

Puzzling Parables

The Wise Manager

October 15, 2017

Welcome to where we're learning to tend those under our care!

How well do you shepherd the sheep around you?

God has entrusted you to tend them with care and feed them with truth. So, do you?



When a crowd of many thousands had gathered, so that they were trampling on one another ... (Lk 12:1)

[Jesus] had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. (Mt 9:36)



After leaving three excuse-makers on the walk to the dock, (Lk 10:1) He sends out 72 other Novice disciples.

[Saying] I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. (Lk 10:3)



Now He's preparing to send His 12 Apprentices ...

... to the lost sheep of Israel ... [saying] I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. ["In sheep's clothing" (Mt 7:15)] (Mt 10:6, 16)



The Good Waiters

Willing lambs and able sheep are both called to help shepherd, by **servicing His sheep in His absence** and **preparing them for His presence**.

As Jesus prepares the Twelve, He's just told two parables: **The good waiters, who are girded** (i.e. hiked up and ready to serve) **and on guard** (lamps lit for their coming Master-Servant). And, **The Dreaded Thief**; a warning to **those who act as the master**: that when the Lord appears, He'll take away what they've selfishly stored.



The Dreaded Thief

[We'll pick it up here, when] Peter asked, "Lord, are you telling this parable to us, or to everyone?" – Luke 12:41 NIV

He's confused. If one of the twelve that Jesus is addressing has a master's mindset instead of a servant's heart, why would He send him out?

Well, because **having a Judas will showcase how man's greed and hypocrisy destroys the man without disrupting God's plan**. It's not only part of God's prophesied plan, Jesus often alludes to it.

When He began this Apprenticeship Training 2.0, He told 'em:

1. Be on guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy (Lk 12:1)
2. What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight (Lk 12:3)
3. Not one sparrow will fall to the ground apart from God's will (Mt 10:29)
4. Whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father (Mt 10:33)
5. Be on your guard against all kinds of greed (Lk 12:15)

And yet, about 14 months later, Judas joins the hypocrisy of the Pharisees [✓ #1]; secretly speaks with 'em at night [✓ #2]; disowns Jesus [✓ #4] for thirty pieces of silver [✓ #5]; and, when he hangs himself, his body falls to the ground [✓ #3]. (Mt 26:14-16, 27:6; Acts 1:18)

Good servants are "on their guard" against "hypocrisy" and "greed". To make His point about guarding against greed, Jesus tells the parable of The Rich Fool: a house-master, representing ...



... anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God. (Lk 12:21)

[And] God said to him, "You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared [stored up] for yourself?" (Lk 12:20)

Do you know who? *The Thief!* Next, Jesus tells them to consider how ravens are fed and how lilies clothe the fields; and, to stop hoarding and start storing up thief-proof treasure.

Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. [Sheep without a shepherd join Jesus' flock when they receive His Kingdom] [So, don't be like *The Rich Fool*] Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near ... – Luke 12:32-33 NIV

He follows this with **The Good Waiters**: where **He comes to serve His fellow servants and faithful friends**; and then, **The Dreaded Thief**: where **He comes to plunder all self-serving hypocrites!**

[And, this is when] Peter asked, "Lord, are you telling this parable to us, or to everyone?" The Lord answered, [in classic Jesus fashion: with a question] "Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time?" – Luke 12:41-42 NIV

In other words: You tell Me. **The one who helps the Master manage and tend and feed His flock is girded for service and on guard**. So, you tell me: *is that you?* **Do you nourish your spouse's walk with God?** Or, your kid's? Or, your friend's? Or, your co-workers? Or, your teammates? "*But, I'm just a lamb. I don't have anything to offer.*" **Have you ever done foolish things? Weak things? Lowly things?** Well, pay close attention to 1 Corinthians:

God **chose** the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God **chose** the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He **chose** the lowly things of this world and the despised things — and the things that are not — to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. – 1 Corinthians 1:26-31 NIV

In the parable, if the “master” is *Jesus*, then the “manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance” is ... *Peter*.



When Jesus last appears to His disciples (on the shore), He puts Peter in charge; asking three times if Peter truly loves Him.

Jesus said, “**Feed my lambs.**” [Like those 72 young disciples] ... Jesus said, “**Take care of my sheep.**” [i.e. Shepherd those sheep who don’t know the *Chief Shepherd*] ... Jesus said, “**Feed my sheep.**” [Like the 12 Apostles] – John 21:15-17 NIV

It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns. I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. – Luke 12:43-44 NIV

So, *Peter* represents the wise and faithful manager?! Yes.

But, is there *anyone* caught off guard more often than *Peter*? No.



About 14 months later, two days before the cross, Jesus repeats these parables privately to Peter, Andrew, James, and John; but, alters the parable of The Good Waiters to specifically fit *Peter*.



It’s like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with his assigned task, and tells the one at the door to **keep watch**. “Therefore **keep watch** because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the **evening**, or at **midnight**, or when the **rooster crows**, or at **dawn**. If he comes suddenly, **do not let him find you sleeping**. – Mark 13:34-36 NIV



The *next night*, Jesus asks Peter to keep watch while He prays in Gethsemane and **returns to find him sleeping ... three times**. (Mt 26:40)



And, **when the rooster crows, and Peter is denying Jesus, Jesus suddenly, unexpectedly, returns**. And ...

The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter ... And [Peter] went outside and wept bitterly. – Luke 22:60b-62 NIV



Mary Magdalene, *not Peter*, went to see if Jesus would return from the dead. Mary, *not Peter*, remained to see Jesus return to the tomb. Mary, *not Peter*, returned to see Jesus on the trail. (Jn 20:1, 6-16; Mt 28:1-9)



The first two times Jesus returned to the disciples, the doors were locked and nobody was waiting or watching to open for Him. (Jn 20:19, 26-27) And on *the day* Jesus puts Peter in charge, he’s caught off guard and ungirded, *out fishing*, and fails to even *recognize* Jesus! (Jn 21:1-7)

So, what’s the big difference between Judas and Peter?

At the Last Supper, Jesus says to Peter:

I have prayed for you, Simon, that **your faith may not fail**. And **when you have turned back**, strengthen your brothers.” – Luke 22:31-32 NIV

You see, **our faith doesn't fail when we fail Jesus**. *Sadly, we always hurt those we love.*

But, our faith only fails if we fail to turn back.

Peter's behavior was often off the mark, but never his heart.

Judas was filled with hypocrisy and greed and anger ... and didn't repent.

Peter was gripped with anxiety and fear and sorrow ... and wept bitter tears of remorse.

And turned back, again and again, every time Jesus found him failing.



Why do you suppose Jesus connected Peter's failure to that rooster crowing? Well, knowing that He was going to put Peter in charge (and that kind of authority tends to puff up our pride), **Jesus gave Peter a daily wakeup call, literally, to keep him humble.**

Do you ever weep bitterly when you fail the Lord miserably?

Or, do you just shrug it off?

Failure doesn't make you a hypocrite ... *insincerity* does.

Failure makes you a *loser*. It makes us foolish, weak, and lowly.

But, thank the Lord for how much Jesus loves us *losers*!

Judas wasn't a failure; he was an *insincere hypocrite*. So, the next time you hear somebody say that churches are filled with hypocrites, you just say, "Ours ain't; it's full o' *losers*!"

Two days before the cross, **when Jesus repeats these parables** to four of His disciples, Peter doesn't ask who He's speaking to. And yet, **that's when Jesus answers Peter's year-old question:**

What I say to you, I say to everyone: 'Watch!' – Mark 13:37 NIV

Which means, the year before, when Peter asked: **"Lord, are you telling this parable to us, or to everyone?"** The answer is the same to us as it was to Him: **"To everyone ... but, mostly to you."**