

Book	Psalms – Study 14
Topic	Introduction to Parables
Reference	Luke 10:25-37, Luke 14:7-24
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Parables basically comes from the Greek word 'parabole'. It is either a metaphor or simile. It is also an example story. It is a concrete depiction of a cosmic truth. Something as abstract and multidimensional and yet made in such a way for you to understand in concrete everyday terms. So, it is not like a fancy English definition, but it is actually a picture and pictures actually convey very deep spiritual truths. A lot of this spiritual truth will be hammered out later on when you read the New Testament in the epistles of Paul, but Jesus speaks in pictorial language because the people at that time were farmers, mostly illiterate. So, you can't give theologies treatises like Paul did where he writes in very eloquent rhetorical style. Jesus spoke to simple folks and so only concrete ideas. For us, we need to get behind those concrete ideas to look at deep spiritual truths.

Klyne Snodgrass described parables as "*the means Jesus used most frequently to explain the Kingdom of God and to show the character of God and the expectation that God has for humans*"

Parables have distinctive features. They are realistic but not necessarily real. That means when he tells you a story, it conforms to what really happens in the real world, but they are not real. For example, there was a parable of a man who was named Lazarus and lived outside rich man's house and then he died and then Lazarus went to heaven and the rich man went to hell and then they were trying to communicate with each other. This never happened. It was just Jesus telling you a story. It looks real but it is not real but is realistic enough for you to understand in concrete terms. So, you can't take a parable too far.

It is meant to shock, conflict and hold you in suspense. When you actually read this parable. If you think there is a very nice romantic story, then I think you missed it. When these parables are told, they are absolutely shocking.

It causes a reversal of thinking. Everything which the normal man thinks, when Jesus introduce the parable, it completely overturns what human beings think at the time.

Each parable will require interpretation. An interpretation is important because the interpretation is used in a way that is actually judgmental for the people who actually have the hearts and they want to know about the Kingdom of God and they receive it, they actually get the interpretation. The people who are hard of heart

and looking for an excuse, not to believe, the same parable will be so difficult that they will turn their hearts hardened. So, parables actually are used, is a way which God uses to judge people. Their response to the parable will determine their eternal life or determine their time in hell. So, in that sense, it requires interpretation.

Most parables will have one major point. There are some exceptions of course. Each parable requires a response. It is not something that you go home and think.

One of the ways people interpreting parables is allegorize. Interpretive practice of reading into parables elements of Church's theology that has little to do with Jesus' intent. So you can have fantastic allegorisation. Like saying Samaritan person mean something, the Jew represents Israel, this represent that. These sort of explanation are wrong. Each detail has separate metaphorical independent significance.

There are some exceptions.

Exception to the rule-Parable of sower. There are four different kinds of soil. Each soil represents each kind of person. Now that's an allegory. It is a very rare allegory, but it is allegory because it is okay to have this because Jesus actually explains later on which soil is what. Where Jesus doesn't explain you can't simply put in stuff yourself. It is very-very important.

GUIDELINES TO INTERPRETING PARABLES

- You have to look at the literary context.
- You have to look at the cultural and historical setting.
- You have to look at the wording, the plot and the who is the main character.
- You have to look at the need that prompted the parable. So that will be inline of the interpretation.
- Look at the main point and the relationship to the kingdom.

Parables are concrete picturizations of kingdom truths. So if you ask what is the kingdom of God, Jesus will not come down and give you five line definition. What he does is to paint you a series of pictures. The kingdom of God is the most important thing in your life. Many of us are members of the kingdom of God, some of us are not. Now to understand what the kingdom of God is, I am not going to give you a definition, I am going to give you a series of parables and through these series of parables you will begin to understand whether you are in the kingdom or you are out of the kingdom. So, it is very-very important. So, every time you have a parable, you have to think, how does this add to my knowledge of what the kingdom of God is.

So here we have the Good Samaritan. Everybody knows the story of the Good Samaritan. It is very popular. The word Good Samaritan is widely used in our world, like Good Samaritan Hospital, Good Samaritan Homes.

We need to look at the context of this parable. We have to look at what was the need that brought this parable about.

PARABLE OF GOOD SAMARITAN:

So, if you look at the parable of the Good Samaritan, you have to understand why did Jesus tell this parable?

Luke 10:25-29 (ESV) And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" **26** He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" **27** And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." **28 And he said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live."** **29** But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

This fellow ask question in order to test Jesus, which means he thinks that he is smarter than Jesus. When someone ask you a question of which he already knows the answer, in order to try to trap you. He was trying to trap Jesus because Jesus was talking about eternal life. The man was expecting Jesus say, no need you just follow me, don't worry about the law. If Jesus would have said that, all the religious leaders will come up and put under the authority, they were just waiting. If Jesus would have given an answer that circumscribes where the boundaries of the neighbor are, what will that achieve for this lawyer. Basically, he was trying to limit who is my neighbor and in response to this Jesus tells a story

Luke 10:30 (ESV) Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. **31** Now by chance a **priest** was going down that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. **32** So likewise a **Levite**, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. **33** But a **Samaritan**, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion.

So, in modern day English, one is a pastor, one is a council member and the Samaritan is worse than an outcast.

Who are Samaritans?

In 722 the Assyrians came and basically captured the Northern Kingdom. Then the Israelites and Assyrians were married, and they contaminated with their religion.

Why did the Jews hate the Samaritans?

They all think that they are unclean and it is not unusual, the American whites think that the Mexicans are all dirty. The politicians actually think that they are dirty and horrible and bring disease. So whenever you have got somebody else of a different race, they always talk about unclean, self-centered, unholy, treacherous.

THEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN JEWS AND SAMARITANS

Samaritans claim they have the original version of the Pentateuch while the version of the Jews was corrupted by during the exilic period. Samaritans claim they were the true "lost Israel" while Israel consider them unclean. Samaritans claim Mt Gerizim is the place Abraham sacrificed his son; not what the Jews claim.

EVIDENCE OF SAMARITAN CULTURE

They are enemies of the Jews, Josephus is a historian and he writes they are treacherous : Changing their status whenever circumstances suit them – Josephus, *Antiquities* 11.8.6

When the Samaritans saw the Jews under these sufferings, they no longer confessed that they were of their kindred, nor that the temple on Mount Gerizim belonged to Almighty God. This was according to their nature, as we have already shown. And they now said that they were a colony of Medes and Persians; and indeed they were a colony of theirs.

So, when it suited them, we are also Jew, when it doesn't suit them we are Persians. So, these are people who are called frogs. They have no loyalty at all. Their only loyalty is to the money and whoever will pay them.

- Dispute with the Jews in Egypt about their temple – Josephus, *Antiquities* 13.3.4
- Gave Antiochus title of a god & named their temple "Temple of Jupiter Hellenius" – Josephus, *Antiquities* 12.5.5
- Desecrated the outside of the Jerusalem temple – Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.2.2

So, they are not nice people. They are probably worse than anybody you meet today. This man is half dead and the Samaritan is the only one who stopped by and gave two coins. Here he is showing you a picture of real love. There is a priest, there is a Levite. These are the people who are most related to Israel. They should be the one showing love, instead they walk by. The Samaritan breaks social ethnic and racial boundaries. The person who hates Jews and the Jews hate them. He turns around and actually looks after that fellow. It is risky because this is a place where the robbers hit him. It seems to be against his nature. All Samaritans are rats, they

are horrible-horrible people. So, when you look at this, is it real. Have you met anybody like this in your life? No. So, if you look at it and understand the context then you will know this is shocking, absolutely shocking. Nobody can actually do that.

The whole question is, I cannot define my neighbor, I can only be a neighbor. So, there is no bound. That means you cannot say, you can only be a neighbor and he say, he wants to justify himself. This story is told in response to self-justification. He thinks he can love his neighbor and Jesus says, oh you think you can love your neighbor, let me tell you a story about this superman. After you heard about this superman, your mouth drop to your leg, nobody would want to pay for someone for two months the hospital bill, nor would you want to. It is an impossible story. Why did Jesus tell it?

It says real love begins when you cannot love. When you realize that you cannot love, it is when real love begins. The whole problem with this man, he thinks he can do a bit of charity, put some of his money aside, visit the old folks home off and on and he will be okay. That's the same with all of us. Now the gospel comes when you realize that real love begins when you cannot love. The level which God expect is so high. Jesus tells that if you want to love your neighbor that's the standard and the moment you tell you that you are basically totally devastated. Every other religion tells you, you can do it. The Buddhist will tell you, if you meditate long enough, you will be able to do it. The Confucius will tell you, if you follow a set of rules, you can do it, but you need to be devastated.

This is a testimony of a farmer who heard George Whitfield preach and when he heard this, he says

And my hearing him preach gave me a heart wound; by Gods blessing my old foundation was broken up, and I saw that my righteousness would not save me; ... Now this distress lasted two years -Poor Me- Miserable me. It pleased God to bring on my Convictions more and more and I was loaded with the guilt of sin. I saw that I was undone for ever.

The gospel must impact us so much so that we find that we cannot love. Our foundation of righteousness is broken up, it cannot save you. The effect of grace is that, it crushes you. So the extent of magnitude of love which is expected is so great, it crushes you, so that you are humble, you are repentant, you are not going to be able to judge your friends, because if the standard is a Samaritan you cannot reach it, your friend cannot reach it, nobody can reach it, so how can you judge your friend. If you can reach the Samaritan standard, then you judge other people, not nice, but if you put the standard of Samaritan none of us can pass it. If none of us can pass, how can we criticize other people. It must crush you, it must make you repentant, it must make you nonjudgmental and it starts to forgive other people, you know why, because if you forgive other people, because you will no longer be morally superior.

If you see yourself as an awful sinner like this, with that such a high level that you have got to reach then you are very forgiving to other people, simply because it devastates you completely. So, the effect of grace, Jesus is saying, it must destroy you. So, you are left humbled. No Christian should be judgmental. No Christian should look at another Christian and say, why the fellow like that. Then you better look at your own face, because that's the standard.

The effect of grace is that you are built up by the love of Jesus freely given to us on the cross. It is free, you fight, you are confident, you are hopeful because you are built up, because however horrible you are Jesus gives you that love, the cross shows you that he loves you and that builds you up, so you no longer depends on your own love, which you generate yourself. You depend on the love generated by the Lord Jesus Christ.

What's Your Real Motive for Being Altruistic?

There is a study in the University of Zurich. They actually look at MRI scans, looking at the flow of blood to certain parts of the brain and they discovered with 80% accuracy, whether you actually gave the money because you are altruistic or because you got something to gain.

Real love begins when you see Christ love for you for paying your debt. Real love begins when you believe that you are spiritually bankrupt. Jesus said blessed are those who are poor in spirit.

Reasons for prosocial behaviour-altruism

- Biological reasons-kinship
- Neurological reasons. When you help people it has been shown that you increase certain chemicals in your brain that make you feel shock like endorphins.
- Environmental. Some people give because of environmental reason. You come from a family who always like to contribute, help social issues and because your family brought you up that way you do that.
- Social norms-reciprocity
- Cognitive
 - Empathy
 - Relieve negative feelings

These are the things that people do good things but there are only two things, you can have fake fuel which is all the reasons for altruism, or you can have RON 97. RON 97 is the glory of what Jesus has done for you. If what empowers you to help other people, to love other people is basically because of what Jesus has done, because it has transformed your life, you were such a horrible fellow and yet he has shown you so much love and you become so humble and yet so confident, you will

do it. That's the power, but if you do it for all the fake reasons, burn out will happen. Jesus burned out for us on the cross 2000 years ago. When he burns out on the cross, he puts a flame inside your heart that cannot be put out. That's what the gospel is about.

Jesus said, how I am going to know who are the Samaritans in the long run. The judgment is there will be in the last day, the sheep and the goats and the sheep are

Matthew 25:35-36 (ESV) For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, **36** I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.'

Matthew 25:40 (ESV) And the King will answer them, Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

You cannot love God with all your heart, soul and mind and you turn to the next guy and say, you dirty fellow get away from me. It is impossibility. That's why in those days, if you were a priest and you look at this you will be so upset with Jesus Christ. It is shocking and this is something that we have to see, it actually cuts us to the heart that the only way we are going to start to love is that we see the love of Christ in our hearts and we do not look at other people.

We do things for our own selves, the people whom you love for will hate you, will crucify you. They crucified Jesus. That's real love. That's RON 97. If your love isn't a supernatural love that will love despite people tearing you apart, if you are looking for people to thank you then you are on fake fuel. RON 97 means unconditional love, extraordinary love, beyond expectation.

Now most of us can't do that but we can do that when we are walking closer and closer to Jesus Christ. Now I don't want you to wake up tomorrow and say after the sermon today I must go and find some stray cat somewhere, it doesn't happen this way. What it happens is, you need to get up tomorrow morning and repent before God and say, Lord I don't have the strength to do it, I am not a Samaritan, I can never be a Samaritan but I am humbled by your love and I am asking you to put your love into my heart and then you make a commitment to study the word of God and the more you read, the more convince you are going to be and then when opportunity comes, you will be able to do that.

THE GREAT BANQUET ON HUMBLING:

Luke 14:12-17 (ESV) He said also to the man who had invited him, "When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. **13** But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, **14** and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection

of the just.” **15** When one of those who reclined at table with him heard these things, he said to him, “**Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!**” **16** But he said to him, “A man once gave a great banquet and invited many. **17** And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is now ready.’ **18** But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, ‘I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.’ **19** And another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.’ **20** And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.’ **21** So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, ‘Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.’ **22** And the servant said, ‘Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.’ **23** And the master said to the servant, ‘Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. **24** For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.’”

So, this is a big banquet, the people whom He invited didn't come. So, he invites everybody outside, and the main point here is that the kingdom of God is a feast for the humble, very-very straightforward point. The perception of Christianity is that on some side people think Christianity is Austere religion or Prosperity gospel. Here the kingdom of God is described as a feast, because the central feature is joy. The first miracle Jesus ever did was wedding dinner. Joy is a feature of the kingdom. The kingdom of God is about joy, it is not about your long face, but the question is what causes the joy. That's the difference.

Here you have got a kingdom of God, Jesus taught about the Kingdom of God in Daniel

Daniel 7:13-14 (ESV) I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. **14** And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

So, there was an expectation of the Jews on Daniel that one day the kingdom will come and the Messiah will be presented with the kingdom and He will rule forever. So, it is in this particular context, this kingdom will be full of joy. The first thing you know is that the kingdom of joy is completely free. Nowadays if someone invites you for a party, it is very expensive for you too. When God invites you it is completely free, so you like that and you don't have to bring a gift.

So, it is prepared for you, it is received, it is not earned, you must come in humility. So, you can't buy the kingdom of God. You can't go and tell God, I bring some things

for you. I will do some good work and then may be I will be saved. Nowadays a lot of Christians think that we have to cleanup before God. You come as you are.

THE JOY COMES WITH A DELAY

This banquet is a foretaste, it is not complete until the last day. So, it takes humility to be able to accept that the kingdom of God is going to come one day but not yet right. It takes trust to believe in the delay. The joy that you experience now is just a foretaste of things to come.

THE JOY IS FOR COMMON PEOPLE

The parties in this world are dependent on the guest, but here God invites the poor, the crippled, lame and the blind. So, it tells you that kingdom of God is not for people who are very posh, kingdom of God is for the lame. Across the whole world, the poorest people are becoming Christians. The rich don't want to come to the kingdom of God, it is too common. They think that they are self-sufficient. In Corinthians Paul describes what Christians are like

1 Corinthians 1:26-29 (ESV) For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. **27** But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; **28** God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, **29** so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. **30** And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, **31** so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

God will choose the worse people in the world in order to show his glory. So, if you belong to that category, good news for you. The kingdom of God is for common people. If you are a drug addict, if you are an alcoholic, you are a rapist, you are an adulterer, you are a murderer. That's the one that will enter in the kingdom. If you are very nice and very moral and very righteousness, living in a big house, you are doing everything right and depend on yourself, there is no place for you. God's heart is with the common people.

"Evangelism can be and ought to be directed to responsive persons, groups, and segments of society. Correct policy is to occupy fields of low receptivity lightly" (McGavran 1990, 187-191).

It is a principle of evangelism that you go to places where people will receive the gospel.

THE KINGDOM JOY DEMANDS PRIORTY

At the time of the banquet, he gave an invitation and they all accepted. When he invited on the wedding dinner, they said they won't to come, but when it comes time for the dinner. In the parable the people gave very lame excuses for not coming. They are actually purposely stupid, so that when you look at it you laugh. When king calls you come that's what the kingdom of God is about. There is a priority.

Acts 13:49-52 (ESV) **49** And the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region. **50** But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district. **51** But they **shook off the dust from their feet** against them and went to Iconium. **52** And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

The word of God is preached and the people who were not receptive Paul shakes his dust off. If you don't want the gospel, you are not bothered with the gospel then you are basically left behind. The kingdom of God comes with a priority.