

INTERPRETING THE PARABLES OF JESUS

Diocesan Certificate of Biblical Studies
26 October, 16 and 23 November 2019

LESSON 2

THE HOMECOMING

The Parable of the Prodigal Son

Luke 15:11-32

PARABLES OF SEARCH AND RESCUE

that highlight the mission and mercy of the kingdom and express the Father's great love and mercy for sinners:

- 1 The Physician and His Patients Mk 2:17; Lk 5:31-32
- 2 The Two Debtors Luke 7:41-43
- 3 The Lost Sheep Luke 15:4-7; Matt 18:12-14; Thomas 107
- 4 The Lost Coin Luke 15:8-10
- 5 The Prodigal Son Luke 15:11-32
- 6 The Pharisee and the Tax Collector Luke 18:9-14
- 7 The Good Employer / Workers in the Vineyard
Matthew 20:1-16

OBJECTIVES

- 1 To illustrate how parables embody a revelation of the kingdom, and to demonstrate how to rediscover these kingdom meanings.
- 2 To apply a five-step approach to parable-interpretation to Jesus' longest and best-known parable, The Prodigal Son.
- 3 To apply the kingdom-of-God meanings of the Parable of the Prodigal Son to our personal life, church, and community today.

I: The Story in Jesus' Context: What it Meant

A: The Story of a Father and His Two Sons

The Prodigal Son - Luke 15:11-32

There was a man who had two sons. ¹² The younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me." So he divided his property between them.

¹³ A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living.

¹⁴ When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need.

¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. ¹⁶ He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. **NRSV**

¹⁷ But when he came to himself he said, “How many of my father’s hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! ¹⁸ I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.’” ²⁰ 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. ²¹ 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.” **NRSV**

²² 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.

²³ And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; ²⁴ for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!” And they began to celebrate. ²⁵ Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. ²⁷ He replied, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.’ **NRSV**

²⁸ Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him.

²⁹ 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.

³⁰ But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!" ³¹ Then the father said to him, "Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³² 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.

NRSV

STEP 1: HEAR / RECEIVE / REFLECT ON THE STORY AS A STORY

QUESTION 1: Story-Line

What is basic story-line or plot of the parable, if there is one? What are your first impressions as you read through the story? Is there anything odd, surprising, shocking, or contrary to normal expectations?

B: What is the
Situation-in-Life

STEP 2: THE SITUATION-IN-LIFE

QUESTION 2: What was the most likely situation in the ministry of Jesus in which this parable was originally spoken? This is the “setting-in-life” question. It includes the occasion in the life of Jesus that called forth the parable, the immediate literary context, the larger biblical background, and the historical-cultural background, especially on items in the story.

C: Evaluate the
Human Behavior
in the Story

STEP 3: FORM A JUDGMENT ON THE ACTION IN THE STORY

QUESTION 3: Form a Judgment

How does the parable invite the hearer to form a judgment and about what? In other words, what conclusion do you think Jesus wished his hearers to draw from this parable?

TABLETALK

Question 3

Evaluate the behavior of the younger son...

- a) in demanding his inheritance before his father dies.
- b) in liquidating his share and running off to the far country.
- c) in squandering his wealth *in dissolute living*. :30.
- d) in hiring himself out to a pig herder.

Human Behavior in the Parable of the Prodigal

- 1 The behavior of the younger son?
self-centered ♦ self-serving ♦ self-destructive
- 2 The behavior of the father?
Foolish? ♦ Permissive? ♦ Extravagant?
- 3 The behavior of the elder brother?
What is his great sin?

STEP 3: FORM A JUDGMENT ON THE ACTION IN THE STORY

QUESTION 3: Form a Judgment

How does the parable invite the hearer to form a judgment and about what? In other words, what conclusion do you think Jesus wished his hearers to draw from this parable?

The parable reflects the immediate situation and holds up a mirror to those in that situation.

D: What the Story
Originally Meant

STEP 4: DETERMINE THE ORIGINAL MEANING OF THE PARABLE IN CONTEXT

QUESTION 4: Comparison & Contrast

What, if anything, is being compared or contrasted internally within the parable, and how does this correspond to something about God and the kingdom of heaven?

STEP 4: DETERMINE THE ORIGINAL MEANING OF THE PARABLE IN CONTEXT

QUESTION 5: (adapted to this parable):

What was the Parable of the Prodigal Son designed to *do* in its original setting? How does it apply to those who stood in that situation and heard the parable firsthand from Jesus?

THE STORY AIMS TO RECONCILE!

Not just sinners to God.

But sinners to sinners too.

Elder brothers to younger brothers.

Pharisees to tax collectors!

Saints to sinners.

The story leaves us hanging at the end.

The father loves both sons equally and unconditionally. Do we?

WHAT THIS PARABLE DOES:

- It **proclaims** the Good News of God's unconditional love, mercy, forgiveness.
- It **vindicates** the Gospel before those who criticize Jesus for accepting sinners.
- It **invites** Pharisees and theologians to embrace sinners and join the Jesus-party in anticipation of the Great Banquet of the Age to Come.

WHAT THIS PARABLE DEMANDS OF US

All three parables in Luke 15 call for a specific response. What is it? :6, 9, 32

TABLETALK

Question 8

All three parables in Luke 15 call for joy. Joy is the hallmark of God's reign. Rejoicing is a sacred duty in the kingdom. If joy is missing in our lives, something is wrong. Something is missing. What is it? Why did the elder son lack joy? Why do we lack joy?

WHAT IS THE MAIN POINT?

- God's **unconditional love** for the 'righteous' and the 'unrighteous.' Mt 5:45
- The **vindication of Gospel** and Jesus' fellowship with sinners
- The **invitation to opponents** of the Gospel to join the fellowship of the forgiven and celebrate.

**GOD'S LOVE SURPASSES ALL HUMAN
EXPRESSION AND EXPECTATION.**

II: The Story in Our Context: What it Means

STEP 5: APPLY THE MEANINGS OF THE PARABLE FOR TODAY

QUESTION 6: Meaning in Literary Context

How does the author of this Gospel apply the meanings of the parable to the believers to whom he is writing? *What it meant?*

QUESTION 7: Application Today

How do you apply the meanings of this parable to believers or pre-believers today? *What it means?*

For your personal life, your church, your community, your culture, your nation? This is the take-away.

What are some imperatives and practical implications for discipleship, witness, and mission?

TABLETALK

Question 10

So what!? What is the theology of the kingdom in this parable? How do you apply these kingdom-meanings to your life, church, and community? What's the take-away? What are some imperatives? *How then shall we live* in the light of this parable?

A: An Illusion of Freedom

Luke 15:11-20

B: An Image of the Father

Luke 15:20-24



C: An Illusion of Faithfulness

Luke 15:25-32

WARNING!

WE CAN INHERIT THE FARM
BUT FORFEIT THE KINGDOM

4 An Invitation to Faithfulness

What is Jesus' theology of the kingdom
according to this parable?

A Call to Faithfulness: Responses Worthy of the Kingdom

- 1 The kingdom creates community.
Becoming • Belonging • Doing
- 2 Stewardship, responsibility, relationships.
Know your place. Keep faith.
- 3 Receive and restore those who break faith
and return. *Gal 6:1-2*

PLEASE RESPOND & PRAY

- 1 Repent of grasping (Adam and Eve)
- 2 Receive your portion and take your place
- 3 Keep faith with God and community
- 4 Elder brothers and sisters take heed.
The far country is closer than you think.
- 5 Join the party and celebrate while you can
- 6 Pray for prodigals to come home. And for elder brothers and sisters to join the party.

THE
PRODIGAL
GOD

Recovering the Heart
of the Christian Faith

TIMOTHY KELLER

Author of the New York Times bestseller The Reason for God

Brennan Manning

The Ragamuffin Gospel

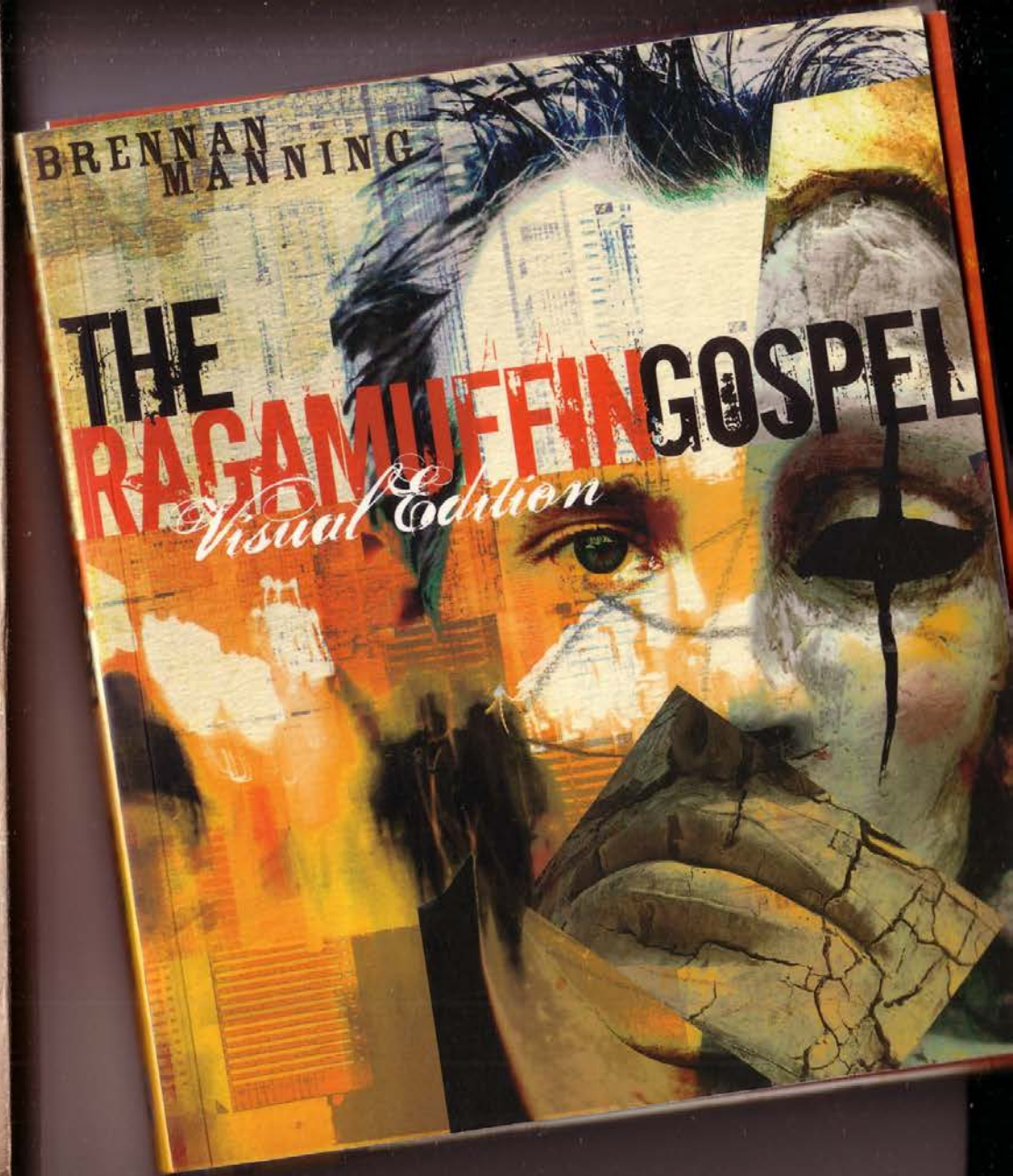
*Good News for
the Bedraggled,
Beat-Up, and
Burnt Out*



BRENNAN
MANNING

THE RAGAMUFFIN GOSPEL

Visual Edition



BEST-SELLING AUTHOR OF *The Ragamuffin Gospel*

brennan manning

the furious longing of God



THE #1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER
OVER SEVEN MILLION COPIES IN PRINT

THE SHACK

WHERE TRAGEDY CONFRONTS ETERNITY



WM PAUL YOUNG

"This book has the potential to do for our generation what
John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* did for his. It's that good!"

Eugene Peterson

Copyrighted Material

ARLAND J. HULTGREN



the Parables of JESUS

A COMMENTARY

Copyrighted Material

STUDYING THE PARABLES OF JESUS



PETER RHEA JONES

WALTER WINK

TRANSFORMING BIBLE STUDY

A Leader's Guide

