual problem with human wisdom. Yet, his condition worsens to the point of utter despair. The son has hit "rock bottom" and that is exactly where God needs many of us to be before He will come to our rescue.

The young son has learned a harsh lesson; that freedom does not come about by declaring independence from the Father. Independence leads to reckless living, and reckless living leads to complete and utter despair. Our actions have consequences, good and bad. But thanks be to God that this is not how the story ends! For we will soon see that God has made a way for the rebel to be reconciled to him.

# ***The Prodigal Son Part 2: God Desires Repentance***

**Luke 15:11-32**



*Luke 15:17-24  
17 "But when  
he came to  
himself, he  
said, 'How  
many of my  
father's hired  
men have more  
than enough  
bread, but I am  
dying here with  
hunger! "18 'I*

*will rise up and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before you. 19 'I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men.'" 20 "So he rose up 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 slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet, 23 and bring the fattened calf, slaughter it, and let us eat and celebrate, 24 for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' And they began to celebrate.*

.....

The parable opens with a young son filled with pride and greed that causes him to declare independence from his father. And his father lets him go, just as our Heavenly father will allow every person a choice: to rebel against Him, or to

obey Him. The son's freedom results in reckless living. Because reckless living is the inevitable condition of an independent heart. Soon the son becomes impoverished and tries to solve a spiritual problem with human wisdom. Yet, his condition worsens and he hits "rock bottom". Now the son is right where God needs many of us to be before He will come to the rescue.

**1) A Coming to One's Self** The son comes to his senses and has a change of mind. Now he declares the true reality of his condition: that his father is good, that his condition is desperate, and that his actions are sinful. The son's heart has become duly prepared. And this is exactly the heart condition God requires before He will receive us. But, the son was still in the swine field, and he had to take action in light of his change in mind.

**2) A Repentance That Leads to Restoration** The son acted and turned towards his father and went to him. He leaves his old life in favor for a new life with his father. This is repentance in action, the son had a change of mind and a change of direction. Repentance is the necessary first step to reconciliation with God. The Bible says God desires our repentance, that Christ commands our repentance, and that Jesus came to call the sinner to repentance. The son's repentance leads to a confession of his sin before the father. And when we confess our sin before the Father, He will grant us forgiveness. Forgiveness is necessary for reconciliation to the Father to occur, because sin breaks fellowship, sin creates separation, and sin is offensive to God.

No matter where we are in life, there is a Father who is in heaven watching and waiting that we would turn to Him for rescue. God has made all the preparations necessary to receive those that are lost to Him. The call of Christ to the world remains: Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Let today be the day that you heed His calling.

# ***The Prodigal Son Part 3: A Seeking and Saving Father***

**Luke 15:11-32**



*Luke 15:20-24  
"So he rose up  
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 slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet, 23 and bring the fattened calf, slaughter it, and let us eat and celebrate, 24 for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' And they began to celebrate.*

.....  
The parable initially focused on a Selfish and Separated Son. Yet, when the son repented and turned towards his father, he received forgiveness and reconciliation. In this story about the redemption of fallen man, it is now through the father that Jesus reveals some great truths about God.

**1) A Seeking Father** Despite the son's sins against the father, this father never stopped seeking the son. "while he was still a long way off, the father saw him". That means the father

was continually watching and willing that his son would return in repentance. This is just like God the Father. He is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. The Bible tells us that God the Father has sorrow over the lost. Because every person, saved or lost, is valuable in the eyes of God. God values every human life so much that He gave His only Son to die for our sin.

**2) A Saving Father** It is the father who sought the son and it is the father who saved the son. When the son returned to his father he was covered in filth and nearly unrecognizable. This is just like humanity. Though we are made in the image of God, that image has been marred by sin. For the son or the lost to be restored in the sight of the Father, the marring effects of sin must be dealt with. We see that it is the father who has the filthy garments removed and replaced with the best robe. It is the father who seals and marks his son with the ring on his finger. And it is the father who orders that sandals be put on the son's feet. This is a beautiful picture of God's comprehensive redemption "from head to toe". When God the father redeems the lost it is comprehensive and permanent.

These truths about our Father can best be summarized by Jesus when he says: "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost." The fullness of that statement comes alive in the Parable of the Prodigal Son. In it we discover that God is seeking the redemption of man, that every person is valuable in the sight of God, and that when God saves, He does so completely. And may all the Glory be to God in the highest places.

# ***The Prodigal Son Part 4: Relationship and not Religion***

**Luke 15:11-32**



*Luke 15:25-32  
"Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 "And summoning one of the servants, he began inquiring what*

*these things could be. 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 became angry and was not wanting to go in, and his father came out and began pleading with him. 29 "But he answered and said to his father, 'Look! For so many years I have been serving you and never have I neglected a command of yours. And yet never have you given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends. 30 "But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.' 31 "And he said to him, 'Child, you were always with me, and all that is mine is yours. 32 'But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and is alive, and was lost and has been found.'"*

**1) A Close Separation** Even though the oldest son did not leave and go on a journey to a far away land, his presence near the father did not produce fellowship, only separation. This oldest son was clueless as to the deep desire of his father's heart, and so disinterested in his father's passion that every single servant in that estate knew it. When we do

not share God's interests, purposes, love, and desires, then that is not a relationship at all. That is complete separation and a lack of fellowship.

**2) An Independent Heart** Just like with the young son earlier, so also the oldest son has an independent heart. His heart is filled with pride and greed. His complaint to the father is focused on himself, and his eye is always set on material things. This son believes he is justified before the father. He claims his works, obedience, and holiness make him righteous. But if there is no relationship with God, then works, obedience, and holy living are meaningless in light of eternity.

**3) An Impassioned Plea** The parable ends with a plea from the father. The father wants his oldest son to share in the fellowship of redemption, of reconciliation, and of joy. And Jesus does not tell us what happens with the oldest son. But Scripture reveals that it is the attitude of this son, found in the Pharisees, that leads to Jesus's false conviction and death.

Our position and place in eternity is not guaranteed based on a list of things we have done or not done before God. Our place in eternity is only guaranteed based on the things that Jesus has done on our behalf. It is not religion that saves, it is relationship. Religion can get us close, and yet without a relationship with Christ, we remain so far away from God.

# ***The Seed Part 1: Spiritual Growth in the Kingdom of God***

## **Mark 4:26-29**



*Mark 4:26-29  
And He was saying, "The kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the soil; 27 and he sleeps and rises, night and day, and*

*the seed sprouts and grows - how, he himself does not know. 28 "The soil produces crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head. 29 "But when the grain is ripe, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."*

.....  
**1) Faith Starts with the Faithful** Our parable starts with man casting seed upon the soil. And why is he doing this? Because, there can be no expectation of a harvest if there is no work to cast the seed. Jesus has called all His disciples to be a witness of Him. When we witness for Christ, we are sowing the seed of salvation in the world. The faith of others starts with the faithfulness of believers to share the gospel of Christ.

**2) God Alone Saves** Though we are to be a witness of Christ, we do not cause the sinner to believe or to grow in faith. This is wholly the work of God. Sometimes we can get worried, frustrated, or sad when the sinner does not turn to God in

repentance and faith. This is understandable and common, but it is in those times of frustration and worry that God is calling us to trust Him. We are to focus on our witness and our prayers, and leave the rest to God, trusting that He is able. Because God alone saves.

**3) We are Colaborers with God** The beautiful reality is that God has chosen each one of us to partner with Him in His divine plan of redemption. We are colaborers with God in His kingdom work. Some may be called to different roles whether it is to sow the seed or to water the seed. But either way, we are to embrace these different roles and callings within the body of Christ. Our differences in our labor for the kingdom is not a cause for boasting or a cause for conflict within the church. The body of Christ comes together, with all of it's unique differences, into one unified whole, to bring forth a good work of God. We sow, God germinates, we water, God grows, in perfect unity and harmony. The end is the salvation of mankind.

We learn from Jesus that each of us has a role in God's good work. We are all called to be a witness for Christ, and others will be gifted uniquely to have a specific focus within the work of salvation. But in the end, God is calling us to be faithful and to trust Him. Because He alone brings forth life, growth, and maturity in the body of Christ. We ought to be the best version of our calling that we can be, and put our best effort forward knowing that our fellow workers with God.

# ***The Seed Part 2: Spiritual Growth in the Kingdom of God***

## **Mark 4:26-29**



*Mark 4:26-29  
And He was saying, "The kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the soil; 27 and he sleeps and rises, night and day, and*

*the seed sprouts and grows - how, he himself does not know. 28 "The soil produces crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head. 29 "But when the grain is ripe, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."*

.....

**1) Our Goal is Maturity** The parable concludes with a harvest. The implication is that as believers grow in the faith, God expects us to reach maturity. The purpose of our salvation is to bring forth fruit for the kingdom of God. Without maturity there can be no fruitful harvest.

**2) Growth Occurs in Stages** Jesus offers three stages of growth in the faith: first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain. So long as we remain among the world, Jesus envisions we are actively growing in the faith towards our end. Each stage of growth means different things and has different requirements. We ought to understand where we

are in our stage of growth and what we need to reach maturity.

**3) Not Everyone will Mature** The reality is that people will grow at different rates. One of the reasons some do not reach maturity is because we are actively stunting our own growth. The degree to which we cooperate with the Holy Spirit in His work to bring forth maturity in our lives will make all the difference in our growth.

John gives the church three ways that we can measure our growth in the kingdom: Our knowledge about the faith; Our behavior in light of that faith; and Our love as a condition of the faith. What we discover in Scripture is that the pinnacle of maturity in knowledge is wisdom, the pinnacle of maturity in behavior is holiness, and the pinnacle of maturity in love is service.

The conclusion in Scripture is that we are to examine our lives, and consider where we are at in our development and growth towards spiritual maturity. Whether we are a blade, a head, or a mature grain depends on the presence of wisdom, holiness, and service in our lives. Where we find ourselves lacking in the faith is exactly where we need to grow in our faith.

# ***The Seed Part 3: Spiritual Growth in the Kingdom of God***

## **Mark 4:26-29**



*Mark 4:26-29  
And He was saying, "The kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the soil; 27 and he sleeps and rises, night and day, and*

*the seed sprouts and grows - how, he himself does not know. 28 "The soil produces crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head. 29 "But when the grain is ripe, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."*

Jesus describes the Christian's growth in the Kingdom in terms of: first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain. We all grow towards maturity in the faith in different stages. The Apostle John further tells us three ways that we can measure our growth in the kingdom: our knowledge about the faith; our behavior in light of that faith; and our love as a condition of the faith. Where we are at in terms of knowledge, obedience, and love will help us understand where we ought to grow.

**1) What Do You Know About the Faith?** It is in our knowledge of Scripture that we can cultivate our relationship with God. We learn about His character, His will, and His purposes for our

lives. Knowledge alone is insufficient to build maturity. Rather, how we apply that knowledge in the best way, that builds up the kingdom of God, is the function of wisdom. Wisdom is the pinnacle of knowledge in the faith.

**2) How Do You Behave in Light of the Faith?** God's word commands the Christian to obedience. Our behavior in the world is the best indicator to others as to our maturity in the faith. When our behavior remains just like that of the world, we are unrecognizable as Christians. However, when our behavior is conformed to the image of Christ, the world sees Jesus by how we live. Holiness is the pinnacle of behavior in the faith.

**3) How Do You Love as a Condition of the Faith?** Love works upward towards God and outward towards others. Our highest act of love is service to God and others. When we serve others selflessly and sacrificially, then we are walking in the footsteps of Jesus. However, when we only receive service and never serve others, we are no different than a little child in the faith. Service is the pinnacle of love in the faith.

The conclusion in Scripture is that we are to examine our lives, and consider where we are at in our development and growth towards spiritual maturity. Whether we are a blade, a head, or a mature grain depends on the presence of wisdom, holiness, and service in our lives. Where we find ourselves lacking in the faith is exactly where we need to grow in our faith.

# ***The Seed Part 4: Spiritual Growth in the Kingdom of God***

## **Mark 4:26-29**



*Mark 4:26-29  
And He was saying, "The kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the soil; 27 and he sleeps and rises, night and day, and*

*the seed sprouts and grows - how, he himself does not know. 28 "The soil produces crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head. 29 "But when the grain is ripe, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."*

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**1) What Do You Know About the Faith?** It is in our knowledge of Scripture that we can cultivate our relationship with God. We learn about His character, His will, and His purposes for our

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# ***The Parable of the Vineyard Part 1: The Story of Israel Past and Future***

## **Matthew 21:33-46**



*Matthew 21:33-46  
"Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard and put a wall around it and dug a wine press in it, and built a tower, and rented it out to vine-growers and went on a journey. 34 "Now*

*when the harvest time approached, he sent his slaves to the vine-growers to receive his fruit. 35 "And the vine-growers took his slaves and beat one, and killed another, and stoned a third. 36 "Again he sent another group of slaves larger than the first; and they did the same thing to them. 37 "But afterward he sent his son to them, saying, "They will respect my son.' 38 "But when the vine-growers saw the son, they said among themselves, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.' 39 "And they took him, and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. 40 "Therefore when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vine-growers?"*

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Today, the whole world is asking the question: "Why should I care about Israel?" This is the wrong question to be asking, a better question is: "What is God's plan for Israel in the future?" Because the

answer to that question will make all the difference. Israel's past and future has and will be a mighty work of redemption by God.

**1) The Vineyard is Israel** God reveals to Isaiah that the house of Israel is the Lord's vineyard. This vineyard was carefully culled by God. He called forward His people through Abraham. He promised that His people would inherit a land, become a nation, and receive a savior. The land God gave to Israel as an inheritance spans from the Nile to the Euphrates. God's covenant with Abraham is irrevocable and eternal.

**2) The Slaves are the Prophets** From Moses to John the Baptist, God sent forth His voice in the nation through His prophets. Israel experienced a progressive decline in the nation from the time of the Exodus to the time of the captivity. The prophets would call the nation to repentance and restoration, yet the people would choose sin over righteousness and kill the prophets of God. Violence cannot stop the Word of God because His Word endures forever. The Word of God will continue to flow forth in the world like an eternal spring of water until the very end.

**3) The Son is Jesus** God promised to Israel, through David, that his offspring will sit on the throne in Jerusalem in an everlasting kingdom. The sad reality is that God's people hardened their heart to His voice and when this offspring of David, the very son of God appeared in their midst, they grew jealous, they grew greedy, and they killed the One who was foretold in the beginning. God's covenant with David is irrevocable and eternal.

Jesus asks a question: what is God going to do in light of Israel's past? They corrupted the vineyard, killed the prophets, and crucified the Son. What will happen to the promises of the land, the nation, the savior, and the King? God is not finished with Israel and has one more awesome work that He will do before the end comes; He will redeem His people Israel and fulfill His promises.

# ***The Parable of the Vineyard Part 2: The Story of Israel Past and Future***

## **Matthew 21:33-44**



*Matthew 21:40-44  
"Therefore when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vine-growers?" They said to Him, "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end, and will rent out the*

*vineyard to the vine-growers who will pay him the proceeds at the proper seasons." 42 "Jesus said to them, "Did you never read in the Scriptures, 'The stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief corner stone; this came about from the Lord, and it is marvelous in your eyes'? 43 "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation, producing the fruit of it. 44 "And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust."*

Jesus reveals that Israel's rejection of the Son of God will result in God's kingdom being given to another; the Church. However, it is in Daniel 9:24-27 that we learn God has one last period of time dedicated to the redemption of Israel after the fullness of the Church Age.

**1) Israel 's Unfinished Purposes:** In Daniel 9:24, God sets a timeline for Israel to achieve their purpose. 490 years are decreed for Israel to: be restored to God; receive the Messiah; and experience the fulfillment of all the promises God has made to the nation. Israel has yet to achieve

their purpose, and God has stopped His clock with Israel until the end of the Church age.

**2) Israel's Missed Call:** The angel Gabriel told Daniel exactly when the Messiah would come to the nation down to the exact day. Yet, when the Messiah appeared in the nation, they missed their call and rejected Christ. But there is one final call coming to the nation in the future.

**3) Israel's Partial Hardening:** Israel's rejection of Christ has ushered in the Church age as part of God's redemptive focus for the world. A partial hardening has occurred in Israel, and the time of the Gentiles is among us today. The angel Gabriel declares there is one more seven year period left in God's plan for Israel, and that period will start when the Church age is finished.

**4) Israel's Last Call:** There is one more seven year period left in God's plan for Israel to: be restored to God; receive the Messiah; and experience the fulfillment of all the promises God has made to the nation. This last call will occur at a time of great desolation and destruction. The anti-Christ will appear and deal with Israel in a harsh and deceptive manner. In the end, God will purchase for Himself a remnant of the nation, purified by a fiery trial, washed pure in the blood of Christ.

There are two truths we can learn from Daniel concerning Israel's future. First, God's prophecy concerning His people has been literally and perfectly fulfilled in the past, therefore the future will be likewise. Second, Gabriel ends his message with a time of desolation and destruction. However, Scripture declares there is one more hope for Israel in the end; The Kingdom. It is in the kingdom where all the promises of God to Israel will be fulfilled in the end.

# ***The Parable of the Vineyard Part 3: The Story of Israel Past and Future***

## **Matthew 21:33-44**



*Matthew 21:33-40*  
*"Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard and put a wall around it and dug a wine press in it, and built a tower, and rented it out to vine-growers and went on*

*a journey. 34 "Now when the harvest time approached, he sent his slaves to the vine-growers to receive his fruit. 35 "And the vine-growers took his slaves and beat one, and killed another, and stoned a third. 36 "Again he sent another group of slaves larger than the first; and they did the same thing to them. 37 "But afterward he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' 38 "But when the vine-growers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.' 39 "And they took him, and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. 40 "Therefore when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vine-growers?"*

**1) Israel's Past: The Parable Explained (Matt 21:33-40)** Jesus tells a simple parable concerning Israel's past. He speaks of a vineyard, which is the land of promise spoken of to Abram. He speaks of vine-growers, which are the people of promise that God led into the land through His servant Moses. Then Jesus reminds the crowd, that God

sent forth his prophets into the nation, and Israel did not receive them. Finally, God sent His son to Israel, and they killed the Son of God. This is the story of Israel's past, and Jesus asks a question: what is God going to do about all of this?

**2) Israel's Present: The Consequence Revealed (Matt 21:41-44)** In light of Israel's rejection of the Son of God, there will be real consequences. Jesus says the kingdom will be taken from Israel and given to the Church. All of these things were foretold by the angel Gabriel in Daniel chapter 9. However, Gabriel reveals that this is not the end for Israel, and that God has one more period of time left to redeem Israel. There is a final period of destruction decreed where God will purchased for Himself a remnant of the nation, purified by a fiery trial, washed pure in the blood of Christ.

**3) Israel's Future: The Promises Fulfilled (Matt 24:29-31)** Jesus reveals later in Matthew 24, that after the time of tribulation spoken of in Daniel 9, the great hope of Israel's future comes: Their King Returns for His People. It is during Christ's second coming that Jesus will gather His nation Israel from around the world. It is during this age of the Kingdom that Christ will fulfill all His promises to Israel.. Jesus will rule on earth sitting on the throne of David in Jerusalem. Jesus will gather His people into their land of promise. And Jesus will cause a time of flourishing for Israel to become a great nation. All these things were promised to Abram and David, and all these things will come to pass in the future Kingdom.

This is the future hope of Israel, when their King comes and restores all things. Everything that God has promised for His people Israel will come to pass. Their present suffering and affliction will not endure forever. God has a plan for His people Israel. In this present age, the entire world is in disorder and rebellion against God. But Christ is coming soon to restore all things, to return His creation back to His order for mankind, and to physically rule over all the nations for a thousand years before the end comes.