



***The Story of the Sower:
A Story About Guarding Our Hearts***

Jesus the Storyteller - Week 1
Matthew 13:1-23

Introduction: It is interesting that when we read in the Bible about Jesus being asked a question, instead of just giving an answer, He would often start a story. His stories were parables with a point.

Section 1 - Jesus tells the crowds earthly stories with a spiritual meaning. (Matthew 13:1-3a)

→ **A definition of a parable.** A parable is a story — but a story with a specific purpose. It tells of everyday things that everyone would be familiar with but would reveal an important life lesson and spiritual truth. Parables have been called “earthly stories with a heavenly meaning.”

Section 2 - Jesus starts with a story about a farmer sowing seeds. (Matthew 13:3b-9)

Section 3 - The disciples ask Jesus a question: why tell people parables? (Matthew 13:10-17)

Section 4 - Jesus explains the meaning of the story of the sower. (Matthew 13:18-23)

The point of this parable for me

Note: A believer’s heart is always in one of these four categories.

1. The Hard Heart. This is when we have allowed our hearts to become spiritually hard because we have neglected spiritual nourishment (prayer, Bible reading, and confessing sins). We might halfway hear or quickly read the Word but it actually just bounces off our hearts. We will have a hard heart when we allow the Word of God little or no room in our lives.

2. The Shallow Heart. This is when we get excited about something spiritual, but the momentum goes away as quickly as it came because our desire is for convenient Christian living.

3. The Crowded Heart. This is when we allow the worries of this life or the attractiveness of wealth to choke out the spiritual work and growth God wants to do in us.

4. The Good Heart. This is when we put into practice what God says. Although we are never perfect, we can be pleasing to God in our attitudes and actions. Daily looking to God with a desire to please Him is what creates great “heart soil” for God’s work to grow and flourish in our lives.

→ **Conclusion:** A believer’s spirit needs daily food as well as his body! At the heart of our spiritual problems is always a problem of the heart. Proverbs 4:23, “Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.”



The Story of the Persistent Widow: A Story About the Importance of Persistent Praying

Jesus the Storyteller - Week 2
Luke 18:1-8

→ **Introduction:** As we come to the 18th chapter of Luke, we find Jesus the Storyteller getting ready to share another story about the importance of persistent praying. What Jesus says in this story will show us five important reasons we should practice persistent praying and not give up.

Five Reasons for Practicing Persistent Praying

Reason #1 - We should not give up when praying about things because there is too much at stake. (Luke 18:1)

- **Don't give up.** There are several reasons why someone might give up on praying about something. One reason we may be tempted to stop praying about something could be "DISCOURAGEMENT." A second reason we could be tempted to stop praying about something could be "DOUBT." A third reason we could be tempted to stop praying about something could be the "DEVIL."

Reason #2 - We should not give up when praying about things even when the circumstances seem against us. (Luke 18:2-3)

- **No better option than God.** It is worth noting that the widow kept going to the judge for help because there was no better alternative. It is a good place to come to in our personal prayer life when we keep going to God about something because we

know there is no better alternative, there is no better plan, and there is no better option than to go to God.

Reason #3 - We should not give up when praying about things because the answer may be right around the corner. (Luke 18:4-5)

- **Teaching truth through contrasts.** It's crucial that we understand Jesus is using contrasts in this short story to teach truth. Jesus did not give this story to imply that God was like the unjust judge but to say that God was nothing like the unjust judge. Contrasts. Likewise, the unjust judge didn't want to hear the request of the widow. But God loves to hear our prayers and answer our prayers. Contrasts. A main emphasis of this story is this: "If a poor widow got what she requested from an uncaring judge, how much more will God's children receive from a caring Heavenly Father?"

Reason #4 - We should not give up when praying about things because God is working everything out. (Luke 18:6-8a)

- **God is always at work.** We don't want to make the mistake of thinking God's seeming delays are God's denials. The unjust judge delayed his answer to the widow for unjust reasons. But when our Heavenly Father seems to delay His answers it's always for righteous reasons for our good.

Reason #5 - We should not give up when praying about things because Jesus always keeps His promises. (Luke 18:8b)

- **Jesus will keep all His promises.** Notice that Jesus does not say "IF the Son of Man comes" but rather "WHEN the Son of Man comes." Jesus is saying in essence, "You can count on the fact that I will return just as I have said I would and when I do will bring justice as I have promised."

→ **Question.** How can we know when to keep praying about something and when we can stop praying about something? Here is a general rule based on us following the leading of God. We should continue to pray for something (1) until the answer comes, (2) or until the circumstances change, (3) or until God changes the burden on our hearts.



*The Story of the Wedding Banquet:
A Story About God's Invitation to
Live with Him Forever in Heaven*
Jesus the Storyteller - Week 3
Matthew 22:1-14

→ ☒ **Introduction:**

One of the characteristics of the stories Jesus told was this: His stories told of everyday things that everyone was familiar with but would reveal an important life lesson and spiritual truth. So it should not surprise us as we come to the 22nd chapter of Matthew that Jesus is telling a story about a wedding, a wedding invitation, and a wedding reception - all things everyone could relate to.

Section #1 - Invitations are sent to the wedding banquet but some refuse. (Matthew 22:1-3)

The main characters in this story

(1) The "king" is God. (2) The "king's son" is Jesus. (3) "The servants of the king" are the Old Testament and New Testament prophets. (4) "The people who refuse the invitation to the banquet" are the nation of Israel. (5) "The people who accept the invitation" are the Gentiles.

Section #2 - A second invitation is sent and refused, and the King reacts. (Matthew 22:4-7)

Everything is ready. That's the message of the gospel. All religions spell salvation "D-O," because it's based on what YOU do. Christianity spells salvation "D-O-N-E," because it's based on what JESUS has already done for you. Everything is ready - we just have to receive God's salvation invitation. (Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:8-9)

→ **Section #3 - The king's invitation is for everyone!** (Matthew 22:8-10)

☒ **Note:** I love that word on the invitation "anyone!" There were no qualifications to saying "yes" to the invitation. When it comes to God's gift of salvation through His Son, Jesus, I am so glad that the invitation was given without qualifications because we might not have qualified in one way or another.

→ **Section #4 - Anyone can accept the king's invitation, but it must be accepted on the king's terms.** (Matthew 22:11-14)

☒ **Note:** Charles Spurgeon said of this man in verse 12: "He came because he was invited, but he came only in appearance. The banquet was intended to honor the King's Son, but to this man, it meant nothing. He was willing to eat the good things set before him, but in his heart, there was no love either for the King or his well-beloved Son."

Invited vs. Chosen. Everyone is invited to say "yes" to God's salvation invitation. But only those who say "yes" are chosen to receive full forgiveness and eternal life in Heaven with the King, our Heavenly Father, and the King's Son, Jesus.

Your RSVP is confirmed. If you have trusted Jesus Christ to be the For-giver of your sins and the Leader of your life, a place is already awaiting you at the royal banquet table in Heaven for the joyous celebration feast! (Revelation 19:9)



***The Parable of the Wedding Banquet:
A Story That Reveals Seven Myths About Heaven***

Jesus the Storyteller - Week 4 - Matthew 22:1-14

Myth #1 - Nobody really knows about Heaven.

(Matthew 22:1-2; John 3:13; John 6:38; John 6:62; John 8:23; John 8:38; John 17:5)

Myth #2 - After death, we'll float on a cloud and play the harp.

(Matthew 22:3a)

→ **Note:** Heaven was created by God to be inhabited by man. 1 Corinthians 2:9 says, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him."

Myth #3 - Heaven is going to be boring. (Matthew 22:3b-4)

→ **Note:** Of all the ways Jesus could have described the Kingdom of Heaven, He described it as a celebration. Consider how many times Jesus compares Heaven to a celebration. Heaven is like a shepherd who finds his lost sheep and celebrates. Heaven is like the woman who finds her valuable lost coin and celebrates. Heaven is like a father whose prodigal son returns home and celebrates. Jesus said, "Likewise, there will be rejoicing in Heaven."

Myth #4 - Heaven is only for "good" people. (Matthew 22:8-10)

→ **Note:** The invitation was for "anyone!" When it comes to God's gift of salvation through His Son, Jesus, I am so grateful that the invitation was given without qualifications because we might not have qualified in one way or another.

Entrance to Heaven is not based on anyone's goodness for we are

all guilty of our sins (Isaiah 64:6; Romans 3:23; Ephesians 2:8-9).

Entrance to Heaven is based on the grace of God provided in the death of Jesus on the cross for our sins (Romans 6:23). It is us saying "yes" to God's salvation invitation.

Myth #5 - In Heaven, we lose our identities. (Matthew 22:11)

→ **Note:** Some people have the idea that in Heaven we won't be the same people we were on earth. Although our bodies will be fully restored and our minds fully renewed, our identities will remain the same. After the resurrection, Jesus had a glorified body but He was also, still the close friend of Peter, James, and John. He looked similar even with His glorified body and He still knew them and even ate with them (John 21:12-13). 1 Corinthians 13:12 says that we will know things fully in Heaven, even as we are fully known.

Myth #6 - I can get to Heaven on my own terms.

(Matthew 22:11b-12)

→ **Note:** Jesus concludes the story with what seems like an unusual incident. A man in the crowd wasn't wearing wedding garments. In those days, the attendees of royal weddings were provided with wedding garments by the king. No one could attend the wedding or the banquet without these wedding clothes. Thus the king's question to this man, "How did you get in here?" This man represents those who think they can be "good enough" to enter Heaven on their own terms.

Myth #7 - Only Heaven exists after death. (Matthew 22:5-7; 13-14)

→ **Note:** Not everyone goes to Heaven after this life. This parable portrays Heaven but it also teaches about hell – "Throw him into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." God desires for everyone to accept His salvation invitation (1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9) available to all during this life. But after this life (Hebrews 9:27), there are two, not one, eternal destinations. A person's decision to accept Jesus as Savior or reject Jesus as Savior will determine a person's eternal destiny.