

# Jesus Teaches in Jerusalem

Notes for 10 Sep

*Steve Logan*

## Background

Matt	Mark	Luke	John
21:28-22:14	12:1-12	14:15-24; 20:9-18	

## Discussion

The story is moving along at a pace. Jesus has arrived in Jerusalem and it is becoming increasingly apparent who he actually *is*. And, at the same time, he is refusing to be drawn into verbally *stating* anything.

*One day as Jesus was teaching the people and preaching the Good News in the Temple, the leading priests, the teachers of religious law, and the elders came up to him. They demanded, "By what authority are you doing all these things? Who gave you the right?"*

They have a discussion...

*And Jesus responded, "Then I won't tell you by what authority I do these things."*

*Luke 20:1-8, NLT*

We didn't discuss these verses last week so let's start here: why did Jesus say this?

This week we will be discussing some of Jesus' parables

- The Parable of the Two Sons
- The Parable of the Evil Farmers
- The Parable of the Great Feast

Read the texts! What is Jesus saying to the listeners? What is he saying to us (if anything?)?

Bring your thoughts to the discussion...

## Ramblings on parables

Compare Christ's method of 'teaching' with, say, sections of Moses' writing. Jesus would tell a story about a man preparing a feast for folks who don't seem to want to come (Luke 14:15-24). Whereas the author of Deuteronomy 23 talks about all sorts of random things...

*If you enter your neighbour's vineyard, you may eat all the grapes you want, but do not put any in your basket. If you enter your neighbour's grainfield, you may pick kernels with your hands, but you must not put a sickle to their standing grain.*

...in extraordinary detail. Take a look at how many pages are taken up in your Bible with such writings and compare that with the number of pages in all four Gospels. Have you ever wondered why is the Bible like that?

This week (I write in early September 2022) saw the death of Queen Elizabeth II. Britain has gone into mourning. I drove into Edinburgh today and noticed that all the huge electronic billboards that line the main thoroughfares have ceased their relentless promotion of cars and soap powder. Rather they all display a simple picture of the Queen. It was affecting and disconcerting at the same time.

You can sense the uncertainty of the great British public as to how to process the death of their Queen. The BBC has gone into mourning. As I understand things the Premier League will not play this weekend. And I see from the Adventist church Friday newsletters circulating today that the passing of the Queen will be formally marked as part of the church services tomorrow.

But you can sense that these institutions are unsure of what they should be doing. We're no North Korea, we don't *do* fanatical fawning over another human. And yet, we seem to need to do *something*... How do we do *enough* but not *too much*?

But, I hear you ask, what has this to do with Jesus and parables?

Allow me another diversion - I read an interview in this week's [New York Times with Karen Armstrong](#), the academic, ex-nun and author of such books as 'The Case For God'. I've not read any of her work but others in the Virtual Vestry have and recommend them.

In my reading around on Armstrong, a reviewer commented on her divide of 'knowledge' into two categories. 'Logos' - that which can be derived by, say, science, and 'mythos' - that which comes from somewhere else entirely. I've been thinking about those categories. I am a working scientist who works firmly in the *logos* camp. But, [I am increasingly drawn to the mythos](#).

Armstrong writes

*We tend to assume that the people of the past were (more or less) like us, but in fact their spiritual lives were rather different. In particular, they evolved two ways of thinking, speaking, and acquiring knowledge, which scholars have called mythos and logos. Both were essential; they were regarded as complementary ways of arriving at truth, and each had its special area of competence.*

*Myth was regarded as primary; it was concerned with what was thought to be timeless and constant in our existence. Myth looked back to the origins of life, to the foundations of culture, and to the deepest levels of the human mind. Myth was not concerned with practical matters, but with meaning...*

*"The Battle For God"*

Let me try and rein in my ramblings...

I have heard it said that if the British monarchy didn't exist then it would need to be invented. We *need* something worthy of our *mythos*. We Brits have the monarchy; the Americans have a strange obsession with a flag and a difficult-to-sing national anthem during which you are required to stand. None of this makes much sense to outsiders.

I consider myself a 'soft republican'. All things considered I don't think we should have a monarchy but I'm not that concerned one way or the other. I find my *mythos* elsewhere. But I completely understand why the death of the Queen has so affected so many people. It's not about the person of the Queen, it's about what that person represents. It's the *mythos*.

To the point...

I think that the parables of Jesus are all *mythos*. We can read a parable and, providing we understand the culture and the context, we all - somehow - deeply *know* what the parable is saying. There are no long lists of instructions in a parable. It's not a legal treatise. It's not Deuteronomy.

And because the parable is *mythos* what I take from it may well differ from what you take from it. We read into the parable that which we need to hear. That most famous parable, 'The Prodigal Son', will say very different things to an abusive father, to a spoiled child.

And that is as it should be.