

T H E S T O R Y

READ THE STORY. EXPERIENCE THE BIBLE.

Chapter 24: No Ordinary Man

Key Question: Who is Jesus and how ought we respond to him?

Teller of Parables

Pages 335–337

Last week we saw Jesus' introduction to the Jews brought hope that the Messiah had finally come. Yet he didn't meet all expectations. This week we look at who Jesus is.

Jesus told many parables. These stories illustrated truths, but they often required careful consideration and a willingness to learn—what Jesus called “ears to hear.” The parable of the sower is one of his most well-known.

1. (a) Briefly describe the four kinds of soil in Jesus' parable (Mark 4:14–20). (b) In your own spiritual journey, have you ever been like the hard path, the shallow soil, or the thorny soil? Explain. (c) What kinds of things can we do to improve the condition of our soil so that the seed of God's message lands in deep soil cleared of thorns?

Jesus explained that the message hidden in a parable is meant to be disclosed.

2. (a) What did Jesus tell his disciples to do with what he says (Mark 4:24a)? (b) How would the effort they put into understanding his words affect how much they understood (4:24b)? (c) What will be given to those who start to understand spiritual things (4:25)? (d) What will happen to those who decide Jesus' sayings are too hard and so ignore or reject them (4:25)? (e) What are practical ways we can consider Jesus' words carefully? (f) What kind of soil are we when our thinking is shallow?

Seeker of the Lost

Pages 337–340

Some of the Pharisees²⁹² and other Jewish leaders were bothered that Jesus spent so much time with “sinners.” Jesus told them some parables that showed where their attitudes were astray.

3. (a) What were the tax collectors and “sinners” doing that bothered some Pharisees and teachers (Luke 15:1)? (b) What did Jesus say a shepherd would do if he lost a sheep (15:4)? (c) What would he do if he found the sheep (15:5–6)? (d) What happens in heaven when a sinner repents (15:7)? (e) What, then, was Jesus—the Good Shepherd—doing by spending time with sinners?

4. (a) What attitude should the Jewish leaders have had towards what Jesus was doing (Luke 15:6–7)? (b) What did the fact that they muttered rather than rejoiced show? (c) How can we cultivate an attitude like Jesus’ towards the lost?

Jesus told a parable about a father and his two sons. The younger son asked for his inheritance early and then wasted it. Starving, he decided to return to his father as a hired man, knowing he wasn’t worthy of being treated as a son.

5. (a) What happened when his father saw him approaching (Luke 15:20)? (b) What was the father’s reaction (15:22–24)? (c) What does this teach us about God’s reaction when someone comes to him in humble repentance after living far astray? (d) Why was the elder son angry (15:28–30)? (e) What attitude should the elder son (and the Pharisees) have had (15:31–32)?

²⁹² This Jewish sect had oral rules by which they determined how righteous people were. They kept away from people they considered “unclean.”

Teacher of Truth

Pages 340–343

Matthew recorded a sermon Jesus gave while sitting on a mountainside.

6. (a) Why and how do hypocrites pray (Matthew 6:5)? (b) How should we pray instead (6:6)? (c) What will God do for those who pray in secret (6:6)? (d) Why does Jesus tell his followers that God rewards certain actions?

7. (a) Why did the pagans babble their prayers to their gods over and over (6:7)? (b) Why is that not necessary with our Father in heaven (6:8)? (c) What are some reasons God wants us to pray?

Jesus taught on how to keep our soil free from choking thorns.

8. (a) According to Jesus, what two masters can we not serve (Matthew 6:24)? (b) Give two examples of situations where we must make a choice between serving God and money. (c) What kind of soil are we when we put money before God?

9. (a) What does Jesus say not to worry about (Matthew 6:31)? (b) Why shouldn't we worry about these (6:32)? (c) What should we do instead (6:33)? (d) What will be the result of doing this (6:33)? (e) What kind of soil are we when we put these cares before God's kingdom? (f) What is a way you can seek God's kingdom and righteousness first today?

10. Write a prayer that gives a concern to God and expresses thanks for his loving care.

Jesus ended his sermon with an analogy that enforced his message.

11. (a) What does the wise person do with Jesus' words (Matthew 7:24)? (b) What is he like (7:24–25)? (c) What does the foolish person do with Jesus' words (7:26)? (d) What is he like (7:27)? (e) Why is listening to Jesus without putting his words into practice silly? (f) What lesson from the Sermon on the Mount can you put into practice today?

Master of Nature, Spirits & Life

Pages 343–348

After a long day of teaching, Jesus told the disciples to cross the Sea of Galilee in a boat.

12. (a) What do we learn about Jesus from Mark 4:37–41? (b) Why didn't the disciples need to be afraid?

When they landed, a demon-possessed man came to meet him.

13. What do we learn about Jesus from Mark 5:7–13?

Jairus, a synagogue ruler, asked Jesus to come heal his dying daughter.²⁹³ But before he arrived, news reached them that the child had died. Jesus insisted on going anyway.

14. What do we learn about Jesus from Mark 5:41–42?

Jesus tried to take the disciples someplace quiet where they could rest and eat, but crowds followed him everywhere. Moved with compassion, Jesus asked his disciples to do something surprising: feed the 5,000 men and their families with five bread loaves and two fish.

15. What do we learn about Jesus from Mark 6:41–43?

²⁹³ On his way, Jesus healed a woman: see [Jesus and the Timid Woman](#).

Bread of Life

Pages 348–351

Jesus sent the disciples off in a boat, and then went to pray alone until nearly dawn.

16. (a) What do we learn about Jesus from Matthew 14:25? (b) What caused Peter to begin to sink (14:29–31)? (c) What analogy can we make from this that can apply to things that frighten us when we're doing what Christ has called us to do? (d) What did Jesus do when Peter cried out for help, and how can that encourage us when we don't respond to something with as much faith as we would have liked (14:31–32)? (e) How did the disciples respond to all this (14:33)? (f) What does the fact that Jesus did not stop the disciples from responding this way teach us?²⁹⁴

The people whom Jesus had miraculously fed searched for and found him.

17. (a) What did Jesus say their real reason for looking for him was (John 6:26)? (b) What did he tell them to do (6:27)? (c) When they asked him to explain this work, what did Jesus reply (6:29)?

²⁹⁴ Remember from last week's lesson that Jesus told Satan people are to worship God only (Matthew 4:10).

Still fixated on their desire to feed their physical bodies, they began to grumble and argue.

18. (a) What did Jesus say he was (John 6:48)? (b) What happens to those who eat of the Bread of Life (6:50)? (c) What did Jesus mean when he said, “This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world” (6:51)? (d) Many people found this teaching too hard and quit following him (6:60, 66). What does this tell us about why they followed Jesus? (e) What kind of soil were they? (f) Why do you think Jesus refused to keep feeding the crowds, when that would have given him more followers?²⁹⁵

19. According to Peter, why should people follow Jesus even if he doesn't always give them what they want and sometimes says things that are hard to understand (John 6:68–69)?

20. Review what you've learned about who Jesus is. Then write a worshipful prayer, song, or poem.

This week we got to know more about who this amazing man Jesus was. Next week we'll see what happens when Jesus speaks more plainly about his purpose for coming to earth.

²⁹⁵ Consider Jesus' purpose, the needs of the people who left, and the needs of those who remained.