



THE PARABLES OF JESUS

Week 4

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Recap

Parables use images from everyday life, but with a twist. We need to recognize that their message is meant to convict and convert, and we may need to have our hearts opened.

To help us hear the parables, we need to place them in the context:

- of the ancient world in and to which Jesus taught
- of Jesus's wider ministry and mission.

The "kingdom of God/heaven" is:

- The arrival of the long-prophesied intervention of God
- Whenever and wherever God reigns
- A near, powerful, down-to-earth revolution

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Recap

In the Parable of the “Pesky Widow”

- Understanding the context of honor/shame helps understand it
- The punchline comes first to give us a lens through which to understand it
- God is paradoxically both like and unlike the judge
- We are encouraged to be bold in faith and in prayer, rebelling against the status quo and in collusion with God

In the Parable of “Those Ungrateful Laborers”

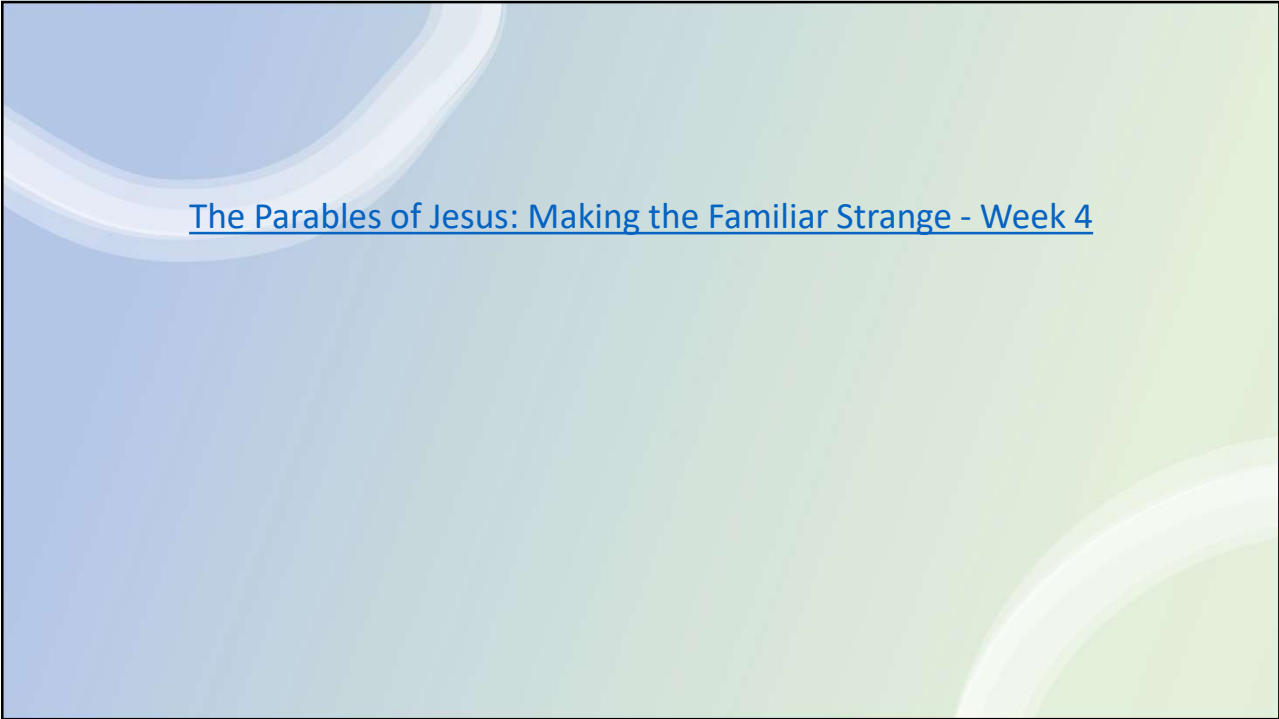
- How Jesus tells the parable helps reveal the implications of such a story
- The listeners first assume the landowner is being a frugal businessman by hiring workers throughout the day, then pays every worker the same no matter when they were hired

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Going Further

- How does the “respectable sin” of envy crop up in your life?
- What other “respectable sins” might we find ourselves guilty of?
- How might the character of God, especially as exhibited in this parable, help us recognize and overcome such faults and be better laborers for God’s kingdom?

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The Parables of Jesus: Making the Familiar Strange - Week 4

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Going Further

This parable asks us to recognize, similarly, that all we possess is ultimately not “our own,” but God’s.

- How can we keep this basic tenet in mind?
- How can we be constantly aware that all we have is from God?
- How does this inform or transform the way we think about our money, our talents and gifts, and other resources?

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Going Further

If our stewardship of the resources God has given us is one of “the most reliable indicators of the authenticity of our faith,”

- How does the message of parable sit with you?
- How would you account for your “shrewdness” with the resources that God has given to you?
- How have you, to use Wesley’s words, made, saved, and given “as much as you can” for the sake of God’s kingdom?
- Where might we have room to grow in our reliance upon God and our stewardship of the resources he has entrusted to us?

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For Next Week

- How might a parish’s approach to stewardship benefit from a deeper dive into this parable?
- How could we, as communities of faith, look to our buildings, endowments, staff, programs, and more as resources given to us by God for the advancement of God’s kingdom values in the world?
- How should our stewardship campaigns be transformed by the message of this parable?
- Can you think of any other ways your parish or community of faith may benefit and grow from reflecting on God’s generosity and our subsequent responsibility?

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