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LISTEN TO JESUS

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STUDY NOTES ON
JESUS' PARABLES IN
MATTHEW'S GOSPEL
FOR THE 4PM TALKS

READING THROUGH MATTHEW TOGETHER:

SUNDAY

10AM

4PM

FOLLOW JESUS:

LISTEN TO JESUS:

| | | |
|---------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 7TH JANUARY | BELOVED SON | THE LAMP |
| 14TH JANUARY | RESISTING TEMPTATION | THE SPECK & LOG |
| 21ST JANUARY | CALLING DISCIPLES | NEW CLOTH |
| 28TH JANUARY | TEACHING BLESSING | THE SOWER |
| 4TH FEBRUARY | REJECTING HYPOCRISY | SEED & LEAVEN |
| 11TH FEBRUARY | THE NARROW GATE | TREASURE & PEARL |
| 18TH FEBRUARY | FULFILLING LAW | <i>(HEALING SERVICE)</i> |
| 25TH FEBRUARY | TEACHING PARABLES | THE NET |
| 3RD MARCH | WORKING MIRACLES | UNFORGIVING SERVANT |
| 10TH MARCH | CHOOSING THE CROSS | VINEYARD WORKERS |
| 17TH MARCH | MODELLING FAITHFULNESS | TWO SONS |
| 24TH MARCH | THE HUMBLE KING | MARRIAGE FEAST |
| 31ST MARCH | HE'S ALIVE! | <i>(JOINT EASTER AT 10)</i> |
| 7TH APRIL | SHARING THE NEWS | <i>(NO SERVICE)</i> |



BACKGROUND & INTRODUCTION

Matthew, who was also known as Levi, is most likely to have written his Gospel around the end of the 50s or 60s AD. He had been a tax collector before following Jesus and becoming a disciple. Some scholars have suggested that the original group he wrote for were the early Christians in Antioch, Syria. This group of believers were a mix of Jews and Gentiles, and you can hear this reflected in the way the Gospel is written.

Matthew's Gospel recounts how Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah who had been promised to the Israelites throughout the story told in the Old Testament, was God himself, come to his creation to bring God's kingdom. He died, rose again and sent his followers to tell this good news (gospel) to the ends of the earth.

Matthew wants to show his readers that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah, that he is the true descendant of King David, and the fulfillment of God's promises. Matthew's account of what happened is an encouragement to Jewish and Gentile Christians to stand strong despite those who oppose their faith. We can have confidence, knowing that through faith in Jesus, we have citizenship in God's kingdom. Jesus the Messiah has come to save us from our sin, and this offer is for all who believe in him.

For a full introduction with timeline and maps, go to:

esv.org/resources/esv-global-study-bible/introduction-to-matthew/





“ READ
MATTHEW
5:14-16 „

I. LISTEN TO JESUS: PARABLE OF THE LAMP

Background and Context:

- Earlier in their history, God had given his people Israel a role as a light to the nations (Isaiah 42:6; 49:6) but they hadn't always lived up to it.
- In John's Gospel, Jesus describes Himself as the light of the world.
- Jesus commonly refers to God as Father, showing their unity as 3in1.
- The concept of God as a father was common throughout Israel's history.
- Here, Jesus extends this metaphor to all members of his kingdom, people who belong to him can call God 'Father'.

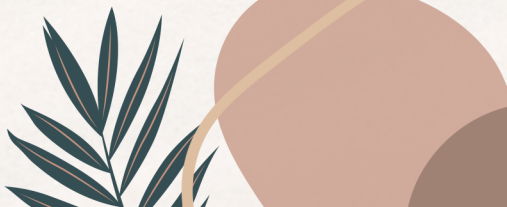
What was Jesus teaching then:

- **Simple starter:** Why is it pointless to make a light then hide it?
- What do you think is Jesus using the metaphor of 'your light' to mean?
- Who is meant to receive the glory when believers live well?

How do we apply that to our own life and faith:

- What could be a modern equivalent to this parable?
- What does it mean for us to shine God's light in the way we live?
- Why might we be tempted to cover it up or hide it?
- Can you think of ways we can glorify God in the way we live and speak?
- What will you ask God's help with to 'shine your light' this week?

SPACE FOR NOTES, THOUGHTS, QUESTIONS, PRAYER ETC





“ READ
MATTHEW
7:1-5 ”

II. LISTEN TO JESUS: PARABLE OF THE SPECK & LOG

Background and Context:

- The Greek verb translated ‘judge’, means expressing a negative opinion about someone.
- ‘brother’ had referred to a fellow Jew and is now also opened up to any kingdom member (someone else following Christ).

What was Jesus teaching then:

- Is there a balance to the way Jesus describes judging and being judged?
- What is the metaphor of the speck and the plank referring to?
- What does Jesus mean when he says these people are hypocrites?

How do we apply that to our own life and faith:

- Why is it so tempting to see problems in others, but not ourselves?
- Is there a way of helping others, and even speaking against what’s wrong, without judging like a hypocrite?
- Does Jesus picture us being able to sort out problems, and help others?
- Can you pray for the grace to recognise your own flaws first?

SPACE FOR NOTES, THOUGHTS, QUESTIONS, PRAYER ETC



“ READ
MATTHEW
9:14-17 „

III. LISTEN TO JESUS: PARABLE OF THE NEW CLOTH

Background and Context:

- Wine was central to the life of ancient Israel, & it features prominently in the Old Testament.
- New skins were also used during fermentation; they would stretch and grow as the carbon dioxide was released.
- Older skins no longer able to stretch would burst if used for this purpose

What was Jesus teaching then:

- If fasting was important, why does Jesus say it's ok for his followers not to fast at that time?
- Who is he claiming to be by saying that?
- What is Jesus saying about the new things God is doing now he's here?

How do we apply that to our own life and faith:

- Do you find you generally prefer old and familiar, or new and different?
- What does it mean for Jesus to be doing a new thing?
- How might the symbolism of the wine relate to what Jesus has now come to bring?
- Do you feel you've been filled with the presence of his Spirit?

SPACE FOR NOTES, THOUGHTS, QUESTIONS, PRAYER ETC



“READ
MATTHEW
13:1-23,”

IV. LISTEN TO JESUS: PARABLE OF THE SOWER

Background and Context:

- Rabbis used parables for illustrative purposes and typically provided an explanation. Jesus, however, did not always offer an interpretation.
- His followers likely viewed some of His parables as riddles rather than illustrations. Jesus indicates that this was an intentional feature of His teaching ministry.
- Just as some in Isaiah's day rejected the message of God, they now reject the kingdom of God as offered by Jesus. Demonstrating that he is the fulfilment of the prophecies.

What was Jesus teaching then:

- How would you summarise this parable?
- What do the seed and soil each represent?
- Is this a strange way for the farmer to sow the seed?
- Do farmers sow their land more than once?

How do we apply that to our own life and faith:

- Have you experienced being like some of the soil in this parable?
- If you've been one in the past and then changed how you receive the message of Jesus, what changed for you?
- What does this story tell us about sharing the good news of Jesus?

SPACE FOR NOTES, THOUGHTS, QUESTIONS, PRAYER ETC

V. LISTEN TO JESUS: PARABLES OF MUSTARD & LEAVEN

“ READ
MATTHEW
13:31-34,,

Background and Context:

- Mustard seed is tiny but grows into a 10-foot-high shrub. It grew alongside the Sea of Galilee and may have been immediately in view of Jesus' hearers.
- Three measures: Approximately 50 pounds—enough to feed about 150 people. Basically invisible when combined with flour, the leaven would become apparent as the dough baked and expanded into a great quantity.

What was Jesus teaching then:

- What is the significance of the mustard seed, in particular?
- Why do you think Jesus then uses yeast and a large amount of flour?
- What does he mean through this pair of short parables?

How do we apply that to our own life and faith:

- Have Jesus words come true about the kingdom starting small and growing?
- Have you thought of yourself as part of the fulfilment of this parable?
- Does it give us confidence to keep inviting people to find new life in Jesus?

“ READ
MATTHEW
13:44-46,,

VI. LISTEN TO JESUS: PARABLES OF TREASURE & PEARLS

Background and Context:

- These two parables describe the great value of the kingdom of heaven.
- Some also see a mirror picture in them, in one the kingdom is of great value. In the other, the kingdom attributes great value to those who are brought in.

What was Jesus teaching then:

- Why does the man in the parable give everything to get the treasure?
- Is there a mirror message with the pearls - who is looking for them?

How do we apply that to our own life and faith:

- Do you see belonging to Jesus as being worth everything?
- What might help you to see that?
- Can you also see yourself as given incredible value by God?
- Are there other stories Jesus told that back up this way of seeing ourselves, Jesus and his kingdom?



VII. LISTEN TO JESUS: PARABLE OF THE NET

“ READ
MATTHEW
13:47-50 ”

Background and Context:

- A drag net is a net with floats on one end and weights on the other. Fishermen cast the net into the sea and allowed the weighted end to sink to a sufficient depth. When they pulled it in, the net scooped up everything in its path.

What was Jesus teaching then:

- Does it impact how you hear this parable to know that original hearers were expecting this separation, but based on religious observance - not this new idea of being saved by trusting Jesus?
- How does this parable relate to the question of why there is still evil in the world?
- What is Jesus explanation for why evil can still occur, and has God given them opportunities to repent (turn away from it) and change?

How do we apply that to our own life and faith:

- Does the net analogy seem less stark when we remember that without the kingdom coming to rescue anyone, all would be lost from God?
- Why is it so important to give people the chance to hear about Jesus?
- From other knowledge of the Bible, what does it take to have ‘righteousness’ or, in other words, to be made right with God?

SPACE FOR NOTES, THOUGHTS, QUESTIONS, PRAYER ETC





“ READ
MATTHEW
18:21-35 ”

VIII. LISTEN TO JESUS: PARABLE OF THE SERVANT

Background and Context:

- 70 x 7 Symbolically represented an unlimited amount in Jewish culture.
- 10,000 talents - The servant owes roughly 150,000 years' worth of wages—an absurd debt intended to shock Jesus' listeners and pale in comparison to the much smaller amount demanded by the servant.
- The Greek text's reference to 10,000 talents represents the largest number used in ancient calculations and the highest monetary unit at that time (one talent was equivalent to 15 years' worth of wages).

What was Jesus teaching then:

- Do you think Jesus means a literal 7x70 times to forgive?
- Who do the various people in the parable represent in Jesus' analogy?
- What is the main point of this parable

How do we apply that to our own life and faith:

- Do you find genuine forgiveness easy?
- Why can it be so hard to truly forgive someone over and over?
- Does Jesus' forgiveness of our sin, help with our forgiveness of others?

SPACE FOR NOTES, THOUGHTS, QUESTIONS, PRAYER ETC



“READ
MATTHEW
20:1-16”

IX. LISTEN TO JESUS: PARABLE OF THE LABOURERS

Background and Context:

- In those days a landowner typically woke early and hired workers to tend fields or harvest crops with wages paid at the end of the day.
- The Greek text identifies the time as the “third hour.” The day was counted from 6 a.m. (first hour) to 6 p.m. (twelfth hour).

What was Jesus teaching then:

- Does the owner of the vineyard have the right to hire at any rate?
- Why are those employed early in the day so outraged?
- What did Jesus mean about earlier and later entrants into the Kingdom?

How do we apply that to our own life and faith:

- Can you think of an equivalent modern day parable that would make a similar point?
- What does it say about God that he doesn't reward the length of our time believing in him or belonging to him, but loves to be generous to all?
- Do you think much about the heritage of our faith? It's roots in Jewish belief? Seeing how Jesus has opened up the kingdom to anyone who believes and trusts in him?

“READ
MATTHEW
21:28-32”

X. LISTEN TO JESUS: PARABLE OF THE TWO SONS

Background and Context:

- Jesus draws on imagery from Isaiah's parable (Isa 5:1–7). In Isaiah, the problem is the lack of fruit. In Jesus' parable, the problem is the tenants.

What was Jesus teaching then:

- What is Jesus saying about our words and actions?
- Why is he so clear on pointing out hypocrisy?
- Would it have been shocking for Jesus to say that tax collectors and prostitutes can be in his kingdom through faith, but not hypocritical religious types?

How do we apply that to our own life and faith:

- Is Jesus saying that these kind of lifestyles are ok?
- What's his main point?
- Do you trust and believe that Jesus welcomes you?



“ READ
MATTHEW
22:1-14 ”

XI. LISTEN TO JESUS: PARABLE OF THE MARRIAGE FEAST

Background and Context:


- Festivities for such an event would have lasted several days.
- Jesus alludes to the great eternal feast, when God's people will enjoy fellowship with the him forever (compare Rev 19:6–10).
- Refusing such an invitation from the king was a shocking insult.
- 'Not dressed in wedding clothes' This man accepted the king's invitation, but on his own terms—which the king found improper.
- 'Weeping and gnashing of teeth.' Jesus is talking about a time of judgement—likely his return. No one will be treated unfairly, and all will get what they wanted. But those who did not want Jesus' offer of forgiveness and new life will discover what they have rejected.

What was Jesus teaching then:

- Who is represented by the King? The Servants? Those originally invited?
- What point is Jesus making to those who had belonged to Israel for many generations?

How do we apply that to our own life and faith:

- Do you believe that Jesus has extended his Kingdom's invite to you?
- Is Jesus worried about what clothes we're wearing or is that a metaphor for something else?
- Are you looking forward to being at the forever party?



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