

The parables retold

by Martin Wild



Theme - Loving Others

He didn't really see them coming. One moment a lad on roller skates knocked into him, then another, pushing and jostling "watch where your going old man", and then the blow to his head and he was down on the pavement. The kicks – when would they stop! He felt them rummage in his jacket and take his wallet, and his watch and then they were gone, shouting and yelling down the wintry street.

He lay hunched in the gutter moaning softly, unable to get up, his stick kicked out of reach.

The social worker on her way home after a long day at the office passed by a few moments later. "Not another drunk" she said as she stepped over him. "I really must get to Sainsbury's". Another few minutes went by, the old man tried to get up but fell back again, cutting his face on the curb.

It was at this point that the minister from the church opposite unlocked the door for his evening service. He caught sight of the hunched figure in the gathering gloom. "Addicts" he muttered "its getting worse every day round here. The police really should do something" and he turned on his heels and went back indoors to finish getting ready before the first of his flock arrived.

The old man could feel the cold seeping into his bones, the voices in the street getting fainter, when he felt a firm hand on his shoulder. He curled into a tighter ball expecting a further kicking. Perhaps the muggers had come back for more.

"Are you OK?" said a man's voice in fractured English. A bearded face swam into view. "He's really hurt" said the man "Bakri – run and call an ambulance. I will stay here with him" The stranger took off his threadbare coat and placed it over the old man. "Don't worry" he said "I won't go away". And as the man lay there he could hear the stranger praying over him in his own language – the only word he recognised was Allah.

Later that night after many hours in casualty, the old man was discharged – and waiting for him at the hospital door was the father Wiraj and his 11 year old son. Asylum seekers from Sudan. "We stayed to make sure you got home" they said, as they guided him gently into a waiting taxi.

When they got back to the old man's flat, they helped him indoors and offered to make a cup of tea. In the kitchen it was plain that there was almost nothing to eat, and the old guy was simply too weary to do anything for himself.

And so Wiraj left his son to sit with him, and went down to the corner "8 'til late" where he used the last of his food vouchers, all that they had for next 3 days, on some simple English foodstuffs for the old man.

Its funny isn't it, how we put people into boxes, prejudices of our own making. Asylum seekers, illegal immigrants, spongers or neighbours – our neighbours and Jesus commands us "Love them as you love yourself". Do I? And if not why not?

Based on the parable of The Good Samaritan Luke 10:30-37

Theme - Grace

SERVICE AND OBEDIENCE

The morning shift had just clocked on when the factory tannoy crackled into life. "Foreman to the Managers office, straightaway please" The foreman sighed and put down his tools. "What already" he thought "we have barely got started."

The Manager looked up as he came in. "Do you want the good news or the bad?" he said glancing at the foreman who stood at the door. Before the foreman could reply he continued "The good news - we have a large emergency order, premium rates but the bad news it must be dispatched by close of business tonight. So I want you to go down to the job centre and find me half a dozen extra contract workers – just for one day. Make sure you offer a good rate as we need them straightaway, OK?"

Within an hour the foreman came back with the extra men who were very pleased to be have been selected and they all set to work.

But by midday it was clear that if they were going to complete the order further hands would be needed and so the foreman went into town again and came back with a further group of men.

By afternoon tea break despite everyone working as hard as they could the Manager could see that the job was still not going to get done in time, so the foreman was dispatched a third time to hire another group of men.

But even so only an hour before factory shutdown for the night the foreman was again at the job centre seeing if he could hire anyone else to help with the final packing and dispatch work.

With barely a minute to spare the order was completed and shipped, much to everyone's delight and relief especially the Manager's.

He called the foreman into his office while the men waited outside. They could see the Manager giving instructions to the foreman who nodded in agreement.

After a few moments the foreman came out and called out the names of all the men who had arrived for the final few minutes of work and as they came forward they each received a full days pay! Their delight was nothing compared to the excited buzz amongst the other men especially those who had been there all day. This was going to be a payday to remember for a long while.

Imagine their shock when every man from the first to the last received exactly the same amount of money – one days pay at the agreed rate.

The men began to mutter and complain, pushing and jostling the foreman and it was clear that there was a danger that a fight could break out. The Manager came out to see what was going on.

One of the men who had been there all day spoke up. "Those guys over there, they have only been here a few minutes and you have paid them as much as us and we have been slaving away all day. That's just not fair!"

The factory manager paused for a moment, folded his arms, looked at the men and said "In what way have I cheated you? Haven't you been paid what was agreed when you signed on this morning? What business of yours is it if I want to pay everyone the same. Don't I have the right to do that. Why should you moan and criticise my generosity? Now take your money and go."

And that is what the Kingdom of Heaven is like. Those who today come last will be first in line and those who think they should be first will be last of all.

**Based on the parable of The Workers in the Harvest Field
Matthew 20:1-16**

Theme - Serving God

The chief executive called his directors into the board room. "I have decided that we need to encourage new talent in the younger generation" he declared "and to that end the company is going to launch an annual sponsorship for students from the local college".

The rules of entry required that any student who would like to be considered for sponsorship would need to apply giving details of why they would be a good candidate.

Eventually 3 students were shortlisted and as a means of the Chief Executive getting the measure of each of these young people he told them that they would each be given a sum of money and that it was up to them to find innovative ways of using it to generate fresh profits for the business. They would each have 30 days to earn as much as they could.

The month went quickly by, and the three students found themselves nervously awaiting their meeting with the Chief Executive and his Board.

The first student reported that he had been able to double the funds that he had been given, and the second student likewise.

But when the third student came to report his results, he hung back, reluctant to declare the outcome. In the end he told the Board of Directors that he knew that they would expect high standards and that he had therefore been reluctant to risk losing any of the money, so he had kept it safe and sound and was pleased to give it all back again in full. He hoped that they would be pleased that he had not lost any.

But the Chief Exec was not in the least impressed, so they took the money and passed it across to the first student as a bonus! The Chief Exec told the 3rd student that he wasn't interested in trainees who were so risk averse and probably idle into the bargain. Why had he made attempt to understand the Company's vision and mission? And the young man left chastened and empty handed.

That's how it is with God. If you try your best you will be given more responsibility, but if you don't make any effort at all, even the little you have will be taken off you and you will be thrown out to fend for yourself.

**Based on the parable of The Loaned Money
Matthew 25:14-30**

Theme - Responding to the message of the Kingdom

He stood on the corner handing out leaflets, sometimes pressing them into the hands of the late night shoppers - urgency written all over his face.

People pushed past barely noticing him - and of those who took a leaflet most merely glanced at it before letting it slip from their fingers, to blow down the street in the winter wind and lie ignored in the gutter.

But a few read with a spark of interest – nodding silently and tucking the leaflet into their coat pocket with muttered promise “to read it again more carefully when they got home”. But few ever did. There was always so much else to do. And when, in few weeks time, the crumpled paper was found in their pocket it was popped into the bin with a quiet shrug but never a backward glance.

But one or two took the offer on the man’s leaflet truly to heart. They could see and almost feel a life changing opportunity when they were offered one. And it truly changed the way they looked at all of life. What once seemed vital now seemed secondary, what was once irrelevant now became central.

And as they responded they too became determined to share this with as many people as they could.

And so, as the weeks went by, there were first 30 then 60 then 100 new faces out on the city’s streets, leaflets in hand.

This is what God’s Kingdom is like.

**Based on The parable of the sower and the soils
Matthew 13:3-8/ Mark 3:4-8/ Luke 8:5-8**

Theme - Response to the Gospel

It was a brilliant business opportunity and the businessman knew exactly how to maximise the returns and, more than that, would make an excellent franchise investment. So he carefully produced a franchise instruction manual, patented all his ideas and devised a complete training package to go with it all. Then he advertised for franchisees who would like to buy into the opportunity. He carefully chose his first franchisees, trained them and made sure they were fully up and running before going away overseas. The only thing he asked of them before he left was to make sure they paid their monthly franchise payments on time.

The new businesses was very successful and the franchisees got very rich indeed. The businessman however never got paid the monthly franchise payments in accordance with the legal agreement. Eventually he sent his UK managing agent to remind them. The franchisees were very rude and sent him away with a flea in his ear saying they had more important things to do than make payments to an absentee owner, didn't he know they were doing important work here.

Month after month the businessman kept on sending representative after representative. Rather than pay their debts however the franchisees got more and more annoyed even throwing some of them out onto the street.

Eventually the businessman said, I will send my son to see them, then they will realize how important this is. But when the franchisees heard that the owner's son was coming they decided that if they got rid of him permanently there would be no-one to inherit the business so they might be able to keep it without ever having to pay anything.

So they arranged to have him murdered and dumped his body on the local landfill so that no-one would think it had anything to do with them.

Now what do you think the businessman did? He had the original franchisees tried for murder and appointed new ones to run the business in their place.

**Based on the Parable of the Wicked Tenants
Matthew 21:33-41; Mark 12:1-9; Luke 20:9-16**

Theme - Use your resources well

The phone rang and the Prosperity Ministry Tele-evangelist picked up the phone. His secretary told him he had the Chairman of Trustees on the line and he needed to speak to him as a matter of urgency regarding a matter of finance.

His heart sunk into his very expensive crocodile shoes. He knew what this was about. For several weeks now there had been rumours of fraud and of funds going missing, and he knew in his heart of hearts that his luck had finally run out. Sure enough the Chairman confirmed that an investigation into his affairs was underway and that he was suspended with effect from today.

“What am I going to do now” he thought. “I have never done a real job in my life and anyway no-one will hire me after this comes to light, and there is no way I am going on the dole. I need to find a way to buy long term friends and allies”. And so he dreamt up his ultimate prosperity ministry scam.

On his way out of the office for the last time he obtained a photocopy of the church’s donor ledger which showed all those people who made regular payments in support of the church in return for which they had their names embossed on the ends of a row of seats and a mention in the annual accounts.

That evening before news of his suspension got out he made calls to each person in turn telling them that the church would not after all be expecting them to meet their commitment in full, but that instead they would still be honoured if they paid less than half of what they had promised.

But the Trustees were watching closely, and they saw everything that was going on. Their reaction however was the most surprising thing of all. They used his continuing dishonesty as an object lesson for the others in the church saying “Look at this man, if only he had been as diligent in winning souls for God as he has been in winning friends for himself, then he would have truly stored up an everlasting treasure rather than the passing gains of the here and now”.

**Based on the Parable of the shrewd manager.
Luke 16:1-9**

Theme - Mercy for the poor

Riches

The snare of money, stronger than the human will,
Deceives the heart with promises it can't fulfil;
The urge to gather, bank and hoard
Conceals itself as "just reward and wealth hard won"
So what should be an instrument of grace
Becomes a tyrant master in God's place.
And Mammon feeds our human greed
Disguising want as rightful need, an all consuming one!
But Heaven's riches lie in servant guise
To give away - love's greater prize;
Abundant life the rich reward
In serving Jesus Christ Our Lord, the Father's Righteous One.
So look to be an instrument of grace
His hands and feet with human face,
Seek first to serve our neighbours' needs
And put aside our selfish greed in following His Son.

**Based on the Parable of The Rich man and Lazarus.
Luke 16:19-31**

Theme - Response to God's invitation

The multi-millionaire fashion designer was arranged the wedding of his daughter. This was going to be the most talked about and best dressed celebrity wedding of the century! He had his personal assistant send out invitations to all his suppliers and all the people who had bought his clothes over the years, young and old alike.

But as the wedding day grew closer his guest list began to shrink. People who had initially accepted his invitation began to send in their apologies. Some said they were going on holiday instead, whilst others explained they had more pressing business engagements. And then to add insult to injury when the specially hired fleet of limousines went to collect those who had not declined his invitation none of them came either. The cars returned empty.

The Millionaire was speechless, in fact he didn't believe it. So he sent the cars out a second time and told the drivers to make it clear that everything was ready and he was waiting their arrival. But this time the invited guests wouldn't even open their doors.

The fashion designer was livid and he had his lawyers take immediate action to cancel the supply contracts and the customer accounts of all those who had offended him, he wasn't going to have his name taken in vain like this.

Next he called in all the drivers and told them to go into the city and stop on the street corners and invite anyone and everyone to come. He also had his drivers offer each guest who accepted this surprise invitation an immediate visit to his retail headquarters where they could choose any new outfit he or she fancied, so that everyone would look their best. And so, better late than never the room, was filled with guests and the wedding could begin.

After the formalities were over the fashion designer went round the room to meet his surprise guests in person all of them dressed in his latest designs, when he came upon a scruffy young man still dressed in torn jeans and a rather grubby T shirt.

The designer turned to his PA "Had this young man been offered his choice of a free set of the latest fashions like everyone else"? But before the PA could consult his extensive list, the young man spoke up for himself saying "I didn't really think it mattered what I wore." But it did. This was after all the wedding feast of the worlds greatest designer, so he immediately had two of his security team come and eject the scruffy young man by the back door. "When I make an offer I don't expect someone to throw it back in my face and think they can get away with it" he said as he returned to the wedding banquet.

**Based on the Parable of The Marriage Feast
Matthew 22:1-14**

Theme - Forgiveness

He knew his time was up. That morning he had been caught red handed embezzling the company's money, fiddling the accounts and now he had been called in to see the boss whom he knew would throw the book at him. He would lose his job, and if that were to happen it was probable he would lose his house and home too, and would his wife stick beside him or leave taking the children with her?

When he came into the boss's office there were a number of other people there already – his manager, his secretary, some of his work colleagues. This was even worse than he had expected. The boss started to quiz him as to why he had stolen the money? Wasn't he paid well enough for the job he did? Did he not realise this was a criminal matter? It was eventually all too much for him and he burst into tears and started to beg the boss not to call the police.

And to the absolute amazement of everyone in the room the boss agreed. He said he wouldn't refer matters to the police and furthermore would not require him to pay back any of the money he had stolen and he could keep his job.

The man couldn't believe his good fortune, he wiped his eyes, and left the boss's office followed by everyone else. But just outside on the corridor the man bumped into one of his junior staff, a young woman to whom the man had lent a small sum of money the week before. She had not managed to pay him back.

Imagine the reaction of everyone in the corridor when rather than passing on the goodwill he had just received, the man started to shout and swear at the young woman demanding his money right there and then. The man made such a noise that the boss opened his door to find out what on earth was going on.

The other staff in the corridor quickly explained what had happened and the boss immediately summoned the man back into his office. "I let you off every penny of all that you had stolen from me, as well as forgiving you your dishonesty, and letting you keep your job but you couldn't even let someone off a small debt. As a result I am immediately going to report your theft to the police and I shall seek repayment of every penny and I expect to see you receive as heavy a sentence as possible."

(And this is how God will treat everyone, who does not forgive others with all their heart).

**Based on the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant
Matthew 18:23-35**

Theme - The Second Coming

The young private soldier was getting married. And who better to celebrate this with than his best mates in his own brigade, who had been with him all through his training. And so he asked his ten best friends to come out on his stag night with him. The only condition he asked of them was that they didn't drink too much and that they would look after him on his night out.

Now some of his mates thought this was a great laugh and they started to get blitzed almost from the off, whilst others respected the terms of the invitation and made sure that although they had a great time neither they nor the groom had too much to drink.

By the time the evening was half way through some were so completely legless that the others left them behind and went on without them.

The following morning – the day of the wedding - those who had respected the request of their best mate were guard of honour at the wedding door, whilst the others were confined to barracks for drunk and disorderly behaviour.

They explained to the camp commander that they were supposed to be at their best mates wedding, but when the commanding officer made enquiries, the young soldier told him he didn't know what they were talking about, and to leave them behind bars until their hangovers had worn off.

**Based on the Parable of the ten Virgins
Matthew 25:1-13**

