

Parables and Forgiveness

Notes for 30 Apr

Tom de Bruin

Background

Subject	Matt	Mark	Luke	John
Parables and Forgiveness	17:22-18:35	9:30-50	9:43-15:7	

Discussion

This week is a potpourri of stories and parables.

If we follow the chronology of Jesus's life in Matthew, this section is Jesus's fourth great sermon. After the sermon on the mount (Mt 5-7), Jesus preaches about mission to the twelve (Mt 10), about the kingdom of heaven (Mt 13), and here about the church. Later, he will give his final sermon on the mount of olives.

Luke and Mark place a different emphasis on Jesus's life, so the sermons are not present there like they are in Matthew. Many of the passages in Matthew 17 and 18 are unique to Matthew, given us an insight into his specific knowledge and theology.

I have given each story and parable a title and included where they can be found in Matthew/Mark/Luke.

This week, I'd suggest reading them through in your Bibles, comparing Matthew's retelling with Luke's and Mark's. For some I have added additional questions for you to consider (and for us to discuss on Sabbath!).

Jesus foretells his death and resurrection

Mt 17:22-23, Mk 9:30-32, Lk 9:43-45

Jesus discussing the temple tax, and Peter finding a rich fish

Mt 17:24-27

This is not the usual story of Jesus and taxation ('render unto Caesar...').

- How is this story different to the more famous one?
- What aspect of (paying) taxes is Matthew emphasizing?
- How does this influence our theology of taxation? Or tithing?

A discussion of who is the greatest

Mt 18:1-5, Mk 9:33-37, Lk 9:46-48

A story of another exorcist using Jesus's name

Mk 9:38-41, Lk 9:49-50

A short step outside of Matthew, to a story he left out (Matthew copies Mark, so we know he left it out on purpose). The disciples are upset with an exorcist driving out demons in Jesus's name.

- How can we compare/reconcile/understand Jesus's words in Luke 9:50 and Matthew 12:30, with his words here?

A teaching on leading others to sin

Mt 18:6-9, Mk 9:42-48, Lk 17:1-2

A parable of a lost sheep

Mt 18:10-14, Lk 15:1-7

The parable of the lost sheep is extremely well known, but note Matthew's introduction is different to the one in Luke (which we more often read).

- What do you make of the ending to verse 10?
- Matthew gives a different message about the lost sheep to Luke, how do the two compare?

Jesus's teaching on confronting another's sins

Mt 18:15-20

Another famous teaching!

- Do you think this is a fair way of dealing with conflict?
- What do you think the meaning of 'let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector' (v 17) is?
- Is excommunication a fair 'punishment' for someone sinning?
- What does verse 18 mean? You might want to look for other places 'bind' and 'loose' are used in the gospels.

Jesus's teaching on forgiveness

Mt 18:21-22

A parable of an unforgiving enslaved person

Mt 18:23-25

- What do you think of the image of God that this parable paints?