

# PARABLES

IN LUKE

The title 'PARABLES' is written in large, bold, white, sans-serif capital letters. A vertical line representing a wheat stalk is positioned between the 'B' and 'L'. A small white silhouette of a sheep is perched on top of the 'S'. Below the main title, the words 'IN LUKE' are written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font.

4 studies in Luke

For groups, individuals or 1:1

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**Key Verses:**

15:20 – 21 “But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’”

**Points to Note:**

Jesus defines sin differently to how we might! The younger son’s offence is not that he engaged in “wild living” but that he separated himself from, and rejected his father. This is the essence of sin.

Similarly, Jesus pictures God differently to how many today do, describing God as a waiting, searching, forgiving, lavishing, celebrating father.

**Key Verses:**

16:8 - 9 “For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light.  
<sup>9</sup> I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.”

**Points to Note:**

Note that it is not the manager’s dishonesty that is commended, either in the parable, or by extension, by Jesus himself. Jesus commends the manager’s response now, in the light of a certain future.

Jesus says that Christian people should respond now, in the light of the certain future also, particularly in how we use money in the light of heaven

The question we're presented with is, how can we use worldly wealth to get others to heaven?

**Study 3                      The Poor Rich Man                      Luke 16:19 - 31**

**Key Verse**

16:31 "He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.' "

**Points to Note:**

The two men do not end up in their respective eternal destinies because of their state of wealth.

The goal of the parable is not to give us a detailed cosmology or understanding of the "geography" of heaven and hell!

Keep observing the rich man's attitude to Lazarus even after death.

Jesus' statement in verse 31 speaks loudly today when many people say they would believe in him if he were to perform some miracle in front of them.

**Study 4                      The Man Who  
                                    Went Home Justified                      Luke 18:9 - 17**

**Key Verses**

18:14 "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt

themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

18:17 “Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”

**Points to Note:**

Try and grasp something of the shock of the “turning of the tables” in this parable. Tax collectors were despised.

Pharisees were considered legalistically righteous. If anyone could claim to be right with God, it was a Pharisee.

There is only one way into right relationship with God and it's not the way humanity expects!

## The Searching God

Luke 15

Can you recall a time when you searched for something you had lost?

Did you find what you were looking for?

How did you feel while searching?

Think of people you know.

How do they imagine God to be? What characteristics or attributes do they ascribe to God?

How would they define “sin”?

### **Read Luke 15:1 - 7**

Why do the religious leaders object to what Jesus is doing?

If you were asked to identify the one major point of the parable, what would you say?



How is Jesus' parable of the lost sheep a response to the religious leaders' mutterings?

What one attribute or characteristic of God is most demonstrated in this parable?

**Read Luke 15:8 - 10**

What one attribute or characteristic of God is most demonstrated in this second parable?

Why do you think Jesus tells this second very similar parable, and then follows it with another on the same topic?

Why does Jesus speak of "one sinner who repents" even though neither of these first two parables involves a sinner repenting?

**Read Luke 15:11 - 32**

What does the younger son:

- Think

- Say

- Do?

What do the younger brother's actions tell us about what is necessary for forgiveness and reconciliation with God?

Jesus uses this parable to radically re-define what makes someone a sinner. The primary offence of the younger son was not that he lived wildly, but that he rejected, and separated himself from, his father. How do we see those two elements of rejection and separation in all sinful behaviour?

What do you notice about the father's response to his repentant returning son?

What is our role in coming to God for forgiveness?  
What is God's role?

Jesus pictures God as a searching, embracing, forgiving, celebrating father. How is this at odds with the understanding of God the religious leaders seem to have?

How does the older son view his father's generous and gracious welcome of his younger brother?

While this parable is sometimes called "the parable of the lost son" it could perhaps be called "the parable of the lost *sons*." What do you think?

How have you experienced the tension between the two responses to God's gracious love that we see demonstrated in this parable?

Think back to the religious leaders' objection to Jesus ministry at the beginning of the chapter.

In what ways are they like the older brother in the parable?

How have they misunderstood God's mission?

How can we celebrate God's lavish and generous love in such a way that draws in not only the "younger brothers" who recognise their rejection and separation from God, but also the "older brothers" who think they have no need of such gracious forgiveness?

## The Shrewd Disciple

Luke 16:1 - 15

How do you respond when you hear stories of business people cheating others?

What are some things that you have heard people say about how we should use or think about money?

What have you heard *Christian* people say about how we ought to think about money?

If your brain works visually, draw a picture of the relationship between you and money!

### Read Luke 16:1 - 15

What is your reaction to this parable, both intellectually and emotionally?

It's important that we understand the context correctly! To whom is Jesus speaking? Who is within ear-shot?

What is the guaranteed certain future that the dishonest manager faces?

How does he act in the light of the guaranteed certain future?

What does the dishonest manager hope to achieve?

What is it about the manager's behaviour that the master commends?

Who are the two groups of people that Jesus contrasts in his follow-up to the parable?

What is the guaranteed certain future that "people of the light" face?

What needs to happen to people in order for them to welcome us into heaven?

What is the major point about money that Jesus is teaching in this parable?

Why do you think Jesus chooses to teach such a challenging message through a parable?

What do you find hard about Jesus' words in verse 15?

Why do you think this parable follows on immediately after the lost and found parables in chapter 15?

How can Christian people use "worldly wealth" to make friends who will welcome us into heaven?

Are there ways in which we can be “more shrewd” in our use of money to bring people under the sound of the gospel?

Does this parable and Jesus’ explanation, challenge any ideas you have about evangelism?



## The Poor Rich Man

Luke 16:19 - 31

Have you ever been up close to either extreme wealth or extreme poverty?

How did it make you feel?

What concepts of heaven and hell do people you know hold?

How do they imagine that one gets to either place?!

### Read Luke 16:19 - 31

What would you say is the single main point of the parable?

*Note that to be at "Abraham's side" in this typically Jewish parable, is to be with God*

Lazarus is the only person in all of Jesus' parables to be given a name. His name means "God is my helper." What does Jesus add to the story by giving his character this name?

What is the overwhelming picture of hell ("hades")?

In addition to the physical agony, what torment is pictured in hell?

What does the rich man's attitude towards Lazarus, even in such a place of torment tell us about his heart?

Despite his selfishness and disrespect, the rich man does have concern for his family. Who are those for whom you feel this same way?

What do you think of Abraham's answer?

In the ancient world there were many stories about someone being sent back from the afterlife to warn those still alive of what lay in store. How does the different ending in Jesus' story help make the point he is trying to communicate?

Do you see any similarities between this parable and the parable of the lost son in Luke 15?

Do you see any similarities between the conduct of the rich man and the behaviour of the religious leaders (Pharisees and teachers of the law) who have featured in Luke 15 & 16?

What do verses 29 - 31 say to us about the place of the Old Testament in people coming to salvation?

How will someone who understands “Moses and the Prophets” respond to Jesus?

Imagine someone said to you, “If I could see Jesus face to face, I’d believe, but without that, I won’t.” In the light of this passage, how would you respond?

How does this parable challenge us about the dangers of wealth making us blind to other realities?

If people “will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead” (v 31), why do Christians (and the Apostle Paul, ie 1 Corinthians 15!) make such a big point about the resurrection?

Reflecting on this parable and the three in chapter 15, what have we learned about how someone gets into a right relationship with God for eternity?

## The Man Who Went Home Justified

Luke 18:9 - 17

Which groups of people do you find it easy to look down on?

What makes you fall into this trap?

Is there something you used to do as a child that you wish you were able to do now?

What kind of people do your friends imagine God wants to welcome into heaven?

### Read Luke 18:9 - 17

What is the audience of this parable likely to think about both the Pharisee and the tax collector?

Compare the two men in the parable with regard to their:

Position & posture

View of themselves

Attitude to God

Words

What is the surprise in the story?

What is the one main point that Jesus is trying to communicate through the parable?

What reason does Jesus give as to why the tax collector went home justified?

How is his justification not simply because of his works (his acceptable prayer) which would be contradictory to the rest of Scripture?

What is the great danger of pride and self-confidence, according to this parable?

Jesus teaches about entering the kingdom, on the example of little children. How does Jesus' teaching here add to our understanding of being "justified before God"?

In what ways are children an example of the humble dependence that Jesus says is the means to being "justified before God"?

What other phrase or expression could we use to describe that Jesus means when he says "justified before God"?

Why is this the way that people can be justified?

How might we be at risk of expressing the same attitude as the Pharisee demonstrates by his prayer?

How can we guard ourselves against the trap of looking down on people who are “confident in their own righteousness” and who “look down on others”?





# TRINITY MOUNT BARKER

A TRINITY NETWORK CHURCH

Office: 9 Hampden Rd

Mount Barker

South Australia 5251

08 8398 2827

[info@tmb.church](mailto:info@tmb.church)

[facebook.com/TrinityMountBarker](https://facebook.com/TrinityMountBarker)

[www.trinitymountbarker.org.au](http://www.trinitymountbarker.org.au)