



A 40-DAY JOURNEY THROUGH
THE PARABLES OF JESUS

THE JESUS

40

Parables
Masterclass

VOLUME TWO · [THEJESUS40.COM](https://thejesus40.com)

Forty stories. One Teacher.

Freely you have received; freely give.

MATTHEW 10:8

This book is free, and it always will be.

Copy it, print it, and give it away to anyone who will read it.

This is the second volume of The Jesus 40. It is written to be read after the 40-day journey, one parable a day, for 40 days.

All scripture quotations are drawn from the four gospels:

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

THE JESUS 40 · VOLUME TWO · THEJESUS40.COM

The disciples came and asked him, Why do you speak to them in parables? He answered, To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven.

MATTHEW 13:10-11

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Before You Begin

You have walked the 40 days. You have met Jesus in his own words, and you have found out what he said is true the only way anyone ever finds out: by doing it. This volume is the next 40.

Jesus taught the deepest truths of heaven using the ordinary furniture of everyday life. Seeds, coins, sheep, dinner tables, a father on a road. He told stories anyone could remember and no one could forget, and he told them for a reason. A story gets past the guard at the door. An argument knocks; a story walks straight in and is already sitting in the room before you decide whether to let it stay.

This is not a masterclass because you will master it. It is a masterclass because you will sit with the Master.

Here is how each day works. You read one parable in his own words. Then the setting he spoke it into, because the first listeners heard things we do not hear. Then what it means. Then one small way to live it before the sun goes down.

Each one closes with a modern echo, the same story retold in the furniture of our world. The echoes are not scripture and are never presented as his words. They exist for one reason: to help you feel the jolt his first listeners felt.

The rules are the same as they were on Day 1. Read in the morning if you can. Do the small thing the same day. If you miss a day, no guilt; pick up where you left off. The goal is direction, not perfection.

Forty stories. One Teacher. Begin.

PART I

The Kingdom of Heaven

PARABLES 1 – 8



What the kingdom is, how it grows, and what it is worth

The Sower

MATTHEW 13:3-9

A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on a path, and the birds came and ate them up. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched, and since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. If you have ears, hear!

THE SETTING

Jesus taught this from a boat to a crowd so large it filled the shoreline. It is the parable he chose to explain first, calling it the key to understanding all the others.

WHAT IT MEANS

The seed is the word of God and it never changes. What changes is the ground. Hard hearts lose it fast, shallow hearts quit when it costs something, crowded hearts let worry and wealth choke it, and open hearts multiply it beyond reason.

LIVE IT TODAY

You cannot control the seed, but you can tend your soil. Clear the path, dig out the rocks, pull the thorns. Make room before the word arrives, not after.

MODERN ECHO

Not scripture

A teacher sent the same message to four students. The first deleted it unread. The second replied with fire emojis and forgot it by Friday. The third meant to act on it, but between two jobs and a full inbox it slipped away. The fourth read it that night, wrote it on a sticky note, and did it every morning. One message. Four phones. Only one changed a life.



Next: The Wheat and the Tares.

The Wheat and the Tares

MATTHEW 13:24-30

He put before them another parable: The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field, but while everybody was asleep an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and then went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?' He answered, 'An enemy has done this.' The slaves said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' But he replied, 'No, for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. Let both of them grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.'

THE SETTING

Tares were a weed that looked almost identical to wheat until harvest. Jesus told this to a crowd asking the oldest question there is: why does evil grow right alongside good?

WHAT IT MEANS

God sees the evil in the field and chooses patience, not because he ignores it but because he refuses to lose one stalk of wheat while pulling weeds. Judgment is real, but it belongs to the harvest and to the Lord of it.

LIVE IT TODAY

Stop appointing yourself the weed-puller of other people's lives. Grow where you are planted, even in a mixed field, and trust the Owner to sort the harvest.

MODERN ECHO

Not scripture

A moderator begged the founder to purge every fake account from the community. The founder said no. Half the accounts you flag are real people on their worst day, he said. Ban them now and you lose them forever. Let it all run to the end of the season. I know my own, and I will know them then.



Next: The Growing Seed.

The Growing Seed

MARK 4:26-29

The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. The earth produces of itself first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle because the harvest has come.

THE SETTING

This is the only parable found in Mark alone. Farmers in the crowd knew the humbling truth of their trade: they could plant and water, but they could not make anything grow.

WHAT IT MEANS

The kingdom grows by God's power, not ours, and mostly while we sleep. Our part is to sow and to harvest. The mystery in between belongs to him.

LIVE IT TODAY

Do your small faithful part today and then rest. Growth you cannot see is still growth. Stop digging up the seed to check on it.

MODERN ECHO

Not scripture

A mother read one page of the gospels with her son every night. No lectures, no results, year after year of what looked like nothing. She fell asleep most nights wondering if any of it landed. At twenty three he called her from another city and said, Mom, I need you to know, it grew.



Next: The Mustard Seed.

The Mustard Seed

MATTHEW 13:31-32

The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.

THE SETTING

Jesus' followers were a small band in an occupied backwater of the Roman empire. Every visible measure said the movement was too small to matter.

WHAT IT MEANS

God delights in laughable beginnings. The kingdom does not arrive impressive. It arrives tiny, then outgrows everything around it and becomes shelter for others.

LIVE IT TODAY

Never despise your small start. One prayer, one changed habit, one act of love is a seed, and seeds are how God builds trees.

MODERN ECHO

Not scripture

Two friends started meeting in a garage on Tuesdays to read what Jesus actually said. No budget, no building, no plan. Ten years later, people they had never met were sleeping soundly, marriages intact, addictions broken, because of what took root on a folding table between a lawnmower and a freezer.



Next: The Leaven.

The Leaven

MATTHEW 13:33

The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.

THE SETTING

Three measures of meal was enough flour to feed a hundred people. The image is a tiny hidden ingredient quietly transforming an enormous batch.

WHAT IT MEANS

The kingdom works from the inside out and mostly out of sight. It does not conquer by force. It permeates, and once it is in the dough nothing stays unchanged.

LIVE IT TODAY

You do not need a platform to change your home, your workplace, or your street. Be the hidden leaven. Let quiet goodness work through everything you touch.

MODERN ECHO

Not scripture

Nobody could explain why the night shift changed. Fewer blowups, more cover-for-you kindness, laughter back in the break room. It took a year for anyone to trace it to the quiet man at station four who forgave fast, spoke well of the absent, and treated the trainee like a person. He never made a speech. He just got into the dough.



Next: The Hidden Treasure.

The Hidden Treasure

MATTHEW 13:44

The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

THE SETTING

Jesus tells this parable alongside the parable of the pearl, back to back, as part of a longer series on what the kingdom of heaven is like. Both stories share the same shape. Someone finds something of extraordinary value, and in response, sells everything they have to get it. The field itself is worthless to anyone else. Its worth is not in the dirt. It is in what is buried underneath, unseen by everyone who walks past it.

WHAT IT MEANS

The man does not sell everything out of obligation or guilt. Scripture is specific that he does it in his joy. That word changes the whole parable. This is not a story about sacrifice for its own sake. It is a story about what happens when someone finally sees the true weight of what they have found, so clearly that giving up everything else stops feeling like a loss at all. The kingdom of heaven does not announce itself as a burden to carry. It reveals itself as a discovery, and the response it produces is joy, not duty.

LIVE IT TODAY

Most people measure a decision by what it costs them. The man in this parable has stopped counting. He is not asking what he is giving up. He is only aware of what he found. Where in your life are you still doing the math, still weighing the cost, when the real question is whether you have found the one thing that makes the rest of the math irrelevant.

MODERN ECHO

Not scripture

A collector stumbled onto a listing everyone else scrolled past, priced at everything he had. He sold the car, emptied the savings, endured the jokes from friends who could not see what he saw. Years later they asked if he regretted it. He laughed. You still think I paid a price, he said. I was not losing anything. I was finally holding the one thing I had spent my whole life missing.



Next: The Pearl of Great Price.

The Pearl of Great Price

MATTHEW 13:45-46

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

THE SETTING

Pearls were the diamonds of the ancient world, and this merchant was an expert who had spent his life appraising the best of them.

WHAT IT MEANS

The hidden treasure was found by accident. The pearl was found by a lifelong seeker. Jesus honors both roads, the stumbler and the searcher, and both end the same way: everything for the one thing.

LIVE IT TODAY

If you have been searching through philosophies, achievements, and experiences for something that finally satisfies, take the seeker's parable personally. When you find him, do not haggle. Buy the pearl.

MODERN ECHO

Not scripture

She had tried everything the wellness industry sold, every retreat, every program, every bestselling path to peace. She was an expert in almost-answers. Then one ordinary morning she read the words of Jesus for herself and went very quiet. She canceled her subscriptions, cleared her shelf of alms, and told her sister, I was not wrong to search. I was wrong to stop at pretty good.



Next: The Net.

The Net

MATTHEW 13:47-50

The kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

THE SETTING

Jesus spoke this to fishermen who had done this exact work every morning of their lives: haul everything in first, sort on the shore after.

WHAT IT MEANS

The invitation of the kingdom is wide open and gathers every kind. But gathering is not the end of the story. A day of sorting comes, and it is done by angels, not by us.

LIVE IT TODAY

Live with both truths: welcome everyone as the net does, and take your own life seriously because the shore is real. Urgency without panic, openness without pretending nothing matters.

MODERN ECHO

Not scripture

The scholarship program accepted every applicant, no exceptions, and people mocked how wide the doors were. But commencement told a different story. Some had used the years and some had wasted them, and the difference had nothing to do with who got in. Everyone was gathered. Not everyone was ready for the shore.



Next: Lost and Found. How heaven feels about the one who wandered.

PART II

Lost and Found

PARABLES 9 – 11



How heaven feels about the one who wandered

The Lost Sheep

LUKE 15:4-7

Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my lost sheep.' Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

THE SETTING

Religious leaders were muttering that Jesus ate with sinners. All three lost-and-found parables are his answer to that complaint.

WHAT IT MEANS

Heaven's math is not ours. One lost soul moves God to leave the many and search until, not in case, he finds. And the finding ends in joy carried home on his own shoulders, not in a lecture.

LIVE IT TODAY

If you are the one, stop hiding. He is not coming to scold you. And if you are among the ninety and nine, learn to celebrate returns instead of resenting the attention they get.

MODERN ECHO

Not scripture

At the reunion, the coach ignored the trophy table and kept watching the door. Someone asked why. Ninety nine of my players turned out fine, he said. One stopped answering my calls fifteen years ago. I have driven to three cities looking for him. When he walks in, we are not going to talk about where he has been. We are going to throw the party.



Next: The Lost Coin.

The Lost Coin

LUKE 15:8-10

Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.' Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

THE SETTING

The coin was likely a day's wage, possibly part of a woman's dowry, precious beyond its price. Homes were dark, with dirt floors. Finding it took light, effort, and refusal to quit.

WHAT IT MEANS

The sheep wandered off, but the coin was simply lost, unaware it was even missing. God searches for those people too, lighting lamps and sweeping corners for souls who do not know their own worth.

LIVE IT TODAY

You may feel like a coin in the dust, forgotten and out of circulation. You are being searched for right now. And when God asks you to help him sweep for someone else, pick up the broom.

MODERN ECHO

Not scripture

When the grandmother's ring went missing, she did not shrug and check the insurance. She pulled the furniture from the walls, emptied every drawer, ran a flashlight along the baseboards until midnight. It is one ring, her son said. She kept sweeping. It is not one ring, she said. It is mine.



Next: The Prodigal Son.

The Prodigal Son

LUKE 15:11-32

There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the wealth that will belong to me.' So he divided his assets between them. A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant region, and there he squandered his wealth in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that region, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that region, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, and no one gave him anything. But when he came to his senses he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.' So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate, for this son of mine was

dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate. Now his elder son was in the field, and as he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. He replied, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf because he has got him back safe and sound.' Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. But he answered his father, 'Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command, yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your assets with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!' Then the father said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.'

THE SETTING

Asking for the inheritance early was asking a father to be as good as dead. The crowd would have expected the story to end with the son disowned. Instead the father runs, something dignified men in that culture simply did not do.

WHAT IT MEANS

This is the clearest portrait of the Father Jesus ever painted. He lets us leave, watches the road while we are gone, and sprints to meet repentance while it is still a great way off. And the ending is deliberately unfinished:

the elder brother, standing outside the party, is the Pharisees, and the invitation still hangs in the air.

LIVE IT TODAY

Come home. Rehearse your speech if you must, but know the robe is already out. And if you are the responsible one, refuse to let resentment keep you outside the joy. There are two lost sons in this story, and the father goes out to both.

MODERN ECHO

Not scripture

The daughter drafted her apology text a hundred times in the parking lot, ready to earn her way back one visit at a time. She never got to send it. Her dad had a notification set for her name, and before she reached the porch the door was open and he was crossing the lawn in his socks. Inside, her older sister stood at the window, arms folded, and their father came back out into the cold a second time, for her.



Next: Mercy and Grace. Forgiveness received, forgiveness given.

PART III

Mercy and Grace

PARABLES 12 – 16



Forgiveness received, forgiveness given

The Good Samaritan

LUKE 10:30-37

A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and took off, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came upon him, and when he saw him he was moved with compassion. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, treating them with oil and wine. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him, and when I come back I will repay you whatever more you spend.' Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers? He said, The one who showed him mercy. Jesus said to him, Go and do likewise.

THE SETTING

A lawyer asked, Who is my neighbour, hoping to shrink the list. Jews and Samaritans despised each other, so making the Samaritan the hero was a deliberate shock to everyone listening.

WHAT IT MEANS

Jesus flips the question. It is never who qualifies as my neighbor, but will I be one. Religion that steps around suffering is exposed, and mercy from the least expected person is held up as the whole law in motion.

LIVE IT TODAY

Your neighbor is whoever is bleeding on your route today. Cross the road, spend the time, pay the two pence. Compassion that costs nothing is spectating.

MODERN ECHO

Not scripture

A man's car died on the shoulder in the rain. A pastor drove past, late for a sermon on kindness. A nonprofit director passed next, mid-call about helping the community. Then a man from the group everyone in town complained about pulled over, gave up his jacket, drove him forty minutes home, and left cash for the tow without giving his name. Which of the three was the neighbor?



Next: The Unmerciful Servant.

The Unmerciful Servant

MATTHEW 18:23-35

For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him, and, as he could not pay, the lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions and payment to be made. So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him by the throat he said, 'Pay what you owe.' Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?' And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.

THE SETTING

Peter had just asked if forgiving someone seven times was enough. Ten thousand talents was a debt larger than the tax revenue of entire provinces, a number chosen to be absurd.

WHAT IT MEANS

The forgiven man strangling a neighbor over pocket change is what unforgiveness looks like from heaven's view. Grace received is meant to become grace given, and refusing to pass it on locks us in our own torment.

LIVE IT TODAY

Put your grudge next to your own forgiven debt and let the comparison do its work. Forgive from the heart, not because the offense was small but because yours was enormous.

MODERN ECHO

Not scripture

The bank wrote off a founder's ruinous loan, millions gone with a signature and a handshake. That afternoon he took his roommate to small claims court over a utility bill. When the story got out, nobody could explain it, least of all the bank officer who had signed the forgiveness and now sat in the gallery, watching, saying nothing.



Next: The Two Debtors.

The Two Debtors

LUKE 7:41-43

A certain moneylender had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he canceled the debts for both of them. Now which of them will love him more? Simon answered, I suppose the one for whom he canceled the greater debt. And Jesus said to him, You have judged rightly.

THE SETTING

Jesus told this at a Pharisee's dinner table while a woman with a broken reputation washed his feet with her tears and the host silently judged them both.

WHAT IT MEANS

Love is the receipt grace prints. The woman loved extravagantly because she knew how much she had been forgiven. Simon loved little, not because his debt was small but because he had never admitted he had one.

LIVE IT TODAY

Cold religion is usually forgotten forgiveness. If your love has gone lukewarm, do not manufacture warmth. Revisit your five hundred pence and let gratitude do what duty cannot.

MODERN ECHO

Not scripture

Two employees had their company debts erased in the same meeting. One owed lunch money, the other owed a sum that should have ended his career. Guess which one showed up early for the rest of his life, defended the boss in every room, and wept at his retirement. The size of the thank you always tells you the size of the rescue.



Next: The Pharisee and the Tax Collector.

The Pharisee and the Tax Collector

LUKE 18:10-14

Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income.' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven but was beating his breast and saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other, for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted.

THE SETTING

Luke says Jesus aimed this at people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others. Tax collectors were considered traitors, the least likely heroes imaginable.

WHAT IT MEANS

The Pharisee's prayer was a performance review of himself with God as the audience. The tax collector's seven words were the only prayer that worked. Heaven is entered by honesty, not by comparison.

LIVE IT TODAY

Notice when your prayers start listing credentials or measuring yourself against worse people. Trade the resume for the seven words: God be merciful to me a sinner. Pray them today and mean them.

MODERN ECHO

Not scripture

Two posts went up the same Sunday. One was a polished thread on personal discipline, subtly ranking the author above the chaotic people in his replies. The other was a single unpolished line from an account with no followers: God, I have made a mess of everything, please have mercy on me. Only one of them was seen by the audience that mattered.



Next: The Laborers in the Vineyard.

The Laborers in the Vineyard

MATTHEW 20:1-16

For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius for the day, he sent them into his vineyard. When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and he said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' So they went. When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around, and he said to them, 'Why are you standing here idle all day?' They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard.' When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, 'Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.' When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received a denarius. Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received a denarius. And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.' But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what

belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?' So the last will be first, and the first will be last.

THE SETTING

Jesus told this right after promising the disciples reward for leaving everything, as a warning against turning grace into a wage negotiation.

WHAT IT MEANS

No one was underpaid. Some were out-graced. The complaint of the early workers is the sound of a heart that served for pay instead of love, and the owner's question cuts forever: is thine eye evil, because I am good?

LIVE IT TODAY

Rejoice when latecomers get what you got. If someone finds Jesus at the eleventh hour of their life, that is not unfair. That is the whole point of the vineyard.

MODERN ECHO

Not scripture

The man who joined the recovery program in January stood at the December banquet, arms crossed, while a woman thirty days sober received the same standing ovation he had. Afterward the founder found him by the door. Did I shortchange your year, he asked. No, the man admitted. Then why does her rescue feel like your loss?



Next: Money and Treasure. What we own, what owns us, and what lasts.

PART IV

Money and Treasure

PARABLES 17 – 21



What we own, what owns us, and what lasts

The Rich Fool

LUKE 12:16-21

Then he told them a parable: The land of a rich man produced abundantly. And he thought to himself, 'What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?' Then he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.' But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God.

THE SETTING

A man in the crowd asked Jesus to referee an inheritance dispute. Jesus declined the case and diagnosed the disease instead: beware of covetousness.

WHAT IT MEANS

Count the pronouns: my fruits, my barns, my goods, my soul. The man's world had a population of one, and God appears in the story only to end it. Wealth is not the sin. Being rich toward yourself alone is.

LIVE IT TODAY

Make your abundance flow outward before it piles upward.
Whatever you are tempted to build a bigger barn for, ask first who
you could bless with it, because tonight is promised to no one.

MODERN ECHO

Not scripture

*The investor hit his number, the one he had promised himself for thirty years.
That night he opened a spreadsheet titled Finally, mapped out the next decade
of ease, and scheduled the boat viewing for Saturday. The obituary ran
Tuesday. His storage units took four months to auction off, mostly to strangers.*



Next: The Rich Man and Lazarus.

The Rich Man and Lazarus

LUKE 16:19-31

There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man's table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was being tormented, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. He called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in agony in these flames.' But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things and Lazarus in like manner evil things, but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us.' He said, 'Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house—for I have five brothers—that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment.' Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.' He said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and

the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'

THE SETTING

This is the only parable where a character has a name, and the name goes to the beggar. Jesus told it to Pharisees whom Luke describes as lovers of money.

WHAT IT MEANS

The rich man's sin was not cruelty but distance. Lazarus lay at his gate and he simply stepped over him daily. Eternity fixed the gulf that his indifference had already dug, and the final line points forward: some hearts will not bend even for a resurrection.

LIVE IT TODAY

Learn the name of the person you routinely step past. The gate you walk through every day is where your eternity is being rehearsed.

MODERN ECHO

Not scripture

He knew every detail of his building's lobby except the man who slept beside its heating vent. Eleven years of good mornings never offered. When the man died in February, the tenant was surprised to learn from the news that he had a name, a story, and a sister who had been searching for him. The vent was eight steps from the elevator. It might as well have been a gulf.



Next: The Shrewd Manager.

The Shrewd Manager

LUKE 16:1-9

There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was squandering his property. So he summoned him and said to him, 'What is this that I hear about you? Give me an accounting of your management because you cannot be my manager any longer.' Then the manager said to himself, 'What will I do, now that my master is taking the position away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. I have decided what to do so that, when I am dismissed as manager, people may welcome me into their homes.' So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' He answered, 'A hundred jugs of olive oil.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it fifty.' Then he asked another, 'And how much do you owe?' He replied, 'A hundred containers of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill and make it eighty.' And his master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly, for the children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light. And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth so that when it is gone they may welcome you into the eternal homes.

THE SETTING

The most puzzling parable Jesus told. The manager is not praised for dishonesty but for something rarer: taking his future seriously enough to act decisively in the present.

WHAT IT MEANS

A crooked manager used temporary money to secure his coming reality. Jesus' point lands like a dare: worldly people plan for their future with more energy than believers plan for eternity. Money is temporary. Use it to do eternal things, especially for people.

LIVE IT TODAY

Convert your currency before it expires. Every dollar spent on generosity, relief, and the spread of good news is wealth wired ahead to a place where you are going to live.

MODERN ECHO

Not scripture

The week she learned the company was folding, one executive updated her resume. The other spent his remaining expense account flying to see every client he had ever served, making things right, making introductions, leaving people better than he found them. A year later one of them had a stack of applications out. The other had a hundred open doors.



Next: The Talents.

The Talents

MATTHEW 25:14-30

For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. At once the one who had received the five talents went off and traded with them and made five more talents. In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things; I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things; I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you did not scatter, so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the

ground. Here you have what is yours.' But his master replied, 'You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I did not scatter? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance, but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

THE SETTING

A talent was roughly twenty years of wages, so even the one-talent servant held a fortune. Jesus told this days before his death, teaching what faithfulness looks like while the Master is away.

WHAT IT MEANS

The two faithful servants received identical praise despite different results, because the reward measures faithfulness, not output. The third servant's failure began with a false picture of his master: he served fear instead of love, and fear buries what love invests.

LIVE IT TODAY

Name what has been placed in your hands, time, skill, money, influence, and put it in motion for the kingdom this week. Buried is not the same as safe.

MODERN ECHO

Not scripture

Three musicians were each given studio time by a producer who believed in them. One recorded an album that reached millions. One wrote three songs that healed one small town. The third never pressed record, terrified of wasting the gift, and returned the unused hours untouched. Only one of the three broke the producer's heart.



Next: The Ten Minas.

The Ten Minas

LUKE 19:12-26

A nobleman went to a distant region to receive royal power for himself and then return. He summoned ten of his slaves and gave them ten pounds and said to them, 'Do business with these until I come back.' But the citizens of his country hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We do not want this man to rule over us.' When he returned, having received royal power, he ordered these slaves to whom he had given the money to be summoned so that he might find out what they had gained by doing business. The first came forward and said, 'Lord, your pound has made ten more pounds.' He said to him, 'Well done, good slave! Because you have been trustworthy in a very small thing, take charge of ten cities.' Then the second came, saying, 'Lord, your pound has made five pounds.' He said to him, 'And you, rule over five cities.' Then the other came, saying, 'Lord, here is your pound. I wrapped it up in a piece of cloth, for I was afraid of you, because you are a harsh man; you take what you did not deposit and reap what you did not sow.' He said to him, 'I will judge you by your own words, you wicked slave! You knew, did you, that I was a harsh man, taking what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow? Why, then, did you not put my money into the bank? Then when I returned, I could have collected it with interest.' He said to the bystanders, 'Take the pound from him and give it to the one who has ten pounds.' (And they said to him, 'Lord, he has ten pounds!') I tell

you, to all those who have, more will be given, but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away.

THE SETTING

Jesus told this approaching Jerusalem, because the crowd thought the kingdom would appear immediately. It is the sister parable to the talents, but here every servant starts with the same amount.

WHAT IT MEANS

Equal deposits, unequal returns, proportionate rewards. Where the talents parable teaches that God gives differently, the minas teach that with equal opportunity our diligence differs, and what we do with a very little decides what we can be trusted with forever.

LIVE IT TODAY

Occupy till he comes. You have the same twenty four hours and the same gospel as everyone else. Trade with it today, in whatever small market you have been given.

MODERN ECHO

Not scripture

The mentor gave ten students the same hundred dollars and one instruction: do good until I am back. One returned with a tutoring service employing six people. Another had funded a month of meals at the shelter. A third handed back the same crisp bill, proud of its condition. You kept it safe, the mentor said quietly. From what? It was never in danger. It was in a napkin.



Next: Prayer and Persistence. Why we ask, and why we keep asking.

PART V

Prayer and Persistence

PARABLES 22 – 23



Why we ask, and why we keep asking

The Friend at Midnight

LUKE 11:5-9

Suppose one of you has a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, for a friend of mine has arrived, and I have nothing to set before him.' And he answers from within, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been locked, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.' I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything out of friendship, at least because of his persistence he will get up and give him whatever he needs.

THE SETTING

Jesus gave this immediately after teaching the disciples the Lord's prayer, when they asked him how to pray. Hospitality was sacred, so arriving with nothing for a guest was a genuine midnight emergency.

WHAT IT MEANS

The argument runs from lesser to greater. If a groggy neighbor answers persistence at midnight, how much more will a Father who loves you answer? The parable is not that God is reluctant. It is that shameless asking is welcome at his door.

LIVE IT TODAY

Bring your midnight needs to God without apology, and notice the man was asking bread for someone else. Some of your boldest praying should be intercession.

MODERN ECHO

Not scripture

She texted her old professor at 1 a.m., embarrassed but desperate, not for herself but for a student of her own who was in trouble. The reply came in minutes, then a call, then a solution by sunrise. Years later she asked why he answered at that hour. Because you knocked, he said. People who knock at midnight for someone else are exactly who I keep the light on for.



Next: The Persistent Widow.

The Persistent Widow

LUKE 18:2-8

In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, 'Grant me justice against my accuser.' For a while he refused, but later he said to himself, 'Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.' And the Lord said, Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them. And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?

THE SETTING

Luke tells us the purpose up front: that men ought always to pray, and not to faint. A widow had no standing, no money, and no leverage, only her continual coming.

WHAT IT MEANS

Another lesser-to-greater argument. If relentless asking moves even a corrupt judge, how much more a righteous Father? The parable ends with the real question turned back on us: when he comes, will he find people still praying, or people who quietly gave up?

LIVE IT TODAY

Whatever you stopped praying for, start again. Persistence is not nagging God into reluctance. It is faith refusing to change its address.

MODERN ECHO

Not scripture

Every Monday for six years, the grandmother emailed the city about the broken crossing light by the school. Interns changed, departments reorganized, her emails became office legend. The light was fixed in year seven, a week before a class of kindergartners started walking that route. People asked how she kept it up. I was never bothering them, she said. I was believing on a schedule.



Next: Invitation and Readiness. The open door, and the hour no one knows.

PART VI

Invitation and Readiness

PARABLES 24 – 30



The open door, and the hour no one knows

The Great Banquet

LUKE 14:16-24

Someone gave a great dinner and invited many. At the time for the dinner he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is ready now.' But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of land, and I must go out and see it; please accept my regrets.' Another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please accept my regrets.' Another said, 'I have just been married, and therefore I cannot come.' So the slave returned and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and said to his slave, 'Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.' And the slave said, 'Sir, what you ordered has been done, and there is still room.' Then the master said to the slave, 'Go out into the roads and lanes, and compel people to come in, so that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those who were invited will taste my dinner.'

THE SETTING

Jesus was eating at a Pharisee's house when a guest piously declared how blessed those who eat in the kingdom will be. This parable was his reply: the feast is real, and the invited are busy.

WHAT IT MEANS

Nobody in the story rejects the feast for something evil. A field, some oxen, a marriage, all good things, all deadly as excuses. Meanwhile the master fills his table with everyone the religious world overlooked, and there is still room.

LIVE IT TODAY

The greatest threat to your seat at the table is not sin but schedule. Say yes now. And if you feel unqualified, you are exactly who the servant is out looking for.

MODERN ECHO

Not scripture

The invitation said everything is ready, and every reply was reasonable. Closing on a house. New job, crazy season. Just got married, you understand. So the host sent cars to the shelter, the halfway house, and the bus station, and the dining room filled with people who could not believe their names were on the list. The photos from that night are the ones nobody who declined can look at.



Next: The Wedding Feast.

The Wedding Feast

MATTHEW 22:2-14

The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. Again he sent other slaves, saying, 'Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet.' But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them. The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. Then he said to his slaves, 'The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.' Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad, so the wedding hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?' And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' For many are called, but few are chosen.

THE SETTING

Told in the temple during the final week, to leaders already plotting against him. Kings customarily provided wedding garments to guests, which makes the man's refusal to wear one a deliberate insult.

WHAT IT MEANS

The invitation is scandalously wide, bad and good alike gathered in. But entering on your own terms is not entering. The garment stands for what the King himself provides, and refusing it while enjoying his feast is the one thing that leaves a person speechless.

LIVE IT TODAY

Accept both the invitation and the clothing. Come as you are, but do not insist on staying as you came. Let him dress you in something new.

MODERN ECHO

Not scripture

The tech founder threw open his son's wedding to the whole city when the elite guest list bailed, and at the door, tailored suits and gowns hung free for anyone, no questions about what you wore in. One man pushed past the rack, proud of his own jacket, planning to enjoy the feast on his terms. He was the only person in the ballroom the host could not celebrate, and the only one who chose it.



Next: The Ten Virgins.

The Ten Virgins

MATTHEW 25:1-13

Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten young women took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. But at midnight there was a shout, 'Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' Then all those young women got up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise replied, 'No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.' And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet, and the door was shut. Later the other young women came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, I do not know you.' Keep awake, therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

THE SETTING

Part of Jesus' final teaching on his return. Wedding processions arrived at unpredictable hours, and bridesmaids lit the way. All ten believed, all ten waited, all ten slept. Only the oil differed.

WHAT IT MEANS

Some things cannot be borrowed at midnight. Character, oil in the lamp, a real relationship with the Bridegroom, these are gathered drop by drop in ordinary days. The tragedy of the five is not wickedness but unreadiness.

LIVE IT TODAY

Buy oil now. Daily prayer, daily scripture, daily obedience are how you fill the vessel, and no one else's walk with Jesus can light your lamp when the cry comes.

MODERN ECHO

Not scripture

Ten students knew the final could come any week, professor's rules. Five studied a little every day. Five kept meaning to. When the announcement dropped at midnight, the unprepared begged their friends: just share your notes, your memory, your year of work. But some transfers are impossible. You cannot lend someone the nights you spent becoming ready.



Next: The Faithful and Wise Servant.

The Faithful and Wise Servant

MATTHEW 24:45-51

Who, then, is the faithful and wise slave whom his master has put in charge of his household, to give the other slaves their allowance of food at the proper time? Blessed is that slave whom his master will find at work when he arrives. Truly I tell you, he will put that one in charge of all his possessions. But if that wicked slave says to himself, 'My master is delayed,' and begins to beat his fellow slaves and eats and drinks with drunkards, the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour that he does not know. He will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

THE SETTING

The disciples had just asked about the sign of his coming. Jesus answered their question about timing with a parable about behavior in the meantime.

WHAT IT MEANS

Both servants believe the master is coming. The difference is what the delay reveals. In one it produces steady faithfulness, feeding the household on schedule. In the other, the whispered thought my lord delayeth becomes a license for cruelty and indulgence.

LIVE IT TODAY

Live so that any moment of his arrival would find you mid-kindness.
The delay is not absence. It is the test.

MODERN ECHO

Not scripture

The owner left two managers in charge and no return date. One ran the shop as if the owner might walk in at closing time any night, staffed, books honest, customers loved. The other checked the parking lot each morning, saw no sign of the boss, and let that fact set his standards. The owner came back on a Tuesday, through the side door, and needed about ninety seconds to learn everything.



Next: The Watchful Doorkeeper.

The Watchful Doorkeeper

MARK 13:34-37

It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. Therefore, keep awake, for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening or at midnight or at cockcrow or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.

THE SETTING

The closing word of Jesus' teaching on the last days in Mark, compressed to a single command repeated three times: watch.

WHAT IT MEANS

Every servant got authority, every man his work, and the whole household one posture: awake. Watching is not anxious sky-scanning. It is doing your assigned work with the lights on and the door in view.

LIVE IT TODAY

Know your work and stay at it. Spiritual drowsiness rarely announces itself, so build the habits that keep you awake: prayer, the word, honest friends.

MODERN ECHO

Not scripture

The night guard's entire job description was one word, and for years nothing happened, which is exactly when the word matters. New hires mocked the vigilance, the rounds, the checked locks at 3 a.m. Then came the one night in a thousand, and the difference between the guard who watched and the one who reasoned that nothing ever happens was the whole building.



Next: The Thief in the Night.

The Thief in the Night

MATTHEW 24:43-44

But understand this: if the owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

THE SETTING

Jesus deliberately chose a jarring image for his own return, not to frighten but to make one point unforgettable: the hour will not be announced.

WHAT IT MEANS

Readiness cannot be scheduled. If we knew the hour we would clean up the night before, which is precisely why the hour is hidden. The unknown timing is a mercy that makes every day the day to be ready.

LIVE IT TODAY

Ask the blunt question: if he came tonight, what would I want to have already made right? Then make it right this week, not someday.

MODERN ECHO

Not scripture

The health inspector never called ahead, and every restaurant owner in town agreed it was unfair. Except one. Her kitchen was spotless at 2 p.m. on a random Wednesday, the same as always. Her secret was no secret. I stopped preparing for inspections years ago, she said. I just decided to run the kind of kitchen that has nothing to hide.



Next: The Sheep and the Goats.

The Sheep and the Goats

MATTHEW 25:31-40

When the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me.'

THE SETTING

The final parable of Jesus' final sermon, given days before he himself would be hungry, thirsty, stripped, and imprisoned.

WHAT IT MEANS

The judgment scene turns on six ordinary mercies, and the stunning revelation is the King's location the entire time: hidden inside the least of these. The righteous are surprised, which means their kindness was habit, not strategy.

LIVE IT TODAY

Stop waiting for a burning bush. Jesus has told you exactly where to find him today: the hungry, the lonely, the sick, the imprisoned. Go visit him.

MODERN ECHO

Not scripture

For decades she assumed the great spiritual encounter would come in some dramatic hour. Meanwhile she drove meals on Thursdays, sat with the dying, wrote to a prisoner nobody claimed. At the end, shown the truth of her life, she asked the question all the surprised ones ask: when did I ever see you? And the answer was a list of Thursdays.



Next: Obedience and Fruit. Hearing, doing, and the life that proves it.

PART VII

Obedience and Fruit

PARABLES 31 – 40



Hearing, doing, and the life that proves it

The Wise and Foolish Builders

MATTHEW 7:24-27

Everyone, then, who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall because it had been founded on rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!

THE SETTING

The closing words of the Sermon on the Mount. Both builders heard the same sermon. Both houses faced the same storm. The only variable Jesus names is doing.

WHAT IT MEANS

This is John 7:17 in story form: the difference between knowing about the teaching and building on it. Foundations are invisible in fair weather, which is why so many houses on sand look fine for years.

LIVE IT TODAY

Pick one saying of Jesus you have heard a hundred times and never fully done. Do it this week. Every act of obedience is a stone under your house before the storm.

MODERN ECHO

Not scripture

Two friends finished the same course, highlighted the same pages, could quote the same lines. One built her mornings, her money, and her marriage around what it said. The other kept the book on the nightstand. The year the storm hit both houses, one family bent and held. The other discovered that admiration is not a foundation.



Next: The Two Sons.

The Two Sons

MATTHEW 21:28-31

A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' He answered, 'I will not,' but later he changed his mind and went. The father went to the second and said the same, and he answered, 'I go, sir,' but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father? They said, The first. Jesus said to them, Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you.

THE SETTING

Spoken in the temple to chief priests who talked obedience professionally. Jesus made them deliver the verdict on themselves.

WHAT IT MEANS

God prefers a rough no that becomes a yes over a polished yes that goes nowhere. The vineyard does not record what we said. It records who showed up.

LIVE IT TODAY

If your life has been a long I go, sir with little going, trade the language of intention for one act of actual obedience today. And never write off the person whose first answer was no.

MODERN ECHO

Not scripture

The father asked both kids to help move grandma on Saturday. One said absolutely, posted about the importance of family, and slept in. The other said no way, stewed about it all week, and showed up at 7 a.m. with coffee and a truck. Ask grandma which one loves her. She will not quote either answer. She will tell you who carried the couch.



Next: The Wicked Tenants.

The Wicked Tenants

MATTHEW 21:33-41

Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a winepress in it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenants and went away. When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. Again he sent other slaves, more than the first, and they treated them in the same way. Then he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.' So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants? They said to him, He will put those wretches to a miserable death and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time.

THE SETTING

Days before the cross, Jesus told the temple leadership their own history: prophets rejected, and now the Son standing before them. They understood, and it hardened their plot.

WHAT IT MEANS

Everything in the vineyard was provided by the owner. The tenants' crime was treating a stewardship like an ownership. And at the center of the

parable Jesus quietly reveals who he is: not another servant, but the beloved Son, sent last.

LIVE IT TODAY

Hold everything you have with open hands and give God the fruit of what was always his. The question is not whether the owner will come, but what he will find when he does.

MODERN ECHO

Not scripture

The landlord charged almost nothing, asking only a share of what the restaurant earned in his building. The tenants pocketed everything, ignored the letters, ran off the accountants, and finally threatened the landlord's own son when he came in person. In court they argued, absurdly, that occupancy equals ownership. Every juror could see what they refused to: none of it had ever been theirs.



Next: The Barren Fig Tree.

The Barren Fig Tree

LUKE 13:6-9

A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. So he said to the man working the vineyard, 'See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?' He replied, 'Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good, but if not, you can cut it down.'

THE SETTING

Jesus told this right after urging a crowd to repent. It hangs between two truths: judgment is deserved, and the gardener is pleading for more time.

WHAT IT MEANS

This is a parable about the year you are living in right now. The tree is spared not because fruitlessness is fine but because someone intercedes, digs, and fertilizes. Grace is not the cancellation of the harvest. It is the extension of the season.

LIVE IT TODAY

Treat this year as the gardener's gift. Let him dig around your roots, even when it feels like disruption, and answer the mercy with fruit.

MODERN ECHO

Not scripture

The review was supposed to end in a termination. Three years, no results, the position needed. Instead the manager spoke up: give me one more year with him, let me invest personally, let me loosen what is stuck. Everyone in the room knew the employee would never hear that conversation. He only noticed that the next year, someone kept showing up at his desk, helping, believing, digging.



Next: The Budding Fig Tree.

The Budding Fig Tree

MATTHEW 24:32-33

From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates.

THE SETTING

Fig trees lose their leaves in winter, so new shoots were the countryside's unmistakable signal that summer was coming. Jesus points at one during his teaching on the last days.

WHAT IT MEANS

Jesus expects his people to read seasons. Not to calculate dates, which he immediately rules out, but to live with eyes open, recognizing that history is going somewhere and the door is nearer than it was.

LIVE IT TODAY

Be a student of the season without becoming a predictor of the day.
Let nearness produce holiness and hope, not charts and fear.

MODERN ECHO

Not scripture

Two farmers watched the same field in early spring. One demanded the exact date of summer and grew bitter when no one could give it. The other saw the green on the branches, serviced the equipment, hired the crew, and was ready when the season broke. The signs were never for calculating. They were for preparing.



Next: New Wine and Old Wineskins.

New Wine and Old Wineskins

LUKE 5:36-38

No one tears a piece from a new garment and sews it on an old garment; otherwise, not only will one tear the new garment, but the piece from the new will not match the old garment. Similarly, no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise, the new wine will burst the skins and will spill out, and the skins will be ruined. But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins.

THE SETTING

Religious leaders asked why Jesus' disciples feasted while others fasted. His answer: what has arrived in him cannot be stitched onto old routines as a patch.

WHAT IT MEANS

New wine still ferments and expands. Old skins, stretched and rigid, cannot flex with it. Jesus is not condemning what is old but declaring that his life demands new capacity: structures, habits, and hearts that can stretch.

LIVE IT TODAY

When Jesus begins something new in you, do not pour it into unchanged routines and expect them to hold. Let him renew the container, your schedule, your assumptions, your heart, along with the contents.

MODERN ECHO

Not scripture

The company acquired a young team whose ideas were doubling everything they touched, then forced them into the old reporting lines, the old meetings, the old caution. Within a year the ideas were gone and the veterans were exhausted. A competitor hired the team, built fresh structure around them, and both flourished. New wine never destroys on purpose. It just needs skins that can stretch.



Next: The Lamp on a Stand.

The Lamp on a Stand

MATTHEW 5:14-16

You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. People do not light a lamp and put it under the bushel basket; rather, they put it on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

THE SETTING

From the Sermon on the Mount, spoken to ordinary fishermen and farmers. Jesus did not say try to become light. He said ye are.

WHAT IT MEANS

A lit lamp under a basket is a contradiction, wasted on purpose. The light is not for the lamp. And the aim of visible goodness is precise: not that people admire you, but that they glorify your Father.

LIVE IT TODAY

Stop dimming what God has lit in you out of fear or false modesty. Do good openly, then deflect the credit upward. Shine so he is seen.

MODERN ECHO

Not scripture

She kept her faith like a phone on silent, afraid of what coworkers would think. Then a colleague hit the worst season of his life and told her later, I spent months looking around this office for one person who had hope, and I could not find any. She had it the whole time, in her pocket, on silent. She never silenced it again.



Next: Counting the Cost.

Counting the Cost

LUKE 14:28-33

For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to ridicule him, saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.' Or what king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand? If he cannot, then while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for the terms of peace. So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.

THE SETTING

Great multitudes were following Jesus, and instead of riding the wave he turned and thinned it. He wanted disciples, not crowds.

WHAT IT MEANS

Jesus is the only founder who talks people out of a shallow yes. The half-built tower is his image for enthusiasm without surrender. Following him costs everything, and he insists we know it going in, because a counted cost is a kept commitment.

LIVE IT TODAY

Sit down and do the math honestly: what has Jesus asked for that you are still holding back? Finishing the tower matters more than starting it loudly.

MODERN ECHO

Not scripture

Two people signed up the same day. One announced it everywhere, bought the gear, and quit within a month when the actual price appeared. The other sat alone the night before, wrote down everything it would cost her, stared at the list, and signed anyway. Ten years later only one tower stands, and it belongs to the one who counted.



Next: The Unworthy Servants.

The Unworthy Servants

LUKE 17:7-10

Who among you would say to your slave who has just come in from plowing or tending sheep in the field, 'Come here at once and take your place at the table'? Would you not rather say to him, 'Prepare supper for me; put on your apron and serve me while I eat and drink; later you may eat and drink'? Do you thank the slave for doing what was commanded? So you also, when you have done all that you were ordered to do, say, 'We are worthless slaves; we have done only what we ought to have done!'

THE SETTING

The apostles had just asked for more faith. Jesus' reply included this bracing word about posture: obedience is not a favor we do God.

WHAT IT MEANS

This parable guards the heart against the oldest religious poison, the sense that God now owes us. Every commandment kept was simply duty, which frees obedience from scorekeeping and turns everything God gives into what it actually is: grace.

LIVE IT TODAY

Serve without invoicing heaven. When you have prayed, given, and forgiven, resist the whisper that God is now in your debt. The reward is real, but it is a gift, never a wage.

MODERN ECHO

Not scripture

The volunteer finished the shift and lingered by the office, waiting to be celebrated for doing what he signed up for. Another finished the same shift, stacked her chair, and slipped out the back, already thinking about next week. Years on, one of them had quit over insufficient appreciation. The other could not tell you a single thing she was owed, which is why she was full.



Next: The Places of Honor.

The Places of Honor

LUKE 14:8-11

When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not sit down at the place of honor, in case someone more distinguished than you has been invited by your host, and the host who invited both of you may come and say to you, 'Give this person your place,' and then in disgrace you would start to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit down at the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher'; then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at the table with you. For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

THE SETTING

Jesus watched guests at a Pharisee's dinner jockeying for the best seats and turned the scramble itself into the lesson.

WHAT IT MEANS

Self-promotion carries its own demotion inside it, and humility its own rising. The safest seat in the kingdom is the low one, because from there the only direction the Host ever moves you is up.

LIVE IT TODAY

Take the low seat on purpose this week, in the meeting, in the group chat, at home. Let recognition find you rather than chasing it, and let God do the promoting.

MODERN ECHO

Not scripture

At the launch party, one team member positioned herself next to the CEO for every photo. Another spent the night refilling drinks and learning the caterers' names. When the CEO gave his toast, he called the second one up front by name, and the room learned what the seating chart never showed: who the evening actually belonged to. The first spent the night moving down. The second was moved up once, and it lasted.



You have finished the forty. Keep one story and live it for life, then hand it to someone else.



Have you done the Jesus 40?

Freely you have received; freely give.

MATTHEW 10:8

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