

Lenten Study 2025



St. Andrew's
Community Church

A GLOBAL METHODIST CONGREGATION

Words to Live By

Parables of Jesus from the Gospel of Matthew



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Words to Live By

Lent is a season of 40 days, not counting Sundays, which begins on Ash Wednesday and leads up to Easter. It is a time of **REPENTANCE, PRAYER** and **PREPARATION** where some followers of Jesus choose to **FAST** or give up something they enjoy to better focus that time, energy or money on God.

Others choose to take on a new habit or discipline that helps them grow in their faith.

Whether you choose to give something up, start something new, or both, our prayer is that we will all **GROW IN OUR FAITH** together during this season of Lent, as we intentionally take time for reflection and self-examination.

One way this is accomplished is through intentional time spent in the **WORD OF GOD**.

Our Lenten Sermon series this year will focus on the **SIX PARABLES** recorded in the Gospel of Matthew that Jesus taught during the week leading

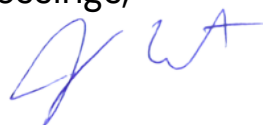
up to His crucifixion.

Additionally, this Lenten Bible study, written by your three pastors, will be taking a closer look at many of the other parables Jesus taught.

Over the next few weeks we will come to better understand what a parable is, why Jesus taught with parables and why His parables are **WORDS TO LIVE BY**.

We encourage you to go through this study at **YOUR OWN PACE**. No need to rush. Each week will have less readings than there are days. So if you miss a day, no worries, you will have time to catch up. Take your time and invite the **HOLY SPIRIT** to do a work in you and through you as we go through this study together.

Blessings,

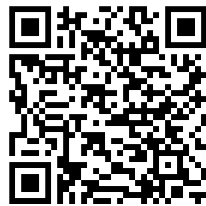


Rev. Josh Coats
Pastor of Discipleship & Missions

Resources

Scan the following QR codes for more resources in understanding the Gospel of Matthew, which is the context of many of the parables we will be reading in this study.

Matthew Part 1



Matthew Part 2



Week 1 - Day 1 - Wednesday, March 5

As we start this journey through Jesus' parables recorded in the Gospel of Matthew, it is important to have a firm understanding of the Kingdom of Heaven, also referred to as the Kingdom of God. Jesus' parables are one expression of His main goal: to announce the arrival of God's Kingdom in and through Himself and His new community. This study will start in **Daniel 2** where Daniel prophesies the coming Kingdom of God.

Read Daniel 2:24-45.

- How does Daniel describe the Kingdom of Heaven in his interpretation of the dream?
- How does the Kingdom of Heaven differ from the worldly kingdoms described in the dream?
- What do you think one would need to do in order to be a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven described by Daniel?

Daniel describes the dream as depicting four kingdoms which shall rise and fall. The first one is definitely Babylon (**Daniel 2:37-38**). With Babylon as the starting point, world history confirms that the next three kingdoms would be:

- The Medo-Persian empire, represented by the chest and arms of silver.
- The Grecian empire, represented by the belly and thighs of bronze.
- The Roman empire, represented by the legs of iron, with feet mixed with iron and clay.

Thus, one could look for the establishment of the "indestructible kingdom" in the days of the Roman empire. That is exactly what we see at the beginning of the Gospels of Matthew and Mark.

Read Matthew 3:1-2 and Mark 1:15.

Week 1 - Day 1 - Wednesday, March 5

Spend a moment in prayer reflecting on the scriptures today and what God might be calling you to do in response to them. Use this page to answer today's questions, write out a prayer or write out your thoughts.

Week 1 - Day 2 - Thursday, March 6

The indestructible kingdom was:

- Foretold by Daniel...
- Later proclaimed by John the Baptist and Jesus Himself...
- And began in the days of the Roman Empire, with Christ as its King and His disciples as its citizens...

This Kingdom is both now and not yet. The Kingdom of Heaven has been established, but we are waiting on the return of Jesus to fulfill all that has been promised.

Read Matthew 4:17–20.

A proper response to the kingdom's presence and the way we become citizens of this kingdom is by repenting of our sins, turning to God and believing the Good News. In his book, *(re)Aligning with God*, Brian Russell describes repentance as a radical revaluation of our lives and a changing of direction. It is a continual (re)alignment with the

things and ways of God. This isn't a one-time decision, but a call to (re)align continually as we follow Jesus.

Following our repentance, Jesus' invitation is for us to be a part of a missional community that reflects who God is in the world and through the world.

- As you reflect on today's reading and your own faith journey, are you a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven? Have you repented of your sins, turned to God and chosen to believe the Good News? If not, what might be holding you back?
- In what ways are you not aligned with God?
- In what ways can you better reflect who God is in the world and through the world?

Week 1 - Day 2 - Thursday, March 6

Spend a moment in prayer reflecting on the scriptures today and what God might be calling you to do in response to them. Use this page to answer today's questions, write out a prayer or write out your thoughts.

Week 1 - Day 3 - Friday, March 7

This Sunday will be the first Sunday of Lent and will be the kickoff of our **WORDS TO LIVE BY** sermon series looking at the six parables Jesus teaches in the week leading up to the cross. Jesus used parables to respond to questions from His disciples, but He also used parables in replying to some of the challenges by those who opposed Him. During Jesus' final week in Jerusalem, He is challenged by religious leaders who are out to get Him (**Matthew 21:23–27**). In response, Jesus tells three parables found in **Matthew 21:28** through **Matthew 22:14**.

- The Parable of the Two Sons
- The Parable of the Evil Farmers
- The Parable of the Great Feast

We will take a closer look at the second and third parables next week and the week after.

Today, let's focus on His first parable, the **PARABLE OF THE TWO SONS**.

Read Matthew 21:28–32.

In Jesus' explanation of this parable, He is applying it to the religious leaders of His day. They were like the second son, who said he would go, but didn't, while the corrupt tax collectors and prostitutes were like the first son. It must have been a shock to hear Jesus tell them that those hated by the Jews would enter the Kingdom of God before them.

- Jesus will have more to say concerning the religious leaders in the next two parables, but what important lessons can we learn from the parable of the two sons?
- What can we learn about God from this parable?
- What can we learn about the Kingdom of God from this parable?

Week 1 - Day 3 - Friday, March 7

Spend a moment in prayer reflecting on the scriptures today and what God might be calling you to do in response to them. Use this page to answer today's questions, write out a prayer or write out your thoughts.

Week 2 - Day 1 - Monday, March 10

The good news we read about in the Gospels is that through Jesus' life, death and resurrection, the **KINGDOM OF GOD** has begun here on earth. As we read last week, this is something Daniel prophesied and both John the Baptist and Jesus announced.

Jesus brought God's Kingdom into reality through His ministry, and He declared what that Kingdom was like through teachings like the Sermon on the Mount or through stories, known as parables. In Greek it is parabole. Para means "alongside" and bole means "to set." So a parable is something that is set alongside another for comparison and contrast.

Jesus' parables were expressions of His announcement of God's Kingdom and they had the ability to both confront and comfort those who heard them. They have that same ability today for those who read them.

Jesus' parables can be divided into three main categories:

- Parables about the surprising arrival and nature of God's Kingdom.
- Parables about the upside-down value system arriving with God's Kingdom.
- Parables about the crisis of decision caused by Jesus' offer of the Kingdom.

As we journey together on this study of Jesus' parables found in the Gospel of Matthew, keep these three categories in mind and put each parable in the category you believe it best fits.

Scan the QR code below to learn more about parables as we shift tomorrow to answering the question, "Why did Jesus use parables?"

Parables



Week 2 - Day 1 - Monday, March 10

Spend a moment in prayer reflecting on today's reading and online resources and what God might be calling you to do in response. Use this page to write out a prayer or write out your thoughts.

Week 2 - Day 2 - Tuesday, March 11

You may be wondering, “Why did Jesus use parables to teach? Wouldn’t it be easier if He just directly said what it is He was wanting to say?” You aren’t the only one who has thought that or asked that. Jesus’ disciples even asked that very question.

Read Matthew 13:10–17 and Isaiah 6:9–10.

- What reason does Jesus give for using parables?
- Why might some be permitted to understand the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven, while others are not?
- What are the differences between looking and seeing or hearing and listening?
- In what ways can you better position your heart to not just look and hear but to see and listen to God’s truth?

Jesus’ use of parables was to both conceal and reveal the mysteries of the Kingdom of

Heaven. Parables have a way of drawing in those with pure hearts who are seeking the truth to go deeper and to understand more while also concealing the truth from those with hard hearts who may have been out to get Him.

Additionally, Jesus wanted to buy time in order to launch His Kingdom movement and parables allowed His message to be dismissed by His enemies. Scholar N.T. Wright wrote about this pragmatic strategy to Jesus’ parables in his book ***Jesus and the Victory of God***.

“Those who have ears to hear will hear, and for the moment it is just as well that those who do not will not. Jesus’ Nazareth manifesto in Luke 4:16–30 was a bit too clear, perhaps, and it almost got him killed. If the prophet is not to perish away from Jerusalem, his subversive message must be clothed in disguise which only the seeing eye will penetrate.”

Week 2 - Day 2 - Tuesday, March 11

Spend a moment in prayer reflecting on the scriptures today and what God might be calling you to do in response to them. Use this page to answer today's questions, write out a prayer or write out your thoughts.

Week 2 - Day 3 - Wednesday, March 12

Well, the time has finally come for us to begin looking at Jesus' parables. We know what a parable is, why Jesus used parables and how they are connected to Jesus either revealing or concealing truths about the Kingdom of God. So let's dive in.

Read Matthew 13:1-9.

The parables found in Matthew 13 follow the diverse responses Jesus received in chapters 11 and 12 from the people He announced the Kingdom of Heaven to in chapters 4 through 10. Here are some of the responses Jesus encountered in the previous two chapters:

- 11:1-6 – Doubt
- 11:7-19 – Rejection
- 12:1-45 – Accusations

First century Israel was an agricultural society and would have easily understood and identified with the sower. But that doesn't mean those in attendance had a clue what

Jesus was talking about. This parable is what led Jesus' disciples to ask why He used parables (yesterday's devotional). It also was one of the parables that required an explanation from Jesus (tomorrow's devotional). Without getting too far ahead of ourselves, let's consider this parable at its face value.

- The sower is not identified in this parable. The emphasis seems to be on the seed and where it falls. Why do you think that is?
- Why do you think the sower cast seed everywhere instead of sowing more on the good soil and less on the other soils he knew wouldn't produce a harvest?
- Without jumping ahead to His explanation, what is it we should understand when Jesus says, "Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand," in verse 9?

Week 2 - Day 3 - Wednesday, March 12

Spend a moment in prayer reflecting on the scriptures today and what God might be calling you to do in response to them. Use this page to answer today's questions, write out a prayer or write out your thoughts.

Week 2 - Day 4 - Thursday, March 13

Read Matthew 13:18–23

The parable of the soils is not difficult to understand because Jesus tells His disciples what it means. Jesus explains the parable in order to encourage His disciples, but also to give a warning about the obstacles to discipleship. We are told:

- The seed is the message about the kingdom.
- The seed on the path is people who hear and don't understand because they have hardened their hearts and decided ahead of time that news about Jesus makes no sense.
- The seed on the rocky soil is people who have a superficial commitment to Jesus and have no strength or perseverance when difficulty comes.
- The seed among the thorns is people who allow the worries of the world or the deceitfulness of wealth to keep them from learning from Jesus.

- The seed on good soil is people who hear and respond to the message of Jesus and experience an abundance of fruit in their lives as a result.

A good harvest in Jesus' day was probably ten or twentyfold. So to produce a crop yielding thirty to one hundred times what was sown would have been nothing short of a miracle.

- There are many obstacles to us hearing and understanding God's word. What obstacles hinder you the most in following Jesus? A superficial commitment? Worries of the world or the deceitfulness of wealth? Or is there something else that is an obstacle to your faith?
- How is this parable an encouragement to followers of Jesus to share their faith and the message of the Kingdom with others?

Week 2 - Day 4 - Thursday, March 13

Spend a moment in prayer reflecting on the scriptures today and what God might be calling you to do in response to them. Use this page to answer today's questions, write out a prayer or write out your thoughts.

Week 2 - Day 5 - Friday, March 14

Read Matthew 21:33–44.

Jesus wasn't finished teaching the religious leaders. Matthew's record leads us to believe that He immediately tells another parable. The first one has to do with who gets in the kingdom of heaven. This one emphasizes that the kingdom should belong to them (as religious leaders), but will be taken away from them. But not only is it taken away, it is given to someone else.

Of course, Jesus knows that they are going to seek his execution in a few days. And the religious leaders know He is talking about their lack of faithfulness, and that further angers them to want Jesus arrested. Jesus is like the son in the parable. The son is killed so the evil farmers can inherit the estate. But unlike the son in the parable, Jesus will rise again from death. So this teaching is not just about crucifixion, it also forth tells resurrection.

- Parables are often good news for some. Who would hear this parable as good news?
- Parables can be bad news for others. This one is certainly bad news for the religious leaders. They do not like it when they are confronted with their sinfulness. How do you respond if someone points out your sinfulness?
- What do you imagine it will be like to be an heir to the Kingdom of God?

Week 2 - Day 5 - Friday, March 14

Spend a moment in prayer reflecting on the scriptures today and what God might be calling you to do in response to them. Use this page to answer today's questions, write out a prayer or write out your thoughts.

Week 3 - Day 1 - Monday, March 17

The three parables we look at this week from Matthew 13 all contrast how things appear at the beginning with how those things turn out in the end, but in different ways. We will begin with the parable of the wheat and weeds.

We learned last week from the parable of the soils that there are obstacles to hearing and understanding the word of God. As a result, the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven will be received by some, but not all. Jesus emphasizes that truth further with the parable of the wheat and weeds.

Read Matthew 13:24-30

Jesus' disciples are so confused or intrigued (or maybe both) by this parable that they later approach Jesus and ask Him to explain the parable to them. We will look at Jesus' answer tomorrow. For today, let's just focus on these seven verses.

- Jesus begins the parable by saying, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like...". What do we learn about the Kingdom of Heaven from this parable?
- What might we learn about God from this parable?
- Who do you think the enemy in the parable represents and what do we learn about him?
- Without reading ahead, how would you explain this parable?
- If you were one of Jesus' disciples He told this parable to, would you have had to ask Him to explain it as well?
- What is the application in your life from the parable?

Week 3 - Day 1 - Monday, March 17

Spend a moment in prayer reflecting on the scriptures today and what God might be calling you to do in response to them. Use this page to answer today's questions, write out a prayer or write out your thoughts.

Week 3 - Day 2 - Tuesday, March 18

Read Matthew 13:36–42

In response to the disciples request for Jesus to explain the parable of the wheat and weeds to them, Jesus identifies:

- The sower – Jesus
- The field – The world
- The good seed (wheat) – The people of the Kingdom
- The weeds – The people of the evil one
- The enemy – The devil
- The harvest – The end of the age
- The harvesters – Angels

This parable is a reminder that not only is there evil in the world, that evil is (for the time being) permitted by God. The parable of the wheat and weeds is a cautionary reminder that followers of Jesus do not need to try and weed people out of the community prematurely. Ultimately, God is the one who will sort the wheat from the weeds at the right time. It is also a warning that we can't fully identify kingdom people until the Kingdom of

Heaven fully comes on earth and God separates the wheat from the weeds.

- What can we learn about the character of God from this parable?
- How does this parable challenge our desire to quickly judge others and the human tendency to want quick solutions?
- Practically speaking, what does it look like to wait for God's perfect timing and judgment?
- What obstacles are there to you fully trusting in God's timing?
- In what ways might followers of Jesus be hurt by rooting up the "weeds" too early?

Week 3 - Day 2 - Tuesday, March 18

Spend a moment in prayer reflecting on the scriptures today and what God might be calling you to do in response to them. Use this page to answer today's questions, write out a prayer or write out your thoughts.

Week 3 - Day 3 - Wednesday, March 19

Following the parable of the soils and the parable of the wheat and weeds, it is easy to imagine the disciples feeling a little discouraged. Only one soil in four would hear and understand the Word of God, and Satan would be allowed to actively undermine the efforts of the Sower? Even knowing all that we know today (Jesus dying on the cross, defeating death and resurrecting) that can still be a tough pill to swallow. That might explain why the next two parables Jesus told (the parable of the mustard seed and the parable of yeast) were to encourage His disciples.

Read Matthew 13:31-32

- How might this parable have been an encouragement to Jesus' disciples?
- In what ways is this parable an encouragement to you?

- What is Jesus emphasizing about the Kingdom of Heaven from this parable?
- Is there any significance to the birds coming to perch in the mustard tree's branches?
- What might your role be in participating in the growth of the Kingdom of Heaven? Another way to think about it is in what ways has God gifted you in sharing your faith and inviting others to follow Jesus?

The parable of the mustard seed contrasts tiny beginnings with results that would seem out of proportion to the size of the seed that was planted. Jesus is telling us the Kingdom of Heaven may look small and insignificant, but looks can be deceiving. The Kingdom of Heaven has grown significantly since Jesus told this parable and is still growing today.

Week 3 - Day 3 - Wednesday, March 19

Spend a moment in prayer reflecting on the scriptures today and what God might be calling you to do in response to them. Use this page to answer today's questions, write out a prayer or write out your thoughts.

Week 3 - Day 4 - Thursday, March 20

Yesterday we read the parable of the mustard seed. Following difficult parables like the soil and the wheat and weeds, Jesus reassures and encourages His disciples that their involvement in the Kingdom of Heaven would not be for nothing. There are some obvious similarities between yesterday's parable of the mustard seed and today's parable of the yeast.

- Both parables are very short and provide no explanation from Jesus.
- Both parables are describing the incredible growth and impact of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Read Matthew 13:33-35

- How does this parable illustrate the unseen, yet powerful work of the Kingdom of Heaven in my life?

- In what areas of my life has the Kingdom of Heaven transformed and what areas of my life do I still need to allow God's presence to permeate and transform me like yeast in dough?
- How can I actively participate in the Kingdom of Heaven transforming the world around me?

The parable of the yeast is about how the Kingdom of Heaven will end up effecting the whole world. The Kingdom's growth will be both pervasive and complete. No part of the world will be left untouched by the influence of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Week 3 - Day 4 - Thursday, March 20

Spend a moment in prayer reflecting on the scriptures today and what God might be calling you to do in response to them. Use this page to answer today's questions, write out a prayer or write out your thoughts.

Week 3 - Day 5 - Friday, March 21

Read Matthew 22:2-14

"For many are called, but few are chosen".

Did you know that statement was from the Bible? Many popular statements or clichés are quotes from scripture. This particular quote follows another of Jesus' words to live by.

Jesus continues to speak to the religious leaders of the day, and continues to confront them with the unfaithful and even murderous intention of their hearts. They reject God's only Son!

Then there is the example that makes us uncomfortable. It is the idea of judgment. In this parable a man is judged for being underdressed. He is judged guilty and punished for his lack of wedding attire. Obviously, he was called (invited to the wedding), but not chosen to remain. It sure doesn't sound like the contemporary church that

invites people to "come as you are". But this is not about how he is dressed. It is about what is in his heart. He is no more committed to Jesus than the religious leaders.

- What do you imagine about a person who is called, but not chosen?
- Have you ever felt like you were not chosen because you lack proper spiritual dress?
- Where in the season of Lent is God moving you to a new commitment?

Week 3 - Day 5 - Friday, March 21

Spend a moment in prayer reflecting on the scriptures today and what God might be calling you to do in response to them. Use this page to answer today's questions, write out a prayer or write out your thoughts.

Week 4 - Day 1 - Monday, March 24

Read Matthew 13:44

Have you ever been geocaching? Wikipedia defines it as “... *an outdoor recreational activity, in which participants use a Global Positioning System (GPS) receiver or mobile device and other navigational techniques to hide and seek containers, called geocaches or caches, at specific locations marked by coordinates all over the world. The first geocache was placed in 2000, and by 2023 there were over 3 million active caches worldwide.*”

If you have ever been, you know that some caches are easy to find, while others are difficult. Some are large and some are very tiny. Finding a cache is always exciting! It is like following a digital map (without the giant “X”) and finding a treasure.

When the man finds the hidden treasure in the parable, he truly desires to keep it. He saw that nothing in his life was more valuable than finding the treasure. So he devotes everything in his life to gain it.

- Would you give everything you have for the promise of living in God’s Kingdom?
- Have you ever had to sacrifice things (opportunities, relationships, possessions...) to follow Jesus?
- What is something you have found that you were excited to share the news about?

Week 4 - Day 1 - Monday, March 24

Spend a moment in prayer reflecting on the scriptures today and what God might be calling you to do in response to them. Use this page to answer today's questions, write out a prayer or write out your thoughts.

Week 4 - Day 2 - Tuesday, March 25

Read Matthew 13:45-46

Another parable about pearls? Yes, but this one is different from the one read yesterday. Yesterday the pearl was unseen and then discovered. It was a great surprise to find it. But today the merchant is looking for the great pearl. The merchant is convinced it is out there...somewhere. So, the merchant looks high and low in relentless pursuit of the very valuable pearl.

People look high and low for things in life. Some seek pleasure or happiness or fame or love or...you can complete the thought. People believe there is something that will give them more happiness or love or pleasure or fame or...whatever they are looking for. We can only imagine the happiness that is felt when it is discovered.

Jesus would want us to know that God's Kingdom is the greatest thing out there. We should be on the lookout for it and settle for nothing less. We can commit everything in our lives in pursuit of the Kingdom.

- Have you ever found something in life that you would leave because you know there is something else better?
- Where have you experienced God's Kingdom in the past 7 days?
- Do you have confidence of faith that God's Kingdom in its fullness is better than anything you have searched for?

Week 4 - Day 2 - Tuesday, March 25

Spend a moment in prayer reflecting on the scriptures today and what God might be calling you to do in response to them. Use this page to answer today's questions, write out a prayer or write out your thoughts.

Week 4 - Day 3 - Wednesday, March 26

Read Matthew 13:47-50

If you have ever been fishing then you know different baits or techniques are needed to catch different kinds of fish. Go through the sporting goods section of a store or to a specialty shop like Bass Pro and you will see lures best for catching bass or crappie. Different equipment and techniques are used for catfish. Kids have loads of fun catching perch or blue gill.

Net fishing is typically different than our experiences because it is used more in salt water than in fresh water. A boat using a net to catch shrimp will catch shrimp. And the net will also catch crabs, bait fish or some other type of fish. The shrimp fisherman then has to separate the things in the net. If it is a good tasting fish it might be kept. Bad tasting fish are usually thrown back into the water.

This parable is obviously about judgment at the end of times. The call is for us to be “good fish” so that we are brought into the eternal presence of the ONE Who casts the nets.

- What do you believe is the difference between the good fish and the bad fish?
- Do you understand that the Kingdom of Heaven is like a net, meaning it tries to catch all types of people?
- Do you have a friend who does not profess faith in Christ? Probably we all do, so let's take a moment to pray for that friend.

Week 4 - Day 3 - Wednesday, March 26

Spend a moment in prayer reflecting on the scriptures today and what God might be calling you to do in response to them. Use this page to answer today's questions, write out a prayer or write out your thoughts.

Week 4 - Day 4 - Thursday, March 27

Read Matthew 13:52

Several years ago, an NFL team drafted a quarterback prospect. The current quarterback was old compared to most players and surely would not have much longer to play. So, it made sense that the team would draft and develop another player to take over when the current quarterback retired.

Fans and media believed the team was wise to think of the future and began to ask the current QB if he would serve as a mentor to this younger player. The older player scoffed at the idea and stated it was not his job.

Sounds pretty selfish doesn't it? But Jesus is speaking to teachers of religious law, older people of faith that have learned much and yet can learn more. He is inviting them to become disciples of the

Kingdom of Heaven so that they have even greater treasure to share with other people of faith.

- Who is someone that is a spiritual mentor or teacher to you?
- Who is someone that you believe you can help mentor as a leader in Christ's church?
- Is there a "gem of truth" you are learning in this Lenten study that has added to your "storeroom of gems"? Share it with others!

Week 4 - Day 4 - Thursday, March 27

Spend a moment in prayer reflecting on the scriptures today and what God might be calling you to do in response to them. Use this page to answer today's questions, write out a prayer or write out your thoughts.

Week 4 - Day 5 - Friday, March 28

Read Matthew 25:1-13

Many of us are familiar with the cliché “Always a bridesmaid and never the bride”. The parable of the 10 bridesmaids is a reminder of a sports term. When a starting player gets injured during a game, then a coach may say “get ready”. The reply is “if you stay ready you don’t have to get ready”.

For example, a backup quarterback spends the week in practice preparing for a game that they seldom get to play. So the backup has to “stay ready”. This idea of readiness is a call to us concerning our spiritual journeys.

For over 2000 years the message of the Church is that Jesus is returning, so we must be ready like the wise bridesmaids were, for His return. But there is temptation to believe that we will always have time to get things in order

after he returns. Clearly this parable’s message is contrary to that idea. So “get ready and stay ready!”

- Does the response of the wise bridesmaids strike you as a selfish response since they refuse to share their oil with the unwise bridesmaids?
- How does this response call us to be ready when the bridegroom (Jesus) appears?
- Is there something you need to do or is there someone you need to help be ready?

Week 4 - Day 5 - Friday, March 28

Spend a moment in prayer reflecting on the scriptures today and what God might be calling you to do in response to them. Use this page to answer today's questions, write out a prayer or write out your thoughts.

Week 5 - Day 1 - Monday, March 31

Read Matthew 18:12-14

Whenever you are unable to find something, do you know where it is? It is in the last place you would look! Why? Because you quit looking after you find it.

Okay, that is a bit cheesy, but this week's parables are about lost things. Jesus is teaching about how wonderful it is when we find something we have lost. And I suspect we can relate to this even though most of us (all of us?) don't have sheep. There is an exhilaration when we locate something important to us. We move from panic to joy! For example:

- If you cannot find your wallet, then you imagine the panic (cancel credit cards) to joy (Yes, I have my ID!).
- Can't find your cell phone (how can I even exist?)? Then you know your relief when you are back in communication with others (ok, maybe the question of existence was a bit exaggerated).

- Misplace your car keys/fob? When you find them you may still be late, but the emotion of losing them disappears.

Jesus' parable teaches the joy God has when a person is "found". The implication is that without Jesus we are lost and God does not desire for us to remain that way!

- Do you know someone who is "lost"? Pray for them to learn God is looking for them.
- Do you think it is crazy for a shepherd to leave 99 sheep to find one?
- What does this teach us about God's love for us?

Week 5 - Day 1 - Monday, March 31

Spend a moment in prayer reflecting on the scriptures today and what God might be calling you to do in response to them. Use this page to answer today's questions, write out a prayer or write out your thoughts.

Week 5 - Day 2 - Tuesday, April 1

Read Luke 15:3-7

Didn't we just read this parable yesterday? Kind of. Is this some April Fool's Day joke? Not at all. Yesterday we read the parable from Matthew and it reads a bit differently from today's reading from Luke.

Matthew focuses on the truth that God does not want anyone to perish. Luke wants to focus on being lost/found and uses this as the first of 3 parables Jesus teaches. Luke gives us more information about what the shepherd does when the sheep is found. The shepherd hoists the sheep on his shoulders and invites others to celebrate with him!

It is dangerous for sheep to wander away from the flock. When people wander away from fellowship of the church, it can also be dangerous. When people who wander away return back, then we should celebrate!

- How do we celebrate when someone is baptized, re-commits to Christ or returns to fellowship?
- Has there been a time that you have fallen away, and Jesus picked you up?
- Who is someone that you would pray for that seems to be struggling spiritually?

Week 5 - Day 2 - Tuesday, April 1

Spend a moment in prayer reflecting on the scriptures today and what God might be calling you to do in response to them. Use this page to answer today's questions, write out a prayer or write out your thoughts.

Week 5 - Day 3 - Wednesday, April 2

Read Luke 15:8-10

With Spring arriving it is possible that you are putting away your heavy coat and grabbing a lighter jacket. We are even getting days when we know we can wear shorts while the sun is shining. Imagine grabbing a windbreaker or some shorts, reaching in the pocket and feeling something. Pulling it out of the pocket you see it is a \$20 bill! SCORE!

Finding money is fun and exciting. Losing money is depressing. A woman loses a coin in her house and begins to search frantically for it. It is believed that the coin may have been part of a wedding dowry and thus was very important. This may explain why she wants everyone to celebrate with her.

There is a difference between lost sheep and lost coins. Sheep are lost because they get careless and do not pay

attention. It is their fault when they get lost. But it is not the coin's fault it gets lost. Note that no matter if it is a person's fault or not, Jesus wants us to rejoice when something... someone... is found.

- What is something you found that you were excited to share with others?
- Have you ever lost something you valued?
- All of us are lost in some ways, but God will search frantically to find us. Take a moment to reflect on that, and then spend some time thanking God.

Week 5 - Day 3 - Wednesday, April 2

Spend a moment in prayer reflecting on the scriptures today and what God might be calling you to do in response to them. Use this page to answer today's questions, write out a prayer or write out your thoughts.

Week 5 - Day 4 - Thursday, April 3

Read Luke 15:11-32

This is one of the best-known parables of Jesus. And it teaches us something about people who are lost and how God looks for us. Sheep are lost because of carelessness. Coins are lost at no fault of their own. And the son is lost because of his open rebellion and defiance of the father.

The father has provided everything his son needs, including the promise of a great future. But the son wants no part of it; he wants to live life on his own terms. Are we brave enough to admit that we are like that too? Do we find our desires for our lives in conflict with God's desires for our lives? If so, then we know God lets us make the choice. God does not force us to do things God's way.

This parable teaches us something different about God. In the first two parables, some look for that which is lost. In

this parable, the father does not look for his son. He watches for him! The father never gives up on the son's return. When we defy God's desires for our lives, we can know God never gives up on our return to him. And when we make that decision to return, God runs to embrace us again!

- The son learns that a return to the father is better than living apart from him. Have you experienced God's goodness despite your rebellion?
- What is something you struggle with in your relationship with Christ that you wish were different than it is?
- No matter how rebellious we may be, God still loves us. Take a moment to focus on God's love, and express gratitude to Him.

Week 5 - Day 4 - Thursday, April 3

Spend a moment in prayer reflecting on the scriptures today and what God might be calling you to do in response to them. Use this page to answer today's questions, write out a prayer or write out your thoughts.

Week 5 - Day 5 - Friday, April 4

Read Matthew 25:14–30

Have you ever heard of someone described as a 10-talent person? This is a description of someone who seems to do everything better than anyone else. They are athletic, musical, good looking, intelligent, charismatic...the list goes on. The idea of a 10-talent person comes from this parable.

However, talent in this parable is not about skill. A talent is a measure of money. When the master left the 3 servants with money, his expectation was that they would do something with that money. The servant described as “lazy” is not confident of his relationship with his master. He relates to the master out of fear, not love.

The other adjective that describes the 3rd servant is “wicked”. Wicked and lazy are both words we would not want Jesus to use to describe our stewardship of the gifts and

blessings that we are given. So the questions before us on this day are:

- Do you ever feel lazy about how you live in relationship with Christ?
- Does your view of God lack confidence in God’s trust in you to steward the gifts that God entrusts you with?
- What are you doing to show yourself a faithful steward (versus a wicked steward) of the money, skills, opportunities and such that God has blessed you with?

Week 5 - Day 5 - Friday, April 4

Spend a moment in prayer reflecting on the scriptures today and what God might be calling you to do in response to them. Use this page to answer today's questions, write out a prayer or write out your thoughts.

Week 6 - Day 1 - Monday, April 7

Read Matthew 18:21-27

Verses 21-22 provide the context in which this parable is being told. Rabbis at the time would have recommended 3 times. Peter's suggestion of 7 times is more than generous, but Jesus recommends 77 times!

If the number 77 seems ludicrous, just wait! Jesus begins the parable by saying that a servant owed his master an astounding amount of money...ten thousand talents! The talent was the highest unit of currency and ten thousand the highest Greek numeral. Our equivalent today might be about a billion dollars...or more! Keep in mind, a billion seconds is about 31.5 years, while a million seconds is about 11.5 days. The point is the debt is impossibly huge. The servant is extremely bold for even daring to ask forgiveness for such a debt!

The master or king in this parable represents God, Who simply shows unlimited forgiveness by canceling the servant's debt.

Jesus uses the first half of this parable to paint a picture of just how forgiving our God is. The measure of forgiveness Peter has received—the measure **WE** have received is impossible for us to wrap our minds around.

- What does the image of God as a king who forgives an insane amount of debt out of His compassion tell us about what God is like and what is important to Him?
- What does it tell us about our worth to Him?

Week 6 - Day 1 - Monday, April 7

Spend a moment in prayer reflecting on the scriptures today and what God might be calling you to do in response to them. Use this page to answer today's questions, write out a prayer or write out your thoughts.

Week 6 - Day 2 - Tuesday, April 8

Read Matthew 18:28–35

Yesterday, we saw a picture of God's incredible forgiveness for us in the way the master/king forgave his servant of a debt that would have been impossible for him to pay.

Today, we see the servant's ability to then forgive the debt of another in action.

The servant leaves, debt cancelled, family safe and immediately runs into someone who owes him, let's say, \$1600 (the number in question is about 1/600,000 of what the first servant owed). He chokes the man and demands to be paid back his \$1600. The man asks for patience and mercy but the first servant—who was forgiven an unsurmountable amount himself—has the man who cannot immediately pay him back thrown in prison.

Word gets back to the king/master (hint: God sees all!), who confronts the servant, rescinds his unlimited

forgiveness and sends the "evil servant" to be tortured until he can pay up! Then, Jesus says "So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

- Why does Jesus compare the first servant's inability to forgive with God's great ability to forgive? Why does God expect us to have unlimited forgiveness for others?
- What does this tell us about the purposes of God's forgiveness? Is God's forgiveness only for our good? Is there more to it?
- What does this tell us about how much God values reconciliation?

Week 6 - Day 2 - Tuesday, April 8

Spend a moment in prayer reflecting on the scriptures today and what God might be calling you to do in response to them. Use this page to answer today's questions, write out a prayer or write out your thoughts.

Week 6 - Day 3 - Wednesday, April 9

Read Matthew 19:27–20:7

Chapter 19 verses 27–30 provide the context for this parable. Peter's initial question is *"We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?"*

The implication of course is, *"Hey! Look what we have done. What will our reward be?"* And so, the parable begins in response to a question that points to an expectation of favoritism.

Here is the story: A landowner goes out and hires workers early in the morning for an agreed upon amount. He goes out later in the morning and hires more, saying "I will pay you whatever is right." He goes out and hires workers twice more, apparently saying the same thing. Close to the end of the workday, he hires even more workers and asks them

to work in his vineyard. At this point our reading for the day ends, but payment will be discussed tomorrow.

- The parable is about favoritism and fairness. What is the expectation for what the workers will be paid?
- Where do you think that expectation comes from?
- Why do you think we, like Peter, often expect to earn what we think we deserve from God and others? What does this say about our human condition?

Week 6 - Day 3 - Wednesday, April 9

Spend a moment in prayer reflecting on the scriptures today and what God might be calling you to do in response to them. Use this page to answer today's questions, write out a prayer or write out your thoughts.

Week 6 - Day 4 - Thursday, April 10

Read Matthew 20:8-16

Yesterday, we began the parable in which a landowner goes out and hires workers early in the morning, mid-morning, at noon, early afternoon and late in the day. We have yet to see them paid, but the expectation is that they will be paid what they have earned for their work.

Instead, when the landowner tells his foreman, "Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first", the payment given does not match the amount of time each person has worked. Every worker is paid the same. The workers who got there early obviously begin to complain because it's not fair! They have worked longer and harder and when it was hottest!

The landowner's response is, "Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?"

The landowner in the story represents God. The payment each worker receives is the salvation God so generously gives us. **Ephesians 2:8-9** says, *"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from you; it is the gift of God; it is not from works, so no one may boast"*.

But so often, we **WANT** to try to earn our salvation! We want God to favor us and prefer us for what we do, but that's simply not His way!

- What does it mean to you that you cannot earn your salvation?
- Have you ever met someone who was "late" to faith? Did it bother you that they received the same gift of salvation as someone who has been a Christian their whole life?
- What can we celebrate today about God's generous nature when it comes to salvation?

Week 6 - Day 4 - Thursday, April 10

Spend a moment in prayer reflecting on the scriptures today and what God might be calling you to do in response to them. Use this page to answer today's questions, write out a prayer or write out your thoughts.

Week 6 - Day 5 - Friday, April 11

Read Matthew 25:31–46

Here is your word of the day:

eschatological (es-cat-a-logical). Eschatology is the doctrine of end times. Today's parable gives us an image of what it will be like at the end of time when the fullness of God's kingdom is consummated. Sadly, it leads us to believe that some will be allowed into God's eternal presence, while others will not.

A common misunderstanding of this parable is that our works earn us entrance into the Kingdom of God. But we cannot do enough works to earn our way into heaven. We are saved when we choose to receive God's gift of saving grace. This parable calls us to demonstrate our faith by doing works that Jesus did. This includes, but is not limited to, feeding the hungry or thirsty, providing shelter for strangers and clothes for the naked. It reminds us to care for the sick and the incarcerated.

- What is your first response when you see someone with a real felt need?
- When are you inclined to help someone versus when you think that a person is untrustworthy?
- At St. Andrew's we often prioritize serving children who need more help than many adults. How have you participated in these missions through our church or through another ministry?
- What works do you do in response to God's gracious gift of salvation?

Week 6 - Day 5 - Friday, April 11

Spend a moment in prayer reflecting on the scriptures today and what God might be calling you to do in response to them. Use this page to answer today's questions, write out a prayer or write out your thoughts.

Week 7 - Day 1 - Monday, April 14

We have completed our journey through Jesus' parables recorded in the Gospel of Matthew, but we aren't quite done yet. Yesterday was Palm Sunday and churches all around the world remembered and celebrated Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem. Palm Sunday kicks off Holy week (the week leading up to Jesus' death and resurrection on Easter Sunday). The things that happened during this week changed the world. In fact, those events are still changing us today.

This week's readings will be longer because we are going to read everything that lead to the cross. We will also be shifting to the Gospel of Mark because he does a better job of recording the days each event takes place, though the corresponding passages in Matthew will be provided as well.

Read Mark 11:12-19 (Matthew 21:12-22)

Monday of Holy Week:

Following Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, Jesus returns the next day and this is where we read the stories of Jesus cursing the fig tree and clearing out or cleansing the Temple. Jesus is angry that the fig tree was proclaiming on the outside something it wasn't. It showed it had fruit, but there was no fruit to eat. He was also angry that the Temple, which was to be a house of prayer for the nations, had been turned into a den of thieves.

- In what ways might you be like the fig tree (proclaiming to be something or someone on the outside that you aren't on the inside)?
- How can you apply Jesus' actions in the Temple to your own life to ensure your "temple" (your body) is dedicated to God?

Week 7 - Day 1 - Monday, April 14

Spend a moment in prayer reflecting on the scriptures today and what God might be calling you to do in response to them. Use this page to answer today's questions, write out a prayer or write out your thoughts.

Week 7 - Day 2 - Tuesday, April 15

Read Mark 11:20–13:37

(Matthew 21:23–26:5)

Tuesday of Holy Week: Jesus returns to the Temple where He is confronted by the religious leaders for His actions from the day before. The Pharisees dispute His authority, which leads to Jesus teaching on multiple things, including: the six parables we have covered on Fridays of this study and our Lenten sermon series has covered on Sunday mornings; on paying taxes; the greatest commandment; and a prophecy concerning the future. Jesus also rebukes the Sadducees who deny the resurrection and rebukes the Pharisees with the seven woes.

- In what ways can you better love your neighbor as yourself?
- In reflecting on the widow's offering (12:41–44), how does this story challenge your perspective on generosity?
- In what areas of your life can you practice giving sacrificially, even when it may feel like you have little to offer?
- In reflecting on the greatest commandment (12:28–34), what would it look like for you to love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength this week?

Week 7 - Day 2 - Tuesday, April 15

Spend a moment in prayer reflecting on the scriptures today and what God might be calling you to do in response to them. Use this page to answer today's questions, write out a prayer or write out your thoughts.

Week 7 - Day 3 - Wednesday, April 16

Read Mark 14:1-11 (Matthew 26:6-16)

Wednesday of Holy Week: We are now just two days away from Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread. After two stressful days of tension and heated interactions with the religious leaders, this was more than likely a day of rest for Jesus and His disciples. Consider it the calm before the storm. No parables. No rebukes. No public teaching. No interactions with the religious leaders out to get Him. According to Mark, just the beautiful story of Jesus being anointed at the home of Simon, a man who had previously had leprosy.

Although some of the disciples were upset at this woman for “wasting” such expensive perfume, Jesus puts them in their place and shockingly reveals that she has anointed His body for burial. Jesus was much closer to being crucified than any of them could have imagined.

We also read on this day that Judas goes to meet with the leading priests with the intention to betray Jesus. This is the very thing the religious leaders needed to finally get Him.

- What does the story of Jesus being anointed reveal about the depth of love and devotion this woman had for Jesus?
- In what ways does this story challenge your understanding of what it means to give generously to God?
- What are some practical ways you can demonstrate a similar level of devotion to Jesus this week?
- Reflect on a time where you may have experienced a moment of deep worship or commitment to God where you felt compelled to give something of great value.

Week 7 - Day 3 - Wednesday, April 16

Spend a moment in prayer reflecting on the scriptures today and what God might be calling you to do in response to them. Use this page to answer today's questions, write out a prayer or write out your thoughts.

Week 7 - Day 4 - Thursday, April 17

Read Mark 14:12–52 (Matthew 26:17–56)

Maundy Thursday: In an upper room, Jesus prepares both Himself and His disciples for His death during what we have come to call the Last Supper. As Jesus leads them in the Holy Passover meal, He uses it to begin a New Covenant. The broken bread represents His soon to be broken body and the wine represents His soon to be shed blood.

Following dinner, Jesus leads the disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane, where He asks them to keep watch with Him while He prays. In agony as He faces His impending death, Jesus pleads with His father to *“take this cup of suffering away from me.”* This is also where we see the incredible love and trust Jesus has in the Father as He ends His prayer with the statement, *“Yet I want Your will to be done, not mine.”*

- What is the significance of the Passover meal in Jewish tradition? (Read Exodus 12) How does the symbolism of the Passover lamb connect to Jesus as the “Lamb of God” who takes away the sins of the world?
- Jesus chooses to share the Last Supper and begin a new covenant with His disciples, even with the knowledge that they would soon betray and deny knowing Him. What does this tell you about God’s love for us?
- What can we learn from the way Jesus prayed in the garden, particularly His submission to the Father’s will?

Week 7 - Day 4 - Thursday, April 17

Spend a moment in prayer reflecting on the scriptures today and what God might be calling you to do in response to them. Use this page to answer today's questions, write out a prayer or write out your thoughts.

Week 7 - Day 5 - Friday, April 18

Read Mark 14:53–15:47
(Matthew 26:57–27:61)

Good Friday: The day begins just after midnight as Jesus has now been betrayed and arrested. The next few hours are marked by multiple trials, false witnesses, angry mobs, denial, mocking, brutal beatings, darkness and ultimately crucifixion and burial.

So why do we call this horrible day in history Good Friday? Jesus' death was the ultimate sacrifice for our sins, saving us from death. Jesus did for us what we couldn't do for ourselves. Paul writes in Romans 5:8, *"God showed His great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners."* And Peter writes in 1 Peter 3:18, *"Christ suffered for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but He died for sinners to bring you safely home to God. He suffered physical death, but He was raised to life in the Spirit."*

While the things done to Jesus on that day were far from good, the results of His death and resurrection are very good.

- In reflecting on Peter's denial of Jesus (14:16–72), what factors do you think contributed to it?
- In what ways have you denied Jesus this week? Or another way to think about it, in what situations have you chosen something or someone over following Jesus?
- What significance do you see in the tearing of the Temple veil (15:38) at the moment of Jesus' death?
- As you reflect on the events of Good Friday, what emotions and thoughts do you have?

Week 7 - Day 5 - Friday, April 18

Spend a moment in prayer reflecting on the scriptures today and what God might be calling you to do in response to them. Use this page to answer today's questions, write out a prayer or write out your thoughts.

Words to Live By Sermon Series

Sunday, March 9



Parable of the Two Sons

◦ Matthew 21:28-32

Sunday, March 16



Parable of the Evil Farmers

◦ Matthew 21:33-44

Sunday, March 23



Parable of the Great Feast

◦ Matthew 22:2-14

Sunday, March 30



Parable of the 10 Bridesmaids

◦ Matthew 25:1-13

Sunday, April 6



Parable of the Three Servants

◦ Matthew 25:14-30

Sunday, April 13



Parable of the Sheep & Goats

◦ Matthew 25:31-46

Sunday, April 20



Easter Sunday

Join us for Holy Week & Easter!

- **Easter Hop Family Dance**

- Friday, April 11 from 6:00 to 7:30 pm

- **Holy Week Services**

- Maundy Thursday, April 17 @ 6:30 pm
- Good Friday, April 18 @ 6:30 pm

- **Easter Services**

- Saturday, April 19 @ 5:00 pm
- Sunday, April 20 @ 9:00 am
- Sunday, April 20 @ 10:30 am

