

Pictures Jesus Painted



All Saints Church, Hoole
Home group studies
September – December 2020

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1. The Sower, the Seed and the Soils

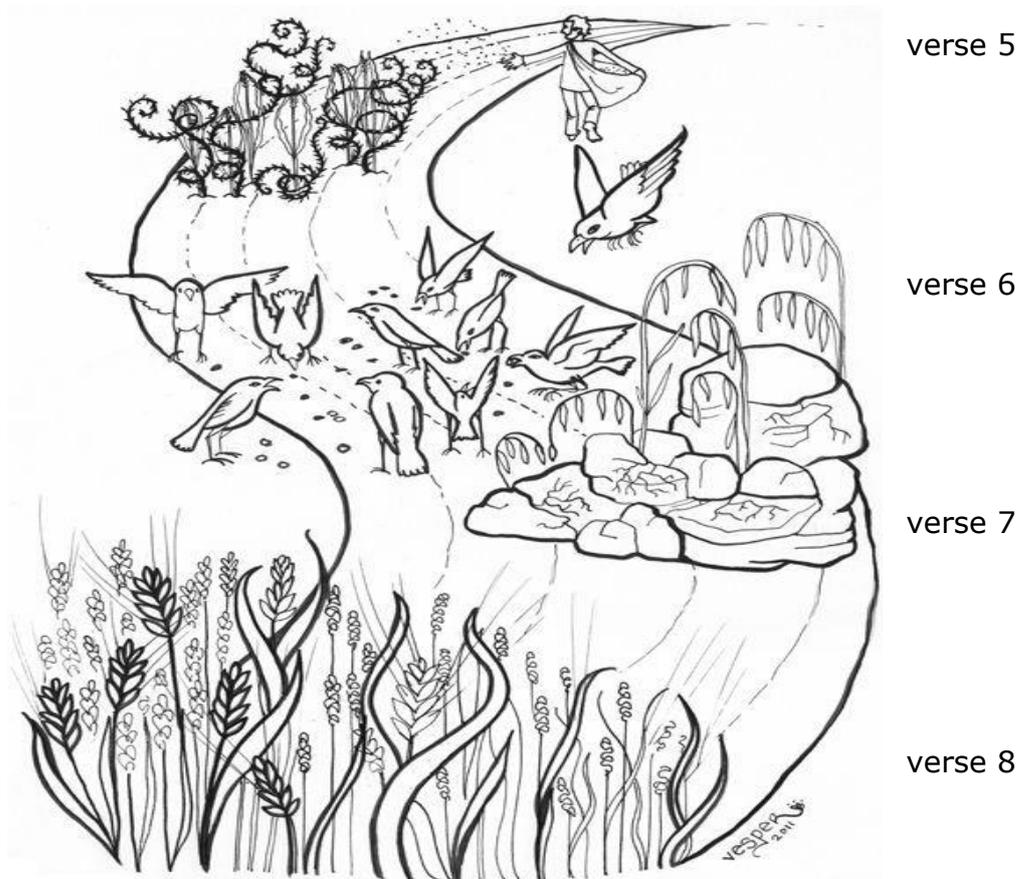
Luke 8:1-15

Jesus was a master storyteller. He used incidents from people's ordinary lives to explain truths about God. The everyday events described then reminded people of Jesus' teaching. These stories are familiar to many of us, but we want to look at them again to see, hear and learn from God and to discover truths that are relevant to us today.

The first 4 questions guide you to look closely at what the passage says, and to begin to reflect on what it means, so that you can then discuss with others in your small group how this relates to your life, and to our community life as God's people.

1. Write down who is listening to Jesus as he begins to tell this story (vs 1-4)

2. The picture below is an illustration of the story Jesus tells in vs 5-8.
Connect the verses to the related part of the picture.



Vesper Stamper/@vesper illustration. Used with permission.

3. Why did Jesus tell this story? (vs 11-15)

4. What suggests that spiritual insight and understanding is given only to those who are willing to put some effort into seeking it out? (vs8b-10)

Think through the questions that follow, and be ready to share your insights with your home group members.

5. What particularly struck you as you reflected on what Jesus taught, and his explanation of this story?

6. How does the photograph below help you understand the point Jesus made about the different kinds of soil?



(How would you re-tell this story today to people living in houses with gardens, or with access to allotments? Would there be mention of builders' rubble, brambles and compost?)

7. Think about the condition of your heart towards God as a type of soil -

- Are we the different types of soil at different stages of our lives?
Share something of your journey (either towards, or away from, God)
- In the last 6 months, which soil(s) has my heart been? Why?

8. The following fictional tale about Satan seeking to disrupt the lives of Christians has been told by someone. How well do you think this illustrates Luke 8:7 and 14?

Satan told his demons: "Keep them busy in the non-essentials of life and invent unnumbered schemes to occupy their minds. Tempt them to spend, spend, spend, then, borrow, borrow, borrow ... Crowd their lives with so many good causes they have no time to seek power from Christ. Soon they will be working in their own strength, sacrificing their health and family unity for the good of the cause." ...

And the evil angels went eagerly to their assignments, causing Christians everywhere to get busy, busy, busy, and rush here and there.

What next?

- Reflect further on the truths you have discussed as a group – colour the picture if this will be an aid to meditating on the message of this parable.

- Pray for yourself and for others in your small group – for receptivity to God's word (the seed) and to be "good soil"

2. The Good Samaritan

This is a familiar passage for many of us. The context is a dialogue between a theological expert and Jesus, in which the expert asks, "Who is my neighbour?" It is helpful to understand that the cultural prejudices of the time meant that Jews considered Samaritans to be social outcasts, racially inferior, practising a false religion, and to be despised. Samaritans responded with a strong dislike and hatred for Jews. In their context, Jesus is answering the religious expert with an extremely provocative story.



The road from Jerusalem to Jericho – approx. 16 miles long with a 3,400 ft descent.

Before your group meeting: *Study the passage using these questions to help you and be ready to share what you have discovered when your group meets.*

1. Look carefully at all the details in the story (10:30 -35)

- What characters are mentioned?
- How does each behave?
- What details particularly strike you, and why?
- Are there 'undercurrents' in the dialogue before and after Jesus' story?

2. The man travelling on this road was seen by everybody, but viewed in different ways:

- to the robbers – he was an object to exploit
- to the religious men – he was a problem to be avoided
- to the inn keeper – he was a customer to serve for a fee
- to the Samaritan – he was a human being, worth being cared for.

With this in mind, consider:

- (a) How do I normally "see" the various people whose paths cross mine, day by day?
(b) What would it mean for me to treat them as "a neighbour" in the way that Jesus is implying?

3. If Jesus was telling this parable in our society today, who might He cast in the role of the Samaritan?

The story might then be renamed: "The Good _____"

[Have a go at re-imagining this story in a different setting – perhaps in a hospital, or on a school campus. Who would the characters be, and who would you cast in the role of the "Samaritan"?)

Share your answers to the following questions when your group meets.

4. Some fresh insights from studying this passage on my own:-

5. What points mentioned in Sunday's sermon were helpful, and/or challenging?

6. An amplified version of verse 37 "Go and do likewise" might go something like this:
"Go and extend compassion to everyone, even those people who are very different from you, or who don't believe the way you do. Go, take a chance and get involved in the lives of other people. Go, show mercy, no matter the risk or reward. Be willing to sacrifice and be prepared to take time out of your busy schedule to help."

- Share examples of how you have seen this beautifully demonstrated.
- Share examples of when you missed a clear opportunity to do this.
- Share examples of when you felt "it's complicated".

What Next?

➤ Pray this prayer daily:

"Father, help me to live this day to the full,
being true to You in every way.
Jesus, help me to give myself away to others,
being kind to everyone I meet.
Spirit, help me to love the lost,
proclaiming Christ in all I do and say. Amen.

[Source: 'Lectio 365' Bible app from 24-7 Prayer International]

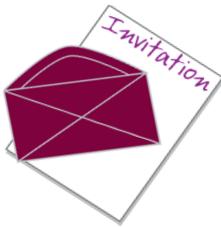
➤ As you travel from A__ to B__ in the days ahead, intentionally notice the people you pass, or meet. Is there someone you can bless in some way, with God's grace?

3. The Great Banquet

In Luke chapter 14, Jesus is being watched at a dinner party (v1), but he has also been observing those around him (v7). It is in these surroundings that he tells a story about a man giving a great banquet. (A similar story in Matthew 22 describes a wedding banquet).

In the first century, it was the custom to send an invitation in 2 parts.

There would be an initial invitation some time ahead of the date of the banquet to announce the event. (v16)



Then, there would be the actual summons to the meal when it was ready (v17)

Before your group meeting : *Study the passage using these questions to help you; and be ready to share what you have discovered when your group meets.*

1. Zoom in - look at the details of this story:

- What can be deduced about the people mentioned in the first guest list?
- How credible are their excuses for not coming?
- Where do the second and subsequent guests come from? How are they different from those who were invited first?
- What do you make of the host's actions?

2. Imagine that you are one of the people mentioned in v21 - previously hunkered down in an alleyway, and then called to come and enjoy a wonderful banquet. How you would describe your experience to a friend the following day?

3. Pan out for the big picture – what is Jesus teaching about the kingdom of God through this story?

For a lego animation of a song based on this passage, google: I cannot come to the banquet Lego version by Sarah Datt; or follow the link,

<https://youtu.be/JC2NgfkfD5c>

Share your answers to the following questions when your group meets.

4. Some fresh insights from studying this passage and looking at questions 1-3:-

5. What points mentioned in Sunday's sermon were helpful, and/or challenging?

6. What is the balance between "compelling" people (v23) to come to the Lord and gently leading them?

- How do we show both urgency and respect at the same time?
- What does it mean for us, as a church, to go out into the "streets and lanes of the town" to bring people into God's house, to share in His banquet? Why is this often difficult to do?

7. What excuses do I (and others) give for not obeying God's call to "Go out" and "bring in"?

What Next?

- Pray: Father, in this parable,
I sense your hurt and your urgency.
Please help me to share your heart –
 - Your sorrow,
 - Your understanding of rejection and insult,
 - Your love for the poor,
 - Your mercy and grace,and the urgency of your invitation.

- The Lord of all the earth invites me
 - to come and be with Him,
 - to enjoy times of intimacy with Him,
 - to listen to Him.

What will my answer be?



4. The Dishonest Manager

In Luke chapter 15, Jesus told 3 stories or parables about things that were lost and then found (a sheep, a coin, a son). The lost son in chapter 15 squandered his inheritance. Here, Jesus tells a parable about a dishonest manager who has squandered what was entrusted to him.

Before your group meeting : *Study the passage using these question to help you, and be ready to share what you have discovered when your group meets.*

1. What are your first impressions of the two characters in this story?
2. Imagine you meet this manager face to face. How might he come across when you engage him in conversation?



3. Why does the rich master commend the manager? (What aspect of his actions is being commended?) How would you have reacted?

4. Tom Wright explains the first century cultural background of this story:-

“Jews were forbidden to lend money at interest, but many people got around this by lending in kind, with oil and wheat being easy commodities to use for this purpose. It is likely that what the Manager did in verses 1-9 was deduct from the bill the interest that the master had been charging. This would leave just the principal to be paid back. The debtors would be delighted, but the master wouldn’t. Nonetheless, he couldn’t openly lay a charge against the steward without owning up to his own shady business practices.” (Luke for Everyone, p99)

- How does this background information help you understand the main point of this story that Jesus is telling?
- What questions remain for you?

Share you answers to the following questions when your group meets.

5. Some new insights from studying these verses on my own and looking at questions 1-4 :-

6. What points mentioned in Sunday's sermon were helpful, and/or challenging?

7. Tom Wright says that this story "has nothing to do with commending dishonest or underhanded practices in business or personal finance. Rather, it recommends resourcefulness when circumstances call for it. It advises us to be flexible and not be too bound by unnecessary regulations that are over and above the gospel itself, especially not in the church." (Luke for Everyone, p100)

- What will it mean for us, as a church, to use the resources at our disposal wisely and creatively?
- What can we learn from the manager about transforming a bad situation into one that benefits both us and others?
- How do we act prudently in our given circumstances?
- Does The Message version of verses 8-9 (see box) provoke any further insights?

"Now here's a surprise: The master praised the crooked manager! And why? Because he knew how to look after himself. Streetwise people are smarter in this regard than law-abiding citizens. They are on constant alert, looking for angles, surviving by their wits. I want you to be smart in the same way – but for what is *right* – using every adversity to stimulate you to creative survival, to concentrate your attention on the bare essentials, so you'll live, really live, and not complacently just get by on good behaviour. "
(Lk 16: 8-9 The Message)

What next?

- Pray that God will show you how to use the resources at your disposal wisely.

5. The Rich Man and Lazarus

This is the second parable in Luke 16 in which Jesus uses picture language to talk about money and riches and our relationship to them. ("There was a rich man" -v1,19) Sandwiched between these he has spoken more directly about the link between our management of money and possessions, and our relationship with God (vs 10-15).

Before your group meeting: *Study the passage using these questions to help you, and be ready to share what you have discovered when your group meets.*

1. In the box below, record all the information given about the rich man and Lazarus:-

	Rich Man	Lazarus
In life		
In death		

2. What is the main point that Jesus is making in telling this story?



3. How true to life do you find Abraham's observation about skeptics? (vs29-31)

[Why did Jesus' resurrection fail to convince people of his day, and why does it still fail to convince people today?]

Michael Wilcock, in his commentary on this parable*, makes the observation that every person has some resources or skills, and for every one of us there is some "Lazarus at the door" – a test case as to whether we will use our possessions

- rightly or wrongly;
- with love or with self-indulgence;
- bringing God's will into the matter or leaving it out.

* [The Message of Luke, BST p162]

Share you answers to the following questions when your group meets.

4. Some fresh insights from studying this passage on my own:-

5. What points mentioned in Sunday's sermon were helpful, and/or challenging?



6. If we choose to listen (v31), what are Moses, the prophets, and this parable saying to us today?

What actions do we need to take in response, both individually and as a church family?

“The 2 parables of Luke 16 both concern the life in the world to come; but they both teach that our destiny in that world depends on what we do with the ‘here and now’. It is a challenge to the far-sighted use of the things of this world, the things that we shall not be able to take with us, but which nonetheless constitute the raw material out of which our inner character is built.” (Michael Wilcock, p162)

What Next?

- Pray : Lord, Forgive me for my sins of omission.
Open my eyes to see “Lazarus” at my door;
Show me ways to care for the obviously needy and the hidden needy;
Show me how I am to share the good things in life, and to prepare for the life to come. Amen.
- Pray : Jesus, I am rich and privileged in so many ways. Today I yield to Your humility, and acknowledge my innate sense of entitlement.
But I am also poor and weak in so many ways, and today I yield to you as the friend of the poor, my advocate and champion in this world.
Amen. [from *Lectio 365*, 12 Aug 2020]
- Pray : for those you know who are yet to acknowledge Jesus as their Lord.

6. The King, the Servants and the money

Luke 19:11-27

The start of this parable (v12) would have reminded listeners of historical events they were familiar with: After Herod the Great died in 4 B.C, his son Archelaus had to go to Rome to be confirmed as king in Judea. He was followed by a delegation of Judeans who tried, without success, to lodge a petition against his claim. After 10 years of mis-rule, he went again; only to find another delegation of Jews and Samaritans opposing his appointment – this time successfully.

Having got their attention, Jesus gives a different twist to his story. He is speaking while headed to Jerusalem – where he will soon ride in on a donkey (to shouts of “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord”), clear the temple, meet mounting opposition from authorities, eat his final Passover meal and head to His death. (A story with some similarities is found in Matthew 25:14-30 but makes a different point)

Before your group meeting: *Study the passage using these questions to help you, and be ready to share what you have discovered when your group meets.*

Jesus tells this story in the context of the crowd’s expectations that the kingdom of God was coming. (19:11) They were expecting the Messiah to appear in power and glory to set up his earthly kingdom, and to defeat all their political and military enemies.

1. When and why does the nobleman entrust his money to his servants? (NB. A mina was an amount of silver weighing about 1¼ lbs, rather than a coin. It was the equivalent of 3 month’s wages.)



2. There is a time of accountability when the nobleman returns as king.

- Compare his reaction to the first and second servants. What matters to him and what does not matter?
- His dialogue with the third servant is detailed. What point is being made?
- How does he handle the rebellious citizens?

3. What do you like, and what do you dislike, about this story?
[How do you respond to Bible passages you find difficult?]

4. What is the reason for Jesus telling this story and the main point he making through it? (see 19:11)

“There is no such thing as standing still in the Christian life. We either get more, or lose what we have. We either advance to greater heights or slip back. We know this to be true and accept it in every other area of life.”

(William Barclay, Luke – The Daily Study Bible, p238)

Share your answers to the following questions when your group meets.

5. Some fresh insights from studying this passage on my own:-

6. What points mentioned in Sunday’s sermon were helpful, and/or challenging?

7. What does this parable have to say to us as we carry on with our ordinary lives, in the knowledge that there will be a final day of God’s judgment; the final “coming” of Jesus as King to our world?

What next?

- We are all called to faithful service.
Ask the Lord to show you what it means to be a faithful servant of Christ
 - as you are, now
 - where you are
 - with what you have.

- Pray : for the Lord to show each of us how to use our “mina” (i.e. how to live the life He has given us) so that we are faithful servants, and so that God’s kingdom grows.



Notes