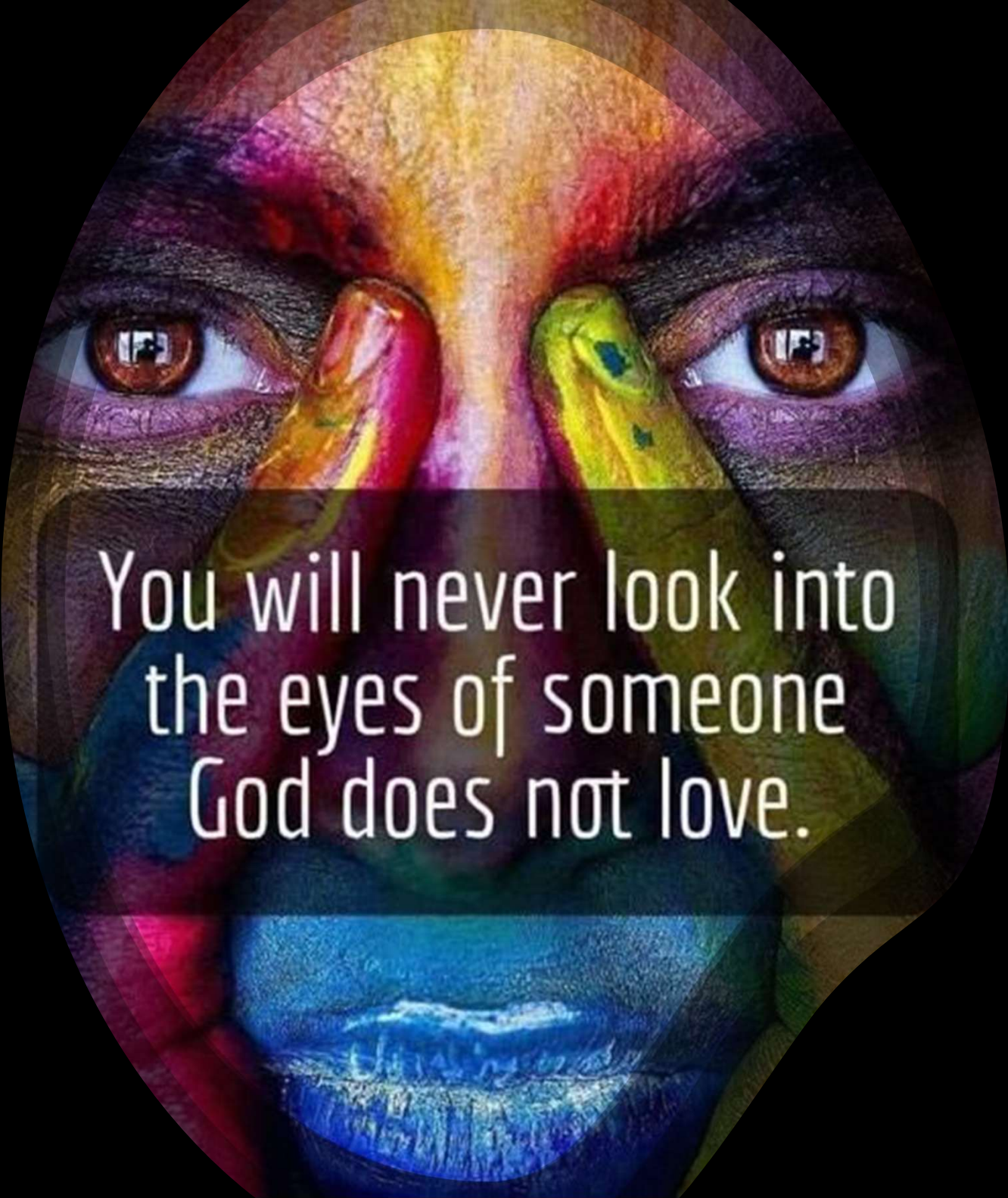




You will never look into
the eyes of someone
God does not love.

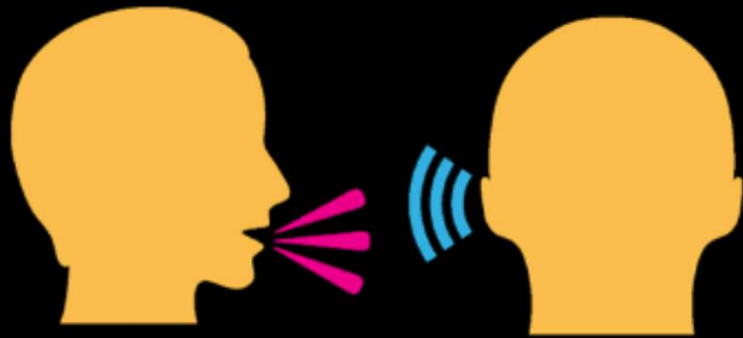
The Gospel of Luke

- Tuesday - The Parables of the Lost
- Wednesday – Reversal
- Thursday - Today!



- Getting started
- How to read a parable
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- Luke 15 – The Lost Sheep
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- What are you trying to do when you teach?

Or

- What is the purpose of teaching, or preaching?

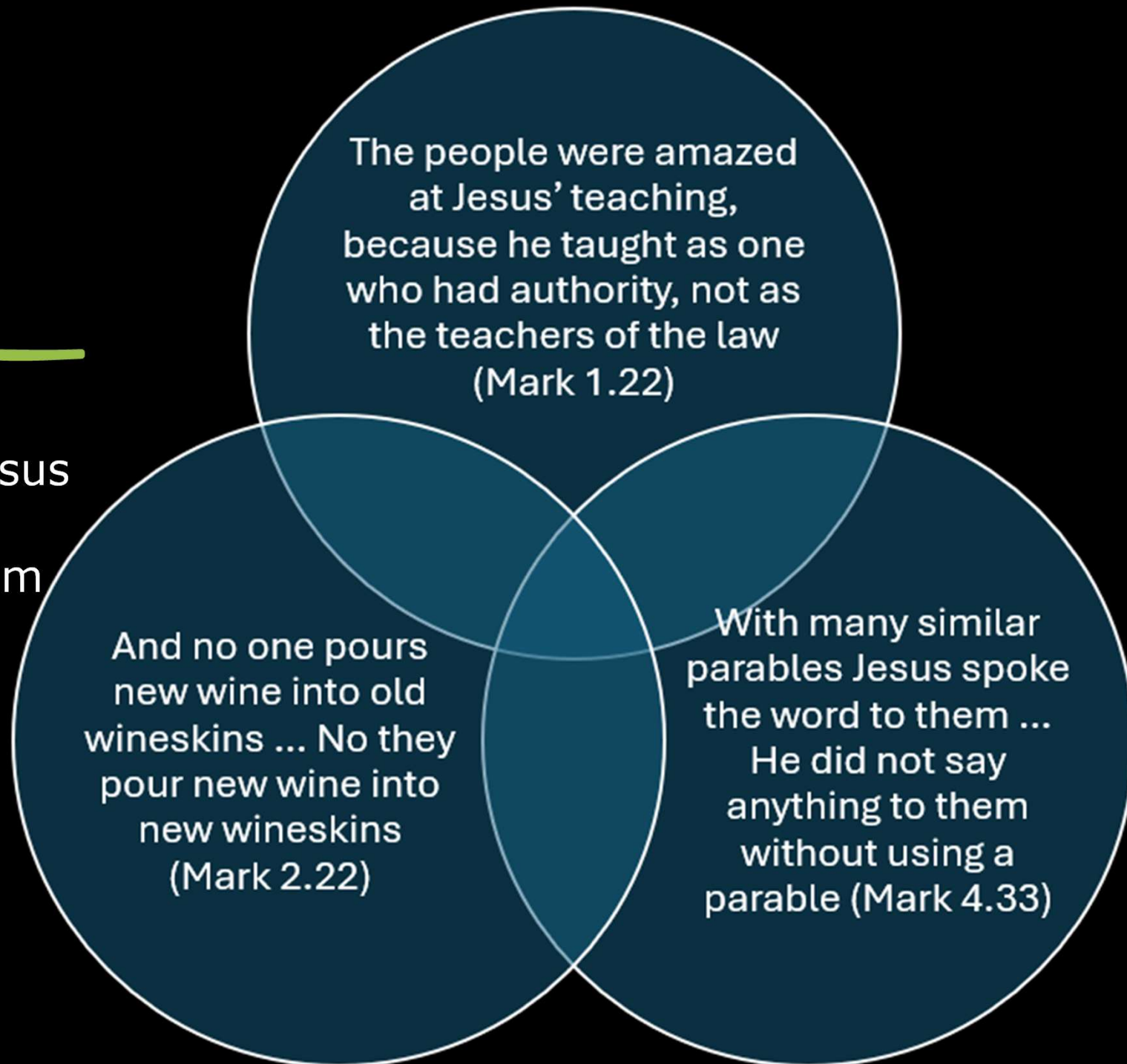


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Jesus' Parables

- Parables are distinctively Jesus
- A new medium for a new message?



What you say
has IMPACT not
just MEANING

There is more
to
communication
than just the
meaning
of what you say.



Parables are

Not:

- An earthly story with a heavenly meaning
- Theology made simple for the simple
- An illustration
- Reducible to a doctrinal point

Deliberately

- Open-ended
- Ambiguous
- Leaves you dissatisfied, wanting more
- Not straight forward - just like God and life!

Is the idea that parables don't have a simple 'meaning' and are even ambiguous, worrying?

Is it good or bad that I am comparing the way parables work to jokes?

The Duff method for parables

Do Not:

- Assume Jesus is using a homely illustration of normal life.
- Twist the text so it fits what was normal.
- Be pleased that Jesus is describing God as being just like us!
-

Do:

- Look for where the parable **diverges** from normal life.
- This is where you will find the meaning – because God is **not** like us!

Try it out!

The Sower – Mark 4.3-9

‘Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times.’

Then Jesus said, ‘Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.’

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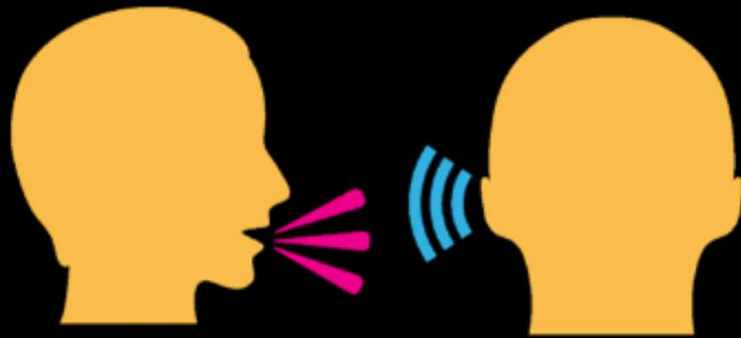
No farmer farms like that!	Reckless sowing - wasteful and unstrategic.
Refusing to focus the seed on the likely places.	God's way of doing mission?

The Duff method for parables

Take another like the
Tenants in the Vineyard

- Where does this diverge from real life?
- How is God different from us?
- What does that mean for us?

Try it out!



- Should we teach not to make things clear but to disturb and make people work it out for themselves?

Or

- If the Sower gives us a picture of God's mission being wasteful, what difference does that make to you?



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The Context - Luke 15.1-2

- Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering round to hear Jesus. ² But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, 'This man welcomes sinners, and eats with them.'

The Context - Luke 15.1-2

- Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering round to hear Jesus. ² But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, 'This man welcomes sinners, and eats with them.'

Luke 15 is Jesus justifying
his way of doing mission!



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The Lost Sheep - Luke 15.3-7

Then Jesus told them this parable: ⁴ 'Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? ⁵ And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders ⁶ and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbours together and says, "Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep."

⁷ I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who do not need to repent.

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No shepherd behaves like that!

Emotional language for God. God's joy!

Picture of risk; not preserving what you have.

A God who has more compassion than sense?



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The Lost Coin - Luke 15.8-10

'Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Doesn't she light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? ⁹ And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbours together and says, "Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin." ¹⁰ In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.'

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Gender Pairs	Urgency, not waiting for daylight!
Emotional language for God. God's joy!	You can't blame the coin!



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The Lost Son – Luke 15.11-24

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 round 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.

Father not behaving as expected	Irrational welcome and joy despite the past
God doesn't care about the past	God doesn't care about looking stupid

The wrong titles?

These parables aren't about the sheep, the coin or the son.

They are about the shepherd, the woman and the father.

Because they are about God not us!

The parable of the searching shepherd

The parable of the searching woman

The parable of the running father



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The Finale – The Elder Brother – Luke 15.25-32

‘Meanwhile, the elder 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 elder 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.””

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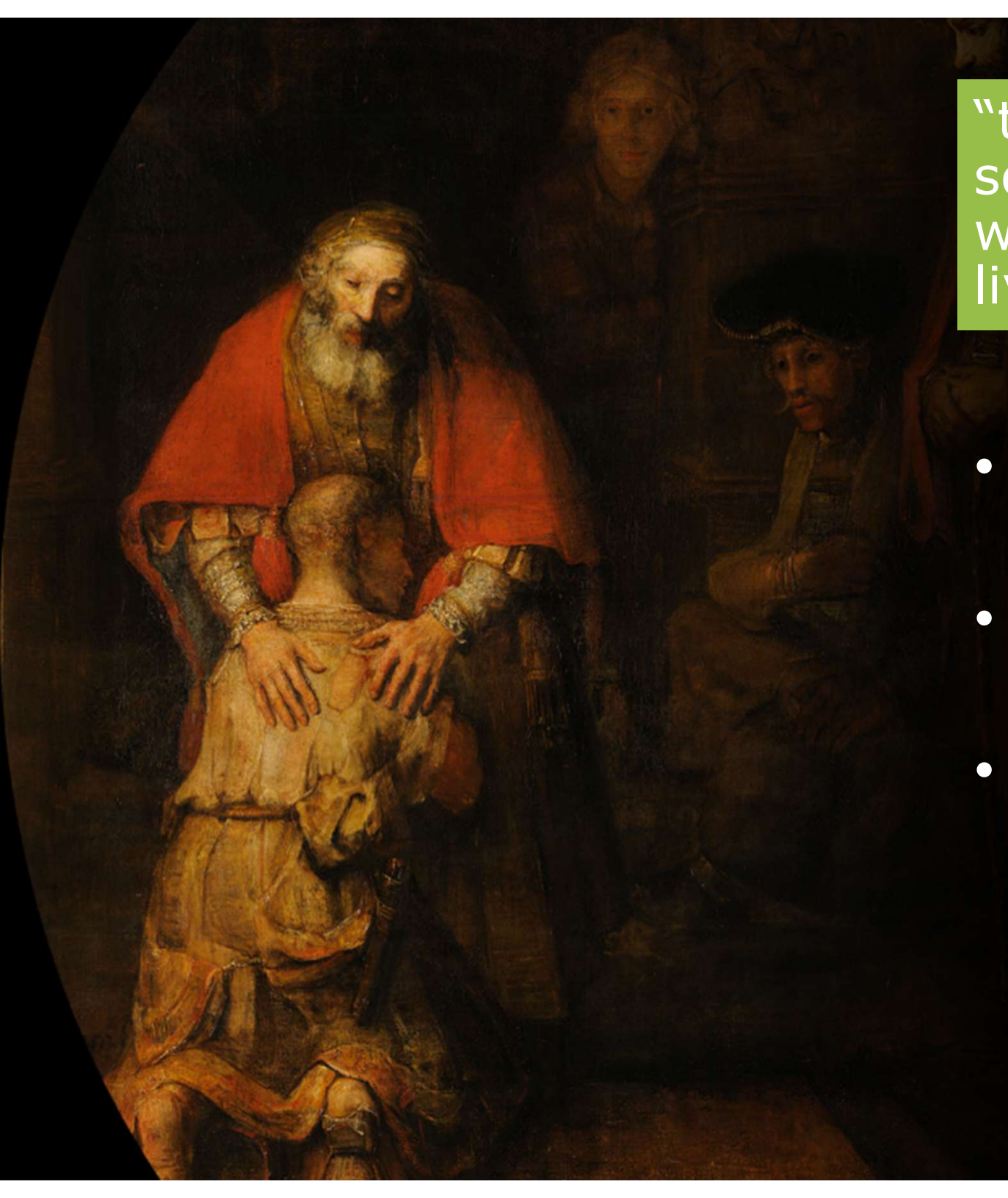
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Back to the context –
attacking the moaners

Who knew the Father’s
heart?

Big contrast – focus on
today or the day after?

Service turning to duty?

A painting depicting a scene of medical examination. A man with a long white beard and a red cloak is being examined by a doctor. The doctor is wearing a white tunic and a black cap, and is holding the man's arm. A woman in a dark dress is standing in the background, looking on. The scene is set in a dimly lit room with a dark background.

“there he
squandered his
wealth in wild
living”

- What have you given up?
- What do you still hanker after?
- How have you wasted what God has given you?



“When he
came to his
senses”

- What brought you here?
- When did you come to your senses?
- What makes you stop and hear God?

A religious painting, likely a detail from a larger work, showing a man with a long white beard and a red robe placing a ring on the finger of a kneeling man. The kneeling man is wearing a simple, light-colored tunic. In the background, another man stands, looking on. The scene is dimly lit, with the red robe being a prominent color.

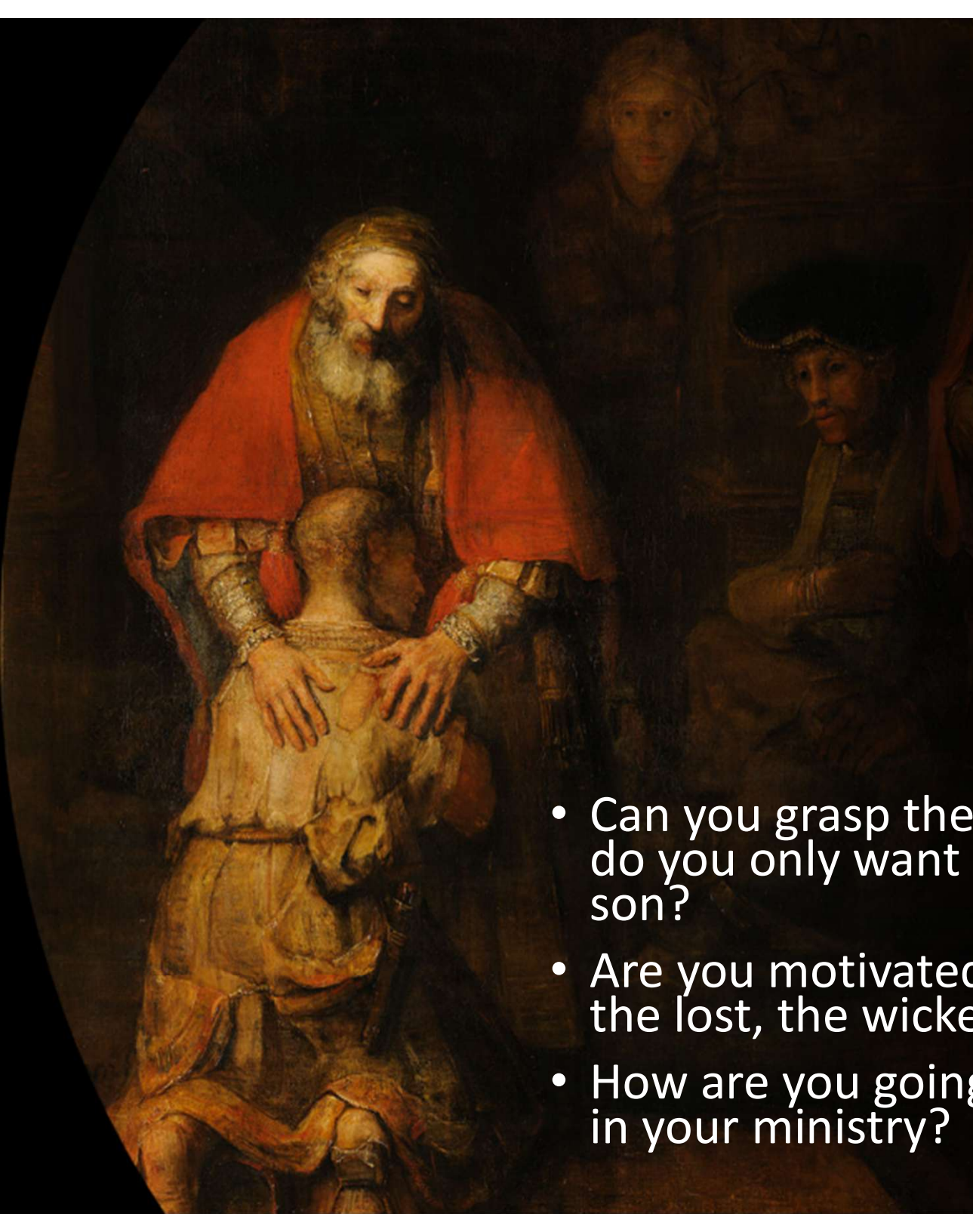
Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate.

- Can you hear God's celebration over you?
- Do you know that God delights in you?

A painting depicting a scene of spiritual guidance or blessing. In the foreground, a man with a long white beard and a red cloak stands, placing his hands on the shoulders of a kneeling man. The kneeling man is wearing a simple, light-colored tunic. In the background, another man stands, looking on. The scene is dimly lit, with the red cloak being a prominent color.

“Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command.

- Do you resent ‘slaving away’ for the Church?
- How do you stop service becoming slavery?



while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him.

- Can you grasp the role of the father ? Or do you only want to see yourself as the son?
- Are you motivated by compassion for the lost, the wicked and the annoying?
- How are you going to 'act like his father' in your ministry?



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The Context - Luke 15.1-2

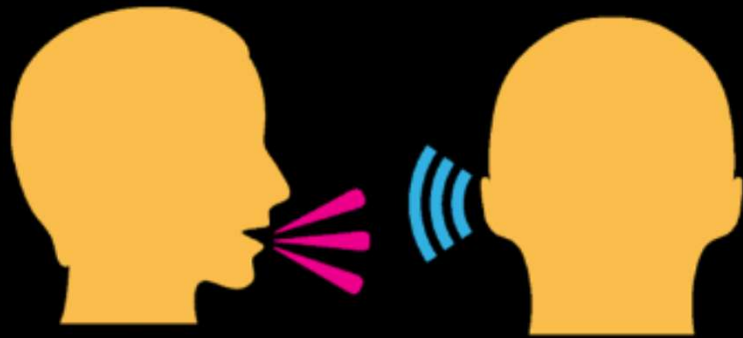
Luke 15 is Jesus justifying his way of doing mission!

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Jesus responds by telling stories of what God is like.

God who

- has more compassion than sense.
- doesn't care why the coin is lost
- forgets the past and gives up his dignity in his joy
- prioritises welcome today, fairness is for tomorrow



- Can you stop seeing yourself as the sheep, coin and son and act as the shepherd, woman and father?
- What difference would that make in your life and ministry?



Jeremy Duff & Joanna Collicutt McGrath



Meeting Jesus
human responses
to a yearning god

**PETER'S
PREACHING**
THE MESSAGE OF MARK'S GOSPEL
JEREMY DUFF

