

The Parables of Jesus – Prayer (Week 3)

Review:¹

God wants to be known and He wants his purposes to be known. He has used written human language according to the rules of a chosen literary form to make Truth known. Study of His word, therefore, must be done grammatically-historically under the unifying redemptive-historical filter.²

One such form, which Jesus made significant use of, is the parable.

Guiding principles to keep in mind while studying parables:

1. A parable's details must be treated differently than a narrative's details. (For example in asking *why is _____ the case?*)
2. Parables teach a primary, generally singular, lesson or truth.
3. There were two sets of original authors and audiences: Jesus' and the Gospel writer's.

The flow of study for this class:

1. Seek to determine what prompted the parable to be given.
2. Note the parable's natural meaning.
3. Ascertain the main truth being illustrated. (Sometimes it's explained directly in the text.)
4. Validate the main truth with direct teaching from scripture. ("The analogy of scripture")
5. Note the actual or intended response of the hearers.
6. Consider together how God, by his Spirit, desires to use this truth to help make us complete, lacking in nothing. (2 Tim 3:17)

Luke 18:2-8:

1. What prompted the parable: Luke gives this parable in the context of Christ describing the last days, when faith is rare and wickedness great. The connection isn't as explicit as in some passages, but Luke seems to use the occasion to teach on prayer. He does this throughout much of his Gospel presentation (Chs. 3, 6, 10, 11, 18, 21, 22), in particular highlighting Christ's example in it (Chs. 3, 5, 6, 9, 10, 22, 23), and he does so again here in this context. His purpose in writing this parable was to teach Theophilus a particular lesson of Jesus: *you ought always to pray and not lose heart* (vs. 1).
2. Natural meaning: There was a man who had the authority and responsibility of judge who also wasn't motivated by right and wrong or by reasons of utility and status. He was repeatedly approached by a powerless widow seeking justice against her adversary. The

1. Parables of Jesus Week 1 Introduction

2. Marshall, Steve (2025). "Grasping God's Word." Wednesday night discipleship course.

3. Bock, D. L. (1994). Luke (Lk 11:1–13). InterVarsity Press.

judge did not respond to her entreaties for some time because he didn't care what God thought or what she and others thought. Eventually, however, for his own self-interest, he gave her what she wanted. ("[She] keeps bothering me....she will...beat me down.")

Things that simply *are*, *are not*, and are *unknowable* because this is a parable, not narrative: What was her cause/case? Was he a good judge? Was he a bad man?

3. The main truth being illustrated: (Discuss) God will give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night. He won't long delay but will give them justice speedily. Keep faith.
4. Is this taught elsewhere in scripture? Ex: Romans 8:33-39; Isaiah 63:4; Rom 12:19
5. Actual or intended response of the hearers: None noted
6. For our sanctification: (Discuss) Some thoughts: sometimes we suffer injustice in small or large ways. Someone is mean, vindictive, or outright evil toward us. It can make us feel helpless and hopeless. But to give into that hopelessness will likely cause us to do one of two things: to give up on doing what's right and joining others in doing wrong, or to take the task of vindication into our own hands as actual or relational vigilantes. That is to say, "God can't or won't, so it falls on me to do his job for him. I will be like God." But Christ urges us: don't despair of receiving His justice. It WILL come. God has obligated Himself to providing that; throw yourself repeatedly at His feet, urging Him to do for you the thing that His position requires Him to do and trusting that He will do that at the right time.

Luke 11:5-8

1. What promoted the parable: Like in Luke 18, this appears to be primarily another point at which Luke emphasizes for Theophilus Jesus' teaching on prayer. It's not explicitly tied a sequence of precipitating events. The passage immediately prior recounted Jesus' time with Mary and Martha. Luke then moves into a lesson on prayer, starting with conveying "the Lord's prayer" in a different context than in Matthew. (Note Pastor Steve's comment that he believes the sermon on the mount was really the message he more or less preached throughout his entire ministry.) Jesus gives an example of how to pray, and then He builds on that with this parable.
2. Natural meaning: Supposed you had company suddenly arrive at midnight but because you weren't expecting them you didn't have anything to feed them. (It is assumed in a culture of generous hospitality that this would be absolutely humiliating.) In desperation, you run to a friend's family, knock on their door and urgently ask for help hosting this unexpected guest. You know he will help you, for not just one but two reasons. At the bottom of it all, even beneath the obligation of friendship, he will help you because of the "shameless audacity" or persistence. It is *absolutely certain* that he will help you.

3. What is the main truth being illustrated? (Discuss)
4. Is this taught elsewhere in scripture? Examples: John 14:16-18, Heb 4:14-16, 7:25
5. Actual or intended response of the hearers: None noted
6. For our sanctification: This comes on the heels of the disciples asking the Lord to teach them to pray. It's interesting that they base their prayer on an explicit sense of identity as His disciples (like John the Baptist and his disciples.) The interchange between Christ and His disciples begins with their asking him to teach them to pray. Jesus focused His example "like a laser beam on expressing a dependent approach to God ... [and] a desire for holiness, for God's ruling presence, for a life of forgiveness, [recognizing] that provision and spiritual protection come from God. It asks God to work on the heart and seeks to be submissive to his will."³ This community prayer—one that it was assumed would be unique to disciples of Jesus, which they would pray—was characterized by true dependence on the Lord for everything "from food to forgiveness."³

Like in this parable, we may face the prospect of doing wrong toward or failing to truly love others (Golden Rule) or approach Christ with "shameless audacity," asking for help to love others well even when it's hard. Christ reminds us it's not shameless audacity to desperately seek His help. Your loving Father absolutely delights in providing for you!

Also, the prayer in this parable is presented as shameless boldness. It reminds me of the leper in Matthew 8 who violates cultural expectations, the law, and risks making people very uncomfortable to come to Christ for healing. This was bold and shameless. But he truly believed, and his belief compelled him. He believed Jesus was the Christ and therefore he just *had* to go to Him—his faith made it virtually impossible not to.

May we have this same compelling faith to go to Christ no matter the perceived risk or rejection or shame, no matter the sense that it might be inconvenient for him or feel presumptuous, no matter what others might think. Let us act in faith of the same *type* as saving faith, totally depending on Him rather than our own resources, ingenuity, or qualities to meet our spiritual needs, help us forgive, and abstain from sin. He will answer give us what He need. It's certain.

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