

Parables ***Stories Jesus Told***

Week 1: *The Unjust Judge*

Thesis: God is good, kind, and just.

Objective: To encourage students to pray persistently *because* God is good.

Scripture: Luke 18:1-8 (*Supplemental Texts: Matthew 7:11, James 1:17*).

Series Introduction: What is a parable?

Parables are basically short, fictional stories used to illustrate a truth. Think of your favorite preacher. He or she likely uses a good illustration to help drive home a point or offer a new angle on something. **[Teacher's Note: Have you recently told a great story or used a strong illustration in a message? Assuming the story/illustration was a success, referencing the effectiveness of your story could help illustrate the power of parable.]** These stories help provide tangible examples for difficult concepts. This is just good communication. It makes sense that Jesus utilized this teaching method all the time in His sermons because the lessons and truths He was teaching were pretty hard to wrap your head around. In some cases, Jesus was offering a new approach to life or a new way to understand life, Scripture, relationships, etc. In order to help His listeners understand these lessons, He used stories to help people understand exactly what He was trying to communicate.

The parables are also pretty shocking, especially to their original listeners. You may know some of these shocking parables:

- The Good Samaritan is an extreme story. A man is beaten to within inches of his life. His mortal enemy saves him and is above and beyond generous to him. That's extreme!
- A son squanders his inheritance and disowns his father and hits rock bottom, eating pig food. Then, the son is welcomed back to the family with a huge party and his brothers storms out with jealousy. That's pretty dramatic!

- A mustard seed—a tiny, tiny seed—grows into the biggest plant in the entire garden. Wow!
- A shepherd leaves 99 of his sheep to go track down one sheep that wanders away. Why would he do that! Leave 99 sheep to chase after one?

Do you see what I am talking about? For the most part, the parables are shocking, provocative stories to help illustrate provocative truths! God is like the shepherd—relentlessly pursuing us. Wow! God accepts us, even after we royally screw up. Wow! The parables are so dramatic (usually) that they shock the listener into really contemplating a difficult truth.

Transition to Week 1 Message:

So, here is our first example of one of the Parables of Jesus.

Depending on your Bible, it is probably titled either “The Parable of the Persistent Widow” or “The Parable of the Unjust Judge.” That is fascinating to me in and of itself. Those headings are not a part of the original Bible—those headings are added by Bible scholars to help us know what we are about to read. And even though they are not “The Bible,” they are really helpful because it shows how different scholars and editors are choosing to interpret the parable. Depending on what “title” they give the parable, it shows what (and who) they think the parable is really about. So—is this parable about the persistent widow or about the unjust judge? Well—let’s see!

Body:

Luke 18:1-8 (NIV): *Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said: “In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’ “For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care what people think, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually come and attack me!’” And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep*

putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"

At first blush, this seems like a parable to explain that we should never give up when we pray to God. And it is! In fact, the opening line of the parable helps us understand the purpose of the parable:

Luke 18:1 (NIV): *Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.*

The main point of the parable is to teach us to pray and not give up.

When you pray, you should be persistent. Don't give up! Knock down the doors of heaven! Now, you may have already noticed, but what is the widow praying for? She is praying for justice! This widow was being mistreated by someone and she is praying that this judge will deal with someone who is acting unjustly toward her. Her prayers are not for a sport's car or a bigger boat, they are for justice to be done! And she is relentless. The text says, "For some time" the judge refused, meaning that this woman showed up consistently, over time, with the same plea. And guess what? Eventually, she wears this judge out and he grants her request. And so the parable, as Jesus says in verse one, is about how to pray. Pray persistently. Pray over time. Don't give up. Be tenacious!

[**Teacher's Note:** Do you have a story about praying for something over a long period of time? What eventually happened? How did that journey impact you? How did it change your view of God?] And while prayer is often the application of this parable, there is another truth in this story that can often get overlooked. Did you notice the description of the judge?

Luke 18:2 (NIV): *In a certain town there was a judge who **neither feared God nor cared what people thought...***

Luke 18:4 (NIV): *'Even though I **don't fear God or care what people think**, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually come and attack me!'"*

Luke 18:6 (NIV): *"Listen to what the **unjust judge** says..."*

This judge is a bad man! He does not fear God. He doesn't care what people think. Remember when we talked about parables being shocking? Well, a judge that doesn't care about justice is kind of shocking! Why does Jesus say three times that the judge is a bad dude? Well, it has to do with

Parables: Stories Jesus Told
Week 2: The Good Samaritan

Thesis: Jesus calls us to radically love those around us.

Objective: To help students see how they can be a “loving neighbor” to those around them.

1. Have you ever heard this story before? What lessons have you typically taken from The Good Samaritan?
2. Are you a “religious” person? Is this a good thing? Bad thing? Neutral?
3. What is the difference between the questions, “Who is my neighbor” and “How can I be a neighbor?”
4. Has your life been more about you or others lately? This is a really good, quick, and convicting question to evaluate if you are really being a good neighbor to those around you. When is the last time you did something kind and/or sacrificial for someone else?
5. What do you think tunnel vision means? Why do you think we struggle with tunnel vision? How can we make sure that we see the people in our “peripheral vision?”
6. What types of needs might be sitting on the side of your road?
7. Have you ever been hurting on the side of the road and experienced someone being kind and generous to you? How did that make you feel? Why do you think that person helped you?
8. What is one way that you can be a loving neighbor to those around you this week?

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