

PARABLES OF JESUS

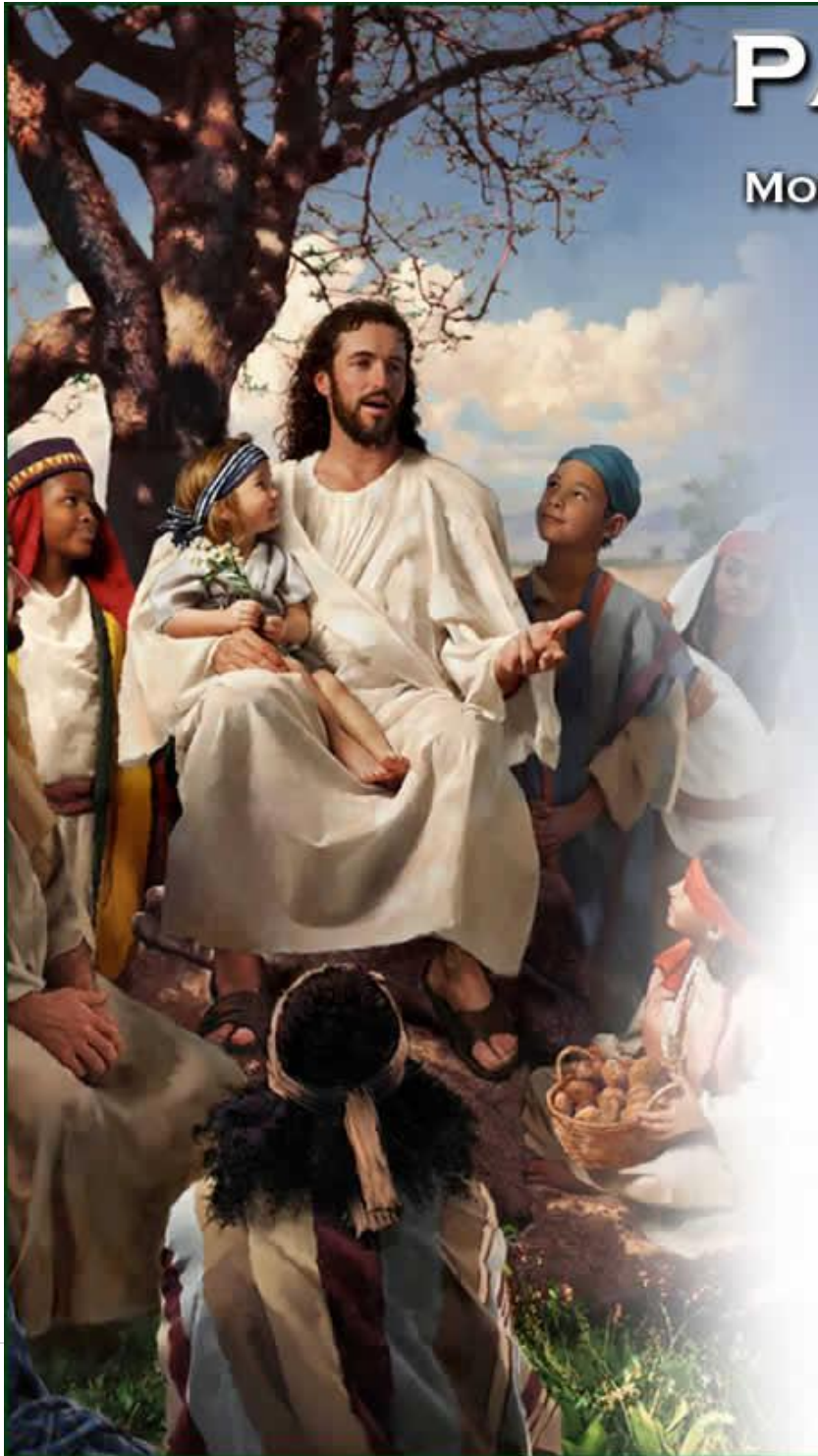
MONTSERRAT SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

Sunday Night Evangelistic Meetings

Pastor: Sherwin A. E. White



THEME: **NEARING HOME**



PARABLES AND THEIR INTERPRETATION

The English word “parable” is from the Gr. *parabole*, “a juxtaposition,” “a comparison,” “an illustration,” “a parable,” “a proverb,” from a verb meaning “to put one thing by the side of another [for comparison],” “to throw beside.” The Gr. *parabole* and its Hebrew equivalent are broader in meaning than our word “parable.” However, parables listed as such in this commentary are those that properly fall within the stricter limits of the English word. According to the English definition a parable is a narrative whose primary purpose is to teach truth. In literary form it is an extended metaphor. Many of Christ’s parables were brief to the point of being metaphors or proverbs

In the Gospels a parable is a narrative “placed alongside” a certain spiritual truth for purposes of “comparison.” The parables of our Lord were usually based on common experiences of everyday life familiar to His hearers, and often on specific incidents that had recently occurred or that they could see at the time. The narrative itself was simple and brief, and its conclusion usually so obvious as to involve no uncertainty (see Matt. 21:40, 41). Placed alongside the spiritual truth it was designed to illustrate, the parable thus became a bridge by which the hearers might be led to understand and appreciate that truth. It met the people where they were and, by a pleasant and familiar path, led their thoughts to where Jesus sought to direct them. It was a window through which the soul might gaze upon vistas of heavenly truth.

By parables Jesus: (1) aroused interest, attention, and inquiry; (2) imparted unwanted truth without arousing prejudice; (3) evaded the spies who pursued Him relentlessly; (4) created in the minds of His hearers lasting impressions that would be renewed and intensified when the scenes presented in the parables again came to mind or to view; (5) restored nature as an avenue for knowing God. Parables revealed truth to those willing to receive it, and at times concealed it from others.

In studying the parables of Jesus it is important to follow sound principles of interpretation. These principles may be briefly summarized thus:

1. A parable is a mirror by which truth can be seen; it is not truth itself.
2. The context in which a parable is given—the place, circumstances, persons to whom it was spoken, and the problem under discussion— must be taken into consideration and made the key to interpretation.
3. Christ’s own introduction and conclusion to the parable generally make its fundamental purpose clear.
4. Every parable illustrates one fundamental aspect of spiritual truth. . . . Details of a parable are significant only as they contribute to the clarification of that particular point of truth.

5. Before the parable's meaning in the spiritual realm can be understood it is necessary to have a clear picture of the situation described in the parable, in terms of Oriental customs and modes of thought and expression. Parables are vivid word pictures that must be *seen*, so to speak, before they can be *understood*.

6. In view of the fundamental fact that a parable is given to illustrate truth, and usually one particular truth, no doctrine may be based upon the incidental details of a parable.

7. The parable, in whole and in part, must be interpreted in terms of the truth it was designed to teach, as set forth in literal language in the immediate context and elsewhere in Scripture."

THE PARABLES OF JESUS

A. DIVINE LOVE, MERCY, AND JUSTICE

Parable	Source	Principles Illustrated
1. The Pearl of Great Price	Matt. 13:45-46	The priceless value of redeeming love. The Savior in search of men; men seeking for salvation.
2. The Lost Sheep	Luke 15:3-7	God's love for those who know they are lost but know not how to return to him. His unwillingness that any should perish.
3. The Lost Coin	Luke 15: 8-10	God's love for those who know not that they are lost. Diligence in seeking the lost.
4. The Prodigal Son	Luke 15:11-32	God's love for those who have wandered from his love. The hardheartedness of man in contrast with the love of God.
5. The Barren Fig Tree	Luke 13:6-9	The relationship between divine mercy and justice. God's dealings with the Jewish nation.

B. THE PLAN OF SALVATION

Parable	Source	Principles Illustrated
6. The Mustard Seed	Matt. 13:31, 32	The extensive, quantitative growth of the kingdom of divine grace, the church. God begins in a small way to accomplish great results.
7. The Tares	Matt. 13:24-30	Character decides destiny. The purpose of probationary time; tares do not eventually become wheat.
8. The Wicked Husbandmen	Matt. 21:33-43	God's eternal purpose will triumph in spite of man's unfaithfulness. Israel would forfeit its role as the chosen nation.

C. THE RECEPTION OF TRUTH

Parable	Source	Principles Illustrated
9. The Sower, the Seed and the Soils	Matt. 13:3-9, 18-23	The reception of truth by different classes of hearers.
10. The Great Banquet	Luke 14:16-24	The danger of neglecting or rejecting truth. God cannot accept a divided heart.
11. Hidden Treasure	Matt. 13:44	The transcendent value of truth and the effort necessary to secure it.
12. New Cloth and New Wine	Mark 2:21, 22	Truth versus traditionalism. The danger of preconceived opinions.
13. The Two Debtors	Luke 7:41-43	Appreciation of, and gratitude for, the love and mercy of God.

14. Building a Tower; A King Going to War	Luke 14:28-33	Counting the cost of discipleship.
15. Seven Unclean Spirits	Matt. 12:43-45	The necessity of a positive attitude toward truth; the unpardonable sin. The condition of the Jewish leaders. Justification incomplete without sanctification.
16. The Two Sons	Matt. 21:28-32	Deeds count, not words; profession without practice is hypocrisy.
17. Building on the Rock or on Sand	Matt. 7:24-27	The perception of truth not an end in itself but a means to the end of a transformed life. The folly of knowledge without obedience.
18. The Rich Fool	Luke 12:16-21	The danger of worldly mindedness; the folly of living for material things. To live for self is to perish.

D. THE TRANSFORMATION OF CHARACTER

Parable	Source	Principles Illustrated
19. The Growing Seed	Mark 4:26-29	Faith and works: human effort cooperating with infinite power in Christian growth.
20. The Leaven	Matt. 13:33	The intensive, qualitative growth of the kingdom of heaven. Power from above is implanted in the heart and transforms the life.
21. The Man Without a Wedding Garment	Matt. 22:2-14	The importance of Christ's righteousness.

E. PRAYER

Parable	Source	Principles Illustrated
22. The Friend Calling at Midnight	Luke 11:5-13	Perseverance in prayer. Asking to give to others.
23. The Unjust Judge	Luke 18:1-8	Perseverance, earnestness, and confidence in prayer.

F. HUMILITY VERSUS PRIDE

Parable	Source	Principles Illustrated
24. Choosing Places of Honor	Luke 14:7-11	Humility toward one's fellow men; honoring others.
25. The Pharisee and the Publican	Luke 18:9-14	Humility before God; the danger of pride and self-righteousness.

G. UTILIZING PRESENT OPPORTUNITIES

Parable	Source	Principles Illustrated
26. The Nobleman and the Pounds	Luke 19:11-27	The improvement of talents and opportunities. Working while waiting for the kingdom. Faithful service the basis of reward.
27. The Talents	Matt. 25:14-30	Same as No. 26; also, helping others prepare for our Lord's return.

28. The Dishonest Steward	Luke 16:1-9	The diligent use of present opportunities in preparation for the future life.
29. The Rich Man and Lazarus	Luke 16:19-31	Eternal destiny is decided in the present life; there is no second probation. The danger of preoccupation with material things.

H. THE CHRISTIAN AND HIS FELLOW MAN

Parable	Source	Principles Illustrated
30. The Good Samaritan	Luke 10:30-37	True religion consists in active service for others; on this, eternal destiny depends. Contact with suffering humanity frees the soul of selfishness.
31. The Unforgiving Servant	Matt. 18:23-35	Mercy toward, and forgiveness of, others. Our forgiveness by God contingent on our forgiveness of others.
32. Treasures Old and New	Matt. 13:52	Familiarity with old truths; alertness for new truth. Adapt truth to the needs of the hearers.
33. The Faithful Steward	Luke 12:42-48	Conscientious supervision of the affairs of God's household, the church.

I. AWAITING THE LORD'S RETURN

Parable	Source	Principles Illustrated
34. The Ten Virgins	Matt. 25:1-13	Personal preparation for our Lord's return; His coming seemingly delayed. Our need of the Holy Spirit.

35. The Watchful Servant	Mark 13:34-37	Watching for the Master's return.
36. The Watchful Servant; The Vigilant Home Owner	Luke 12:35-40	Preparedness for our Lord's sudden return. Living up to the light we have; personal accountability for truth.
37. Laborers in the Vineyard	Matt. 20:1-16	God measures service by the willingness and fidelity with which it is rendered. Rewards are based on our Lord's gracious generosity and on the spirit which motivates our service for Him.
38. Unprofitable Servants	Luke 17:7-10	Faithfulness to duty. God's claim on all our services.
39. The Sheep and the Goats	Matt. 25:31-46	The significance of practical religion. The supreme test of the reality of our religion is what it leads us to do for others.

J. THE FINAL JUDGMENT; ETERNAL REWARDS

Parable	Source	Principles Illustrated
40. The Dragnet	Matt. 13:47-50	The final separation of the bad from the good. Not all the wicked eventually become righteous.