

## The Parables of Jesus

If we know anything at all about the teaching of Jesus we know that he taught in parables. Many of Jesus's parables are very familiar to us and have entered into our Western culture. Not everybody will know the story of the Good Samaritan in every detail, but we all know what is meant when somebody is called a *Good Samaritan*. Other phrases from the parables, such as a *pearl of great price*, or a *house built on sand*, are part of our every day life.

But we are not always quite so clear about exactly what a parable is – nor about how many parables of Jesus are recorded in the gospels. Some parables are extended stories, like the Prodigal Son or the Good Samaritan; some are brief sayings such as the parable of the Leaven. What they all have in common is that they are stories and sayings rooted in the every day experience of the people Jesus was speaking to. The parables use concrete examples from human life to reveal something about God and how to live well in accord with God's will.

The parables have many themes but are often grouped into several collections which have a similar focus – parables about the kingdom, parables about prayer, parables about the end. But there are others that are not easy to categorize.

So how many parables are there in the gospels? Opinions vary, but here are thirty-eight. Some of them are unique to one gospel, some are common to two or three gospels (John's gospel has no parables at all). Where two or more evangelists share the same parable they sometimes have very similar versions and sometimes quite different versions. Some commentators would leave out one or two from this list, others might find more.

### How to use this study guide

Each day offers reflections on one parable. Where the parable is common to more than one gospel references for all the versions are provided. It is worth looking at all three versions as they can offer different insights into the teaching of Jesus. There is much to be said for reading the parables several times. But if time is pressing just look at what you can each day.

A reading and reflection is offered for every day during Lent, but each day is entirely independent of the other days so missing the odd day will not matter terribly. Readings appropriate to the day are offered on Sundays and from Good Friday to Easter Day.

The parables are arranged in groups according to the themes of the parables. Some of the parables may fit into more than one theme so the grouping is, at times, a little arbitrary.

Also offered are daily topics for prayer arising from the parable.

Depending on you and how you use this guide it should take as little as ten or fifteen minutes or, if you wish, much longer. Use it as suits you best.

This guide is available for download on the Benefice website <http://fourcrosses.weebly.com/lent-2013.html>. You can also download a copy of all the readings for this guide and join in a discussion of the parables on a forum at <http://fourcrosses.weebly.com/forums.html#/>.

Date	Reference	Notes	Prayer
<b>Parables of the Kingdom of Heaven</b>			
A number of Jesus's parables begin with the words, "The kingdom of heaven is like ..." Jesus spoke often of the kingdom and when he spoke of it he made it sound as if it was something to look forward to, but he also made it feel a present reality. These parables may sometimes seem to be looking forward, but they often give us a challenge to make the world more like God's kingdom.			
Day 1 13 <sup>th</sup> Feb	<b>The Sower</b> Mt 13.3-9; Mk 4.3-9; Lk 8.5-8	<p>We start with one of Jesus's most familiar parables – and also one that occurs in all three gospels – the parable of the sower. The meaning of the parable is not hard to grasp, but that's one of the points of using parables. The explanation provided in the gospels is unnecessary and probably does not come from Jesus but from the early Church. This is a parable about how the kingdom grows – here and there where the seed is sown but not everywhere. Where it does grow it grows impressively, <i>yielding thirty and sixty and a hundredfold</i>.</p> <p>Like the first Christians we should expect growth but not be surprised or disappointed if not everything we do bears fruit.</p>	Lord, help me to grow in love and faith in you; may I bear fruit to your glory.
Day 2 14 <sup>th</sup> Feb	<b>The Hidden Treasure</b> Mt 13.44	<p>For such a short parable – just one verse – there are many layers of meaning here. And, again, it is not hard to see what this means. It is spoken to the disciples alone because they are the ones who know what Jesus is about. The kingdom is hidden, rather than out in the open. The disciples know about the kingdom; as yet the crowds do not. The disciples should know how valuable they treasure they have is. It is so valuable that it is like a poor man who finds treasure buried, reburies it and sells everything he has to buy the field.</p> <p>What value do we put on God's kingdom?</p>	Lord Jesus, make me ready to seek and find you; and having found you to remain firm in the faith.
Day 3 15 <sup>th</sup> Feb	<b>The Pearl</b> Mt 13.45-46	<p>Here is a second parable similar to the last, which it immediately follows in Matthew's gospel. Perhaps Matthew records both parables to emphasize the point, or maybe it's that the merchant is clearly wealthier than the man in the previous parable. Matthew is keen to emphasize that the kingdom is for all – rich and poor alike. It is so valuable that is worth giving up everything to be able to enter it. And, as in the previous parable, it requires action on our part to gain the kingdom. [cont'd]</p>	Lord give me grace to give up everything to follow you, so that I may put all my trust in you.

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		What have you, or would you, sacrifice to enter God's kingdom?	
Day 4 16 <sup>th</sup> Feb	<b>The Growing Seed</b> Mk 4.26-29	This parable is about how the kingdom grows and comes to fruition. Here the kingdom sounds as if it is present in the world now rather than something to be hoped for in the future. The kingdom appears to have a life of its own and requires little work from us to grow it. Is it God or us who does the planting? The final verse suggests that it is God with its suggestion of a time of judgement at the end.  What signs do we see of the growing of God's kingdom now?	Holy God, help me see the sign of your presence in the world around me.
Lent 1 17 <sup>th</sup> Feb	<b>The Temptation in the Wilderness</b> Luke 4.1-13	Jesus fasted in the wilderness for forty days. Our Lenten fast is also forty days. Jesus shows us how to resist temptation by the way he is so immersed in the scriptures that his relationship with God is absolutely assured. For us too our ability to overcome temptation is related to how well we know God.  What will you do this Lent to get to know God better?	Heavenly Father, your Son battled with the powers of darkness, and grew closer to you in the desert: help us to use these days to grow in wisdom and prayer that we may witness to your saving love in Jesus Christ our Lord.
Day 5 18 <sup>th</sup> Feb	<b>The Mustard Seed</b> Mt 13.31-32; Mk 4.30-32; Lk 13.18-19	Matthew and Mark make the point about the smallness of the seed and the size of the shrub that grows from the seed. Luke ignores this altogether. But all three evangelists agree that the kingdom is like a mustard seed which grows to become a tree and which provides shelter for the birds. This suggests that the kingdom is a refuge for us, a place where we receive all that we need for our (spiritual) life.  Where do you find spiritual refuge?	Loving God, shelter me in the safety of your kingdom.
Day 6 19 <sup>th</sup> Feb	<b>The Leaven</b> Mt 13.33; Lk 13.20-21	This seems such a simple parable – we all know what yeast (leaven) does when mixed with flour. But how does it apply to the kingdom? This parable is closely paired with the previous parable (of the mustard seed) and they should probably be read together. If so you get a sense of the kingdom,	Lord, let me make a difference in your world.

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		although being small and unnoticed having an effect in the world beyond their size and apparent significance. Like the yeast and the mustard seed the kingdom has a profound effect in the world. Who do you know who is making a real difference in the local community?	
<b>Parables of Loss and Redemption</b>			
Two of these three parables appear exclusively in Luke's gospel. They are parables about God's faithfulness and desire to seek out the lost. They fit well with Luke's view that Jesus came to bring hope to the outcast and disadvantaged, who might be regarded as <i>the lost</i> .			
Day 7 20 <sup>th</sup> Feb	<b>The Lost Sheep</b> Mt 18.10-14; Lk 15.4-6	<p>Although this parable appears in both Matthew and Luke it has a different context in each gospel. Matthew has it in a debate with his disciples about who is the greatest and the need to become like a child to enter the kingdom of heaven. Luke has it in a debate with the Pharisees about eating with sinners and it is the first in series of parables about God's concern for the lost. In both cases, thought, the parable is about God's desire not to lose any who might be saved – sinners or <i>little ones</i>.</p> <p>In Luke the parable is followed by Jesus's saying, <i>there will more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who need no repentance</i>. How ready are we to accept those whose lives are in need of repentance?</p>	Caring Lord, seek out the lost and bring them home.
Day 8 21 <sup>st</sup> Feb	<b>The Lost Coin</b> Lk 15.8-9	<p>This parable, which is the second in Luke's series of parables about the lost, has many similarities to the parable of the lost sheep – especially in the context that Luke uses. One coin is lost and the woman is concerned that none should be lost and so turns the house upside down until she finds it. God cannot accept that any, no matter how apparently insignificant, should be lost.</p> <p>Do you think of anybody as being "beyond redemption?"</p>	Lord Jesus, help me truly to rejoice over those who have been found by you.
Day 9 22 <sup>nd</sup> Feb	<b>The Lost (Prodigal) Son</b> Lk 15.11-32	The third parable in the series about the lost is much more complex and lengthy than the two previous stories. It is the longest of all the parables in the gospels and the most complex of them all. Having said that, the meaning of the parable is quite simple. The lost (prodigal) son eventually	Welcoming God, when I turn back to you invite me into your kingdom.

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		<p>comes to his senses and returns to his father who welcomes him with open arms. So far the parable fits easily with the two previous parables about the lost. But there is also the story of the second son. He is resentful of his father's generosity to his wasteful, but repentant brother. It looks as if this character might be aimed directly at the Pharisees (and perhaps us sometimes). Like the older brother they appear to resent God's willingness to forgive and accept the lost who return. They need to learn the same lesson as the elder brother.</p> <p>Which are you more like – the lost son or the older brother?</p>	
<b>Parables about Love and Forgiveness</b>			
		<p>It might appear strange that these parables are the only ones about love and forgiveness, themes we focus on quite a lot as modern Christians, and that they do not appear in all of the gospels. But the evangelists were largely concerned with the kingdom and with an imminent end of the world and the second coming of Christ. It is therefore not surprising that it is Luke (the latest of the Synoptic gospels) which is most concerned about how to live a good Christian life as one who cares for neighbour.</p>	
Day 10 23 <sup>rd</sup> Feb	<b>The Good Samaritan</b> Lk 10.30-37	<p>This well known parable is another lengthy story in Luke's gospel only. The general thrust of the story is clear – love your neighbour – but there are many other plots here too: the significance of the fact that it is a Samaritan, rather than the priest, or Levite who helps the man; the care from the Samaritan which goes beyond even might be considered sufficient – not just dressing the wounds but taking him to the inn, paying the innkeeper and promising to make up any shortfall when he returns all suggest something of the boundless generosity of God to those in need.</p> <p>The parable is a challenge to us; who is our neighbour? How often do we ignore the needs of our neighbour and “walk by on the other side?”</p>	Give me grace Lord to know who my neighbour is and to show them your love.
Lent 2 24 <sup>th</sup> Feb	<b>Our Citizenship is in Heaven</b> Philippians 3.17-4.1	<p>This short passage from Paul's letter to the Philippians almost exactly sums up what Lent is all about. He encourages the Christians to observe those who can set a good example of living the Christian life so that they can be sure that they have <i>citizenship in heaven</i>. Those who live earthly lives find praise and glory only in earthly things and in human praise. Christians should seek to find their glory in the cross of Jesus. If we follow</p>	Almighty God, by the prayer and discipline of Lent may we enter into the mystery of Christ's sufferings, and by following in his Way

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		the example of Jesus we will receive a great salvation. According to Paul we are either in or out – there is no middle ground. How will your Lenten discipline help you to “glory in the cross of Christ?”	come to share in his glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Day 11 25 <sup>th</sup> Feb	<b>The Two Debtors</b> Lk 7.41-43	Jesus tells this parable to Simon the Pharisee who is critical of Jesus for allowing the woman with a bad reputation to wipe his feet with her tears. Simon says, “If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him—that she is a sinner.” The implication of the parable, and of what Jesus says to Simon following it, is that the woman is more repentant, and more forgiven than the self-righteous Simon. The evidence is in the love she shows Jesus. How aware are you that Jesus has forgiven you your sins?	God of forgiveness help me to know my need of forgiveness and to turn to you in love.
Day 12 26 <sup>th</sup> Feb	<b>The Unforgiving Servant</b> Mt 18.23-25	This parable is almost a reflection on part of the Lord's Prayer – <i>forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us</i> . The servant who has been released from his debt was duty bound to show the same forgiveness to his fellow servants who owed him a debt. Unfortunately, although he has been forgiven much (a ridiculously large amount in fact) he sees an opportunity to enrich himself by calling in the debts owed to him. It would seem that forgiveness does not completely draw a line under the past – it is a challenge to be more forgiving in turn. Does having been forgiven affect the way you behave in the future?	Father, forgive me my sins, as I forgive those who sin against me.
<b>Parables about Prayer</b>			
This again is a surprisingly small group. Jesus taught about prayer, but less often in parables. Again it is Luke with his interest in encouraging good Christian practice who records them.			
Day 13 27 <sup>th</sup> Feb	<b>The Friend at Night</b> Lk 11.5-8	We can all relate to the friend who is persistent in seeking our help – we know we will give in in the end. Jesus follows this parable with the saying, <i>Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you</i> . Perhaps this is a parable advising us to be persistent in prayer or, at least, not to be unafraid to ask again if our prayer appears to be unanswered. [cont'd]	Lord, make me committed to prayer and ready to ask you to fulfil my needs.

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		Do you sometimes feel a bit embarrassed about asking God the same things over and over again? Does this parable change your mind about that?	
Day 14 28 <sup>th</sup> Feb	<b>The Unjust Judge</b> Lk 18.1-8	This parable has a very similar theme to the preceding one – persistence in prayer is likely to be rewarded. If even a wicked ruler can be persuaded by persistence to give the widow justice then how much more readily will God answer the prayers of those who come to him in faith. But there's something here too that suggests that even the most hardened people can be "badgered" into behaving correctly. Do we give up too easily in our quest for justice and goodness?	Give me a readiness, Lord, to listen to the needs of others.
Day 15 1 <sup>st</sup> Mar	<b>The Pharisee and the Tax Collector</b> Lk 18.9-14	The comparison between the Pharisee and the publican is quite stark. Often in Jesus's parables it is the Pharisees (who should know better) who are used as the exemplar of what not to do and those normally considered sinners (prostitutes, tax collectors, etc) who do the right thing. There is great danger in assuming that we are better than we actually are. Jesus doesn't suggest that the Pharisee is a bad man as such, nor that the tax collector is morally superior, simply that the Pharisee's prayer is presumptuous. The tax collector is <i>justified</i> because he is a humble penitent. Prayer should always be approached in a penitential spirit. Do you ever think of yourself as better than you actually are?	Make me humble in my prayer, Lord, and may I be ready always to come to you in sorrow for my sins.
<b>Parables about the End Time</b>			
The <i>End Time</i> (the <i>eschaton</i> ) was very important to all three evangelists. These parables, together with those about the kingdom of God, are the ones most often common to two or three of the gospels. These two groups are also easily the largest themed groups. Jesus clearly used parables to make the end time and the kingdom more easily understood, and easier for his disciples to respond to. It's interesting then that few of these parables would appear in most people's lists of favourite parables of Jesus today.			
Day 16 2 <sup>nd</sup> Mar	<b>The Faithful Servant</b> Mt 24.45-51; Mk	We should know that the way we behave will have consequences for us. Jesus uses the example of a servant entrusted by his master with his affairs during his absence to make this point. He contrasts the outcome for the two different types of behaviour of the trusted servant. Jesus often	Lord, make me always aware of your presence with me.

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	13.34-37; Lk 12.35-48	<p>spoke, in the context of the end time, about being trustworthy and carrying out our duties diligently. The other theme here that also appears frequently in Jesus's parables is the idea that the master will arrive at <i>an hour he does not know</i>. It is not enough just to be diligent, but also ready all the time for the master when he returns.</p> <p>We have no sense of the urgency of the Lord's return. What does it mean for you to be ready at all times for the Lord?</p>	
Lent 3 3 <sup>rd</sup> Mar	<b>Come to Waters</b> Isaiah 55.1-9	<p>It is from God that we should receive all that we need. The question, <i>Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which does not satisfy?</i> is an important one for us to answer, and Lent gives an opportunity to do that. We lead busy and often hectic lives and we all know that sometimes we do not have enough time for the things that are really important. Isaiah reveals a God who provides what is truly necessary for our physical and spiritual well-being, and who promises that God will welcome us when we turn to him in penitence.</p> <p>What are the most important things in your life? Are your priorities right?</p>	Eternal God, give us insight to discern your will for us, to give up what harms us, and to seek the perfection we are promised in Jesus Christ our Lord.
Day 17 4 <sup>th</sup> Mar	<b>The Ten Virgins</b> Mt 25.1-3	<p>Here is another parable about the need to be ready for the end. The bridesmaids, five wise and five foolish, show the importance clearly. The task they need to perform can only be performed when the bridegroom arrives. Because he is delayed the importance of being ready for all eventualities is evident. Those who were properly prepared are welcomed; the foolish ones are off doing what they should have done much earlier.</p> <p>Again we hear the refrain, <i>keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.</i> The fact that the wise bridesmaids are unable to help the foolish probably indicates that we are responsible for our own salvation (by the way we behave and by our readiness) and cannot be responsible for those who take no responsibility for themselves.</p> <p>What does <i>being ready for the bridegroom</i> mean for us today? How does it affect the way we live?</p>	Give me, Lord, the wisdom to be ready for you when you come to me.
Day 18	<b>The Great</b>	Matthew and Luke both record this parable, but Matthew's story seems to	Lord, give me grace to come

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5 <sup>th</sup> Mar	<b>Banquet</b> Mt 22.1-14; Lk 14.15-24	be two parables rather than just one. They both tell the story of the great banquet and how the invited guests reject the call to dine. Matthew has the declining guests mistreating his servants and the king destroying them and burning their city. Both gospels then tell how the feast is filled with those called in from the streets. This part of the story is clearly about the rejection of the unworthy and the invitation being held out to all who will respond. Matthew then adds the short story of the guest who comes improperly dressed to the wedding. Those who are called need to be worthy and ready.  Do you ever make excuses for your lack of commitment to Christ?	worthily to your banquet, that I may sit and eat in your kingdom.
Day 19 6 <sup>th</sup> Mar	<b>The Rich Fool</b> Lk 12.16-21	There are many ways in which this parable is more readily approachable for us than the ones about the Lord's return. We all know that death is likely to come before the second coming (no guarantees though) so a parable that highlights the importance of not assuming that we will see the fruit of our labours has a relevance for us. The rich man assumed that he could live a happy retirement and was not ready for death when it came. His plans come to naught. The point is that it is important to prepare for death and, by implication, for judgement, than to make plans for our future.  Are ready to stand before God? How can you prepare for that day?	Help me, Lord, to live as if each day were my last so that I will be ready for heaven when you call me to you.
Day 20 7 <sup>th</sup> Mar	<b>The Wicked Tenants</b> Mt 21.33-41; Mk 12.1-9; Lk 20.9-16	This parable appears in a very similar form in all three gospels. The tenants, who beat and kill the landowner's slaves and finally kill his son, who he expects them to respect , are turned out of the vineyard and killed. Traditionally the parable is about God's relationship with Israel, his chosen people, who are rejected because they ignore and mistreat the prophets and finally kill God's Son. Probably, though, we should think of it as a warning that if we are not faithful we risk being rejected from God's kingdom and that we will be judged for our faithfulness to Christ. Salvation is entrusted to us and we have to show ourselves worthy of it.  Do you think principally of Christ as judge or Saviour? What difference does it make?	Lord, may I be ready to hear your prophets and to respond to Jesus when he calls.

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Day 21 8 <sup>th</sup> Mar	<b>The Tares</b> Mt 13.24-30	This parable is in the list of parables about the end time but it could as well have been in the list of parables of the kingdom, beginning as it does with the words, <i>the kingdom of heaven may be compared ...</i> Jesus uses, as he often does, an agricultural image. Weeds have grown together with the good wheat and are allowed to grow together until harvest when the weeds will be gathered first and burned, and then the wheat harvested and stored. Here we see that the kingdom exists alongside the world, but the members of the kingdom are those destined to be saved. The world will be rejected. What do you think are the differences between being a citizen of god's kingdom and being a citizen of the world?	Holy God, help me to see the tares in my field and to harvest and gather to me the good wheat of your gospel.
Day 22 9 <sup>th</sup> Mar	<b>Drawing in the Net</b> Mt 13.47-50	Another parable that will fit into two categories. Again, Jesus highlights the difference between belonging to the world and belonging to the kingdom. The fish are separated into good and bad and the bad rejected but the good retained. This is compared to the judgement at the end time when God will separate <i>the evil from the righteous</i> . On what basis do you think that God judges who is evil and who righteous?	God, make me worthy to found among the good when you separate good and evil.
Lent 4 10 <sup>th</sup> Mar	<b>Everything has become New</b> 2 Corinthians 5.16-21	It is easy to lose sight of the transformative nature of being <i>in Christ</i> , but Paul is very clear here about how changed we are because we have become members of Christ – <i>if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; everything old has passed away; see everything has become new!</i> This is achieved by the forgiveness we receive from God when we turn to him; because God does not hold our <i>trespasses</i> against us. When he speaks of us being ambassadors for Christ he is challenging us to proclaim this transformation by calling others to know this reconciliation in Christ. Do you feel transformed by Christ? What evidence is there in your life that you have been made new?	Merciful Lord, you know our struggle to serve you: when sin spoils our lives and overshadows our hearts, come to our aid and turn us back to you again; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Day 23 11 <sup>th</sup> Mar	<b>The Budding Fig Tree</b> Mt 24.32-35;	Jesus uses the image of a fig tree in bud to emphasize the nearness of the end time. Just as the fig tree in bud means that summer is near so the disciples should discern the signs of the end and know that the end is near – indeed it will be in the time of their generation. This is probably one of the	Lord, give me grace to discern the signs of your coming.

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	Mk 13.28-31; Lk 21.29-33	hardest things in Jesus's teaching for us to understand fully. It is hard (after two thousand years) to feel confident that the end is near. What are the signs of the end for us? And what might we mean by the end?	
Day 24 12 <sup>th</sup> Mar	<b>The Barren Fig Tree</b> Lk 13.6-9	What use is a fig tree that bears no fruit? The landowner decides to cut down the barren fig tree – it has no use and is just taking space in the ground that could be more usefully used. His gardener pleads for one more year to allow it to bear fruit. Clearly, Jesus wants us to understand that God is a merciful judge and is ready to give us another chance. But there is a limit to his mercy – we need to take advantage of second chances. What is the fruit that we should bear in order for us to avoid the judgement?	Be patient with me, Lord, that I may be found ready for your kingdom.
Day 25 13 <sup>th</sup> Mar	<b>The Sheep and the Goats</b> Mt 25.31-46	The story of the sheep and goats may not be a parable at all. There is only a little hint of a story based on everyday life. This story may well have originated as a simple account of how a shepherd separates sheep from goats, but the nature of the final judgement has been added to make unambiguous the lesson to be learned. In its current form though it spells out clearly the sort of life that Jesus requires of his disciples. As it is recorded by Matthew this story is very challenging to us. If this is the basis for judgement will you be a sheep or a goat?	Lord Jesus, make me mindful of your needs in the world today.
<b>Other Parables</b>			
These are the parables that do not fit easily into any of the above categories. You may think that some of them should be in one or other of the groups – and you may be right. All of these parables have something of value to teach us and all would fit into a group of parables which help us to consider the way in which we live as Christian disciples.			
Day 26 14 <sup>th</sup> Mar	<b>The Wise and Foolish Builders</b> Mt 7.24-27; Lk 6.46-49	Matthew and Luke both record this parable. The need for solid foundations would have been as clearly understood by his first disciples as it is by us. It is a key point in understanding this parable that hearing the words of Jesus and acting on them constitute sound foundations in our lives. In Matthew's gospel this parable is found in the Sermon on the Mount so he may well	Make me build on solid foundations, Lord, that I may withstand the temptations of the world.

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		<p>have the words of the sermon in mind. Luke also sets it in the context of similar teaching, although he does not record the whole of the Sermon on the Mount here.</p> <p>What foundations is your life built on? Will they be secure when the floods rise and the wind blows?</p>	
Day 27 15 <sup>th</sup> Mar	<b>New and Old Cloth</b> Mt 9.16; Mk 2.21; Lk 5.36	<p>This one verse parable is found in all three gospels, and in each of the gospels it, and the next parable, comes in a discussion of fasting. Why, Jesus is asked, do his disciples not fast when John's disciples and the Pharisees do. The answer is that the bridegroom's attendants cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them followed by this parable about the folly of sewing a patch of new cloth to repair an old cloak. It's not easy to understand but appears to suggest that Jesus is offering something new to his disciples and the old ways do not apply now.</p> <p>Jesus shows us a new way. Do you see <i>newness</i> in your Christian life?</p>	Lord, make me aware of the difference between my needs and my wants.
Day 28 16 <sup>th</sup> Mar	<b>New Wine into old Wineskins</b> Mt 9.17; Mk 2.22; Lk 5.37-39	<p>Closely related to the previous parable this is also part of the discussion about fasting. Again we hear how new and old cannot be mixed successfully. New wine will burst old wineskins (presumably because it continues to ferment after being put into the old skin which cannot stretch). The kingdom does not mix with the world but must remain separate or it will be lost.</p> <p>Where do you see the incompatibility of the world and the kingdom?</p>	Lord, give me a detachment from the things of this world so that I can grasp the things of the next.
Lent 5 17 <sup>th</sup> Mar	<b>You always have the poor with you</b> John 12.1-8	<p>Mary's act of anointing Jesus's feet with the costly perfume is interpreted by Jesus as an act of sacrificial love. As Jesus approaches the time of his passion Judas comes to the fore in the stories in John's gospel. Here he criticizes Mary for the waste when the perfume could have been sold and money given to the poor. Whatever Judas's motives Jesus sees in what Mary has done an act of love in preparing his body for burial. Mary has bought the perfume for this specific purpose giving what she had to buy this oil to show Jesus great love.</p> <p>What can you sacrifice to show your love of Christ?</p>	Gracious Father, you gave up your Son out of love for the world: lead us to ponder the mysteries of his passion, that we may know eternal peace through the shedding of our Saviour's blood, Jesus Christ our Lord.

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Day 29 18 <sup>th</sup> Mar	<b>The Lamp under a Bushel</b> Mt 5.14-15; Mk 4.21-25; Lk 8.16-18	Again, brief though this passage is, there may be two separate parables here in Matthew's version – a <i>city built on a hill cannot be hidden</i> , and, <i>no one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket ...</i> , although both making a similar point. Mark and Luke do not have the city on a hill but have a comment of Jesus which identifies the light as that which reveals our deeds as good or bad and so make the parable one about judgement in contrast to Matthew who makes it a parable about us being light for the world.  In what areas of the world does your light shine?	May I be light in the world, Lord, to bring your love to your people.
Day 30 19 <sup>th</sup> Mar	<b>The Strong Man</b> Mt 12.29; Mk 3.27; Lk 11.21-22	All three evangelists record this parable although Luke has changed it significantly. Perhaps thinking that plundering a man's property is not something that Christians should be doing he gives the story a twist to change its context to that of a battle. Either way the parable is a difficult one in which to see what Jesus was trying to teach his disciples, but context is everything. The parable is part of the discussion about how Satan's house is divided it cannot stand. In that context the parables means that because Satan is <i>tied up</i> his house can be plundered and the followers of Christ will be triumphant.  What signs can you see in the world of evil being defeated?	Make me ready, Lord, to do your will and to obey your call.
Day 31 20 <sup>th</sup> Mar	<b>The Unjust Steward</b> Lk 16.1-13	This is another lengthy parable which is unique to Luke, and another parable that is not easy to understand. Jesus praises the unjust steward for his cunning in writing down his master's debtors' obligations. Is Jesus really praising him for what are probably fraudulent actions? It is possible that there is a hint of irony in what Jesus says here. He tells his hearers how to thrive in the world and perhaps the intention is to highlight how different the standards of the kingdom are – that being honest in all things is better than weaving a web of deceit in order to thrive.  What do you see in the world that demonstrates that the world works differently to the kingdom of God?	Lord, make me wise in the things of your kingdom.
Day 32	<b>Counting</b>	Again we have two parables which reinforce each other's meaning. Both	Lord, give me detachment from

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21 <sup>st</sup> Mar	<b>the Cost</b> Lk 14.28-33	focus on the need to assess whether there are enough resources to carry out the task – building a tower or fighting a war against a more powerful enemy. The cost of following Jesus would appear to be the renunciation of possessions – <i>So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.</i> If anyone wants to follow Jesus they need to consider whether they are prepared to give up everything. Are there possessions which get in the way of you following Jesus?	material possessions and help me to put true value on your kingdom.
Day 33 22 <sup>nd</sup> Mar	<b>The Rich Man and Lazarus</b> Lk 16.19-31	It is arguable that this is not strictly a parable, but it clearly serves the same purpose as Jesus's other parables and has clear lesson. The rich man and Lazarus are both reaping the rewards in the next life of their behaviour in this. There appears to be, though, little moral judgement in the story. The rich man suffers because he has had good things in life, Lazarus has good things now because her suffered in life. The implication is – although it is never explicitly stated – that the rich man could have done more to alleviate Lazarus's suffering. Is your behaviour worthy of a reward in heaven?	Make me aware, Lord, of the needs of my neighbour, and give me grace never to blind myself to them.
Day 34 23 <sup>rd</sup> Mar	<b>The Master and Servant</b> Lk 17.7-10	What should our motivation be to behave in the right way? According to this parable we should simply be satisfied with doing our duty. The good servant works not because he expects a reward, nor to avoid punishment but simply to fulfil his master's wishes. That probably does not sit well with our modern assumptions, but there is a point to be made here. Experience teaches us that the things we do best are the things we do because we want to, not things we do in expectation of a reward. There is satisfaction in obeying God's will. How should we discern what is God's will?	Lord, make me satisfied with doing what I should – for you and in the world.
Palm Sunday 24 <sup>th</sup> Mar	<b>The stones would shout out</b> Luke 19.28-40	As Jesus approaches his death he enters Jerusalem in something like a Roman General entering Rome in triumph. But there are signs that all is not as well as it appears. He is criticized for the behaviour of his disciples. Jesus's reply, "if these were silent, the stones would shout out," suggests that what is happening is about much more than events in Jerusalem. The	True and humble king, hailed by the crowd as Messiah: grant us the faith to know you and love you, that we may be found beside you

Date	Reference	Notes	Prayer
		whole world is rejoicing that Jesus is entering his city and approaching his death. The Pharisees do see this; perhaps the crowd do, at least for now. This is an event of truly universal significance. How does "all creation praise the Lord?"	on the way of the cross, which is the path of glory.
Day 35 25 <sup>th</sup> Mar	<b>The Talents</b> Mt 25.14-30; Lk 19.12-27	The parable of the talents is well known and its meaning clear. But one does feel a little sympathy with the servant who is condemned for not making more money. One gets the sense that had he come and said that he had invested it but lost everything that would have been preferable. He is condemned for not using his master's gift. God gives us talents, skills and abilities for us to use them. Failure to accept and use what God gives us is a failure of discipleship. It appears we will be judged on how we have used our gifts. What gifts and talents do you have? Do you use them in God's service?	Lord, I thank you for the gifts you have given to me; may I use them always for your glory.
Day 36 26 <sup>th</sup> Mar	<b>The Two Sons</b> Mt 21.28-32	Actions speak louder than words. Neither son comes terribly well out of this story, but only one of them did the will of his father. Clearly the one who said that he would work and then did not is the more to be condemned. At the end of the day it is what we do that will attract praise or criticism. Does the way you live reveal your Christian discipleship?	Lord, make me slow to speak but quick to serve.
Day 37 27 <sup>th</sup> Mar	<b>The Workers in the Vineyard</b> Mt 20.1-16	The kingdom of heaven is something that you're either in or out of – there is no middle way. The labourers who were sent first to the vineyard feel, understandably, aggrieved that those who work for an hour are paid the same as them. The owner of the vineyard points out that they receive what was agreed and that therefore they have no reason to complain. If others who come later receive the same as them it is not for them to complain. Those who belong to the kingdom all receive the same reward regardless of whether they have been a member for years ... or minutes. Have you ever felt unfairly treated when you've been treated the same as someone else?	Welcome me into your kingdom, Lord, and give me joy in those who share it with me.
Day 38	<b>The</b>	Humility is important in the Christian life. Jesus uses this parable about a	Holy God, give me the gift of true

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28 <sup>th</sup> Mar	<b>Wedding Feast</b> Lk 14.7-14	wedding feast to explain. Those who think they are more important than they really are will be found out and humiliated. If we take the lowest position we may be asked to come higher (or we may be left where we are) and thus seen by all to have been honoured. Of course the parable is about how our status is not something we choose ourselves but something chosen for us. The same is true in the kingdom – it is God who chooses our status in the kingdom, not us.  What does it mean for you to be humble?	humility and respect for others.
Good Friday 29 <sup>th</sup> Mar	<b>Why have you forsaken me?</b> Psalm 22	Jesus quotes this psalm as he hangs on the cross, <i>My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?</i> The gospels are united in revealing Jesus's isolation on the cross – not only from his disciples and family, but from God himself. In many ways these words are the most moving part of the whole passion story as we sense that everything has come to nothing.  Have you ever felt totally cut off from God?	Eternal God, in the cross of Jesus we see the cost of our sin and the depth of your love: in humble hope and fear may we place at his feet all that we have and all that we are, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Holy Saturday 30 <sup>th</sup> Mar	<b>I will sing to the Lord</b> Exodus 15.1-18	The song of Miriam when the people of Israel crossed the Red Sea, fleeing from Egypt expresses the might and glory of God who has delivered them against all the odds. It is a key part of the Easter proclamation on Easter Eve and Christians have from the earliest time drawn parallels between the death and resurrection of Jesus and the flight from Egypt. God shows his mighty power and glory in raising Jesus from the dead.	Lord God our redeemer, who heard the cry of your people and sent your servant Moses to lead them out of slavery: free us from the tyranny of sin and death and, by the leading of your Spirit, bring us to our promised land; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Easter Day 31 <sup>st</sup> Mar	<b>Alleluia! Christ is Risen!</b>	The stories of the first encounter with the risen Christ are remarkable for how matter of fact they are. The women come to the tomb to complete the preparations for the burial of Jesus's body and find the tomb empty. The	God of glory, by the raising of your Son you have broken the chains of

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	Luke 24.1-12	disciples are puzzled, bewildered, shocked and can make no sense of what has happened. In Luke's gospel they need the angel to explain what has happened so that they can start to make sense of it. Each generation of Christians is faced with the same challenge – make sense of the events of the first Easter day and decide how to respond. What does it mean to you to that Christ is risen?	death and hell: fill your Church with faith and hope; for a new day has dawned and the way to life stands open in our Saviour Jesus Christ.

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