TERESA OELOFSE

Stewardship and Eternity

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To the One who spoke in parables beside the Sea of Galilee.
To Christ, the hidden treasure, the true Shepherd, the Light of the world, and the King of the coming Kingdom.
May these pages help restless hearts hear again the voice that called fishermen, confronted Pharisees, restored sinners, and revealed the mysteries of the Kingdom of God through simple stories carrying eternal weight.

"Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven..."

— Matthew 13:11 (NKJV)

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Foreword

The parables of Jesus are among the most familiar passages in all of Scripture.

Yet they are also among the most misunderstood.

For generations, these stories have often been reduced to:

simple moral lessons,

children's illustrations,

or inspirational anecdotes.

But Christ never intended the parables to function merely as pleasant religious stories.

The parables were instruments of revelation.

Through them:

kingdoms rose and fell,

hypocrisy was exposed,

hidden sin was confronted,

mercy was revealed,

and the nature of God's Kingdom was unveiled to those willing to hear.

Jesus spoke of:

seeds,

lamps,

vineyards,

shepherds,

weddings,

coins,

servants,
fishermen,
and fathers.

Yet beneath these ordinary images lay truths concerning:
judgement,
grace,
repentance,
eternity,
discipleship,
redemption,
and the final restoration of all things.

The purpose of this work is not merely to explain the parables academically.

It is to journey through them slowly, thoughtfully, and prayerfully.

Each chapter seeks to explore:
historical setting,
Jewish context,
Old Testament echoes,
theological meaning,
practical application,
and spiritual reflection.

This study also draws from the insights of:
Scripture itself,
historical scholarship,
and especially the devotional and Christ-centred reflections found within Christ's Object Lessons by Ellen G. White.

The parables were designed not only to inform the mind, but to search the heart.

May this journey help uncover the mysteries hidden within the stories of Christ.

Preface

This book was written as a documentary-style devotional study guide through the parables of Jesus.

It was designed for:
daily study,
personal reflection,
group discussion,
sermon preparation,
devotional reading,
and contemplative meditation upon Scripture.

The structure of each chapter intentionally follows a layered approach:

- Opening Meditation
- Primary Scripture Reading
- Historical and Cultural Context
- Verse-by-Verse Exposition
- Old Testament Echoes
- Christ's Object Lessons Integration
- Theological Reflection
- Personal Reflection
- Prayer
- Journaling Space

The goal is not speed.

The goal is immersion.

The parables were never meant to be rushed.

They were designed to linger within the soul like seeds planted beneath the surface — slowly revealing the nature of the Kingdom of God over time.

Some readers may approach this work devotionally. Others academically. Others spiritually searching for answers.

All are invited to listen carefully to the voice speaking through the stories.

Because the parables ultimately reveal more than moral instruction.

They reveal Christ Himself.

I

Purpose of Parables

Before revealing the mysteries of the Kingdom, Jesus first revealed why He spoke in parables. These stories were designed both to uncover truth and expose the condition of the human heart. To some, the parables brought light, understanding, and transformation. To others, they remained hidden beneath ordinary words and familiar images. Part I explores the spiritual purpose behind Christ's teaching method and the mystery of hearing with the heart.

1

Introduction

Why Jesus Spoke in Parables

The crowds came from everywhere.

From fishing villages scattered along Galilee's northern shoreline. From Jerusalem's crowded streets. From Roman roads lined with dust and taxation booths. Farmers, widows, zealots, labourers, shepherds, Pharisees, merchants, the sick, the curious, the hostile, and the spiritually hungry gathered around a wandering Rabbi who spoke unlike any teacher Israel had heard before.

Jesus rarely taught in abstract theology.

He spoke about seeds. Lamps. Bread. Soil. Nets. Banquets. Vineyards. Coins. Fig trees. Sheep. Weddings. Debts. Farmers and servants and fathers and kings.

Simple images.

Yet these stories unsettled empires, divided crowds, exposed hypocrisy, and revealed the hidden architecture of the Kingdom of God.

The parables are not ornamental illustrations added to Jesus' teaching. They are the teaching.

And they are stranger than most readers realise.

Some end without resolution. Others contain shocking reversals. The righteous are exposed as blind. Outsiders become examples of faithfulness. Religious leaders become villains. Wealth becomes dangerous. Honour is overturned. Grace appears scandalous. Judgement arrives unexpectedly.

The parables comfort the repentant and disturb the self-assured.

Jesus Himself explained that parables both reveal and conceal truth:

```
"Because it has been given to you to know the
mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it
has not been given."
 -- Matthew 13:11, NKJV
```

The same story could awaken one listener while hardening another.

This was not accidental.

The parables functioned like mirrors. Every hearer eventually discovered himself somewhere within the story.

The proud often failed to recognise themselves.

2

The World of Parables

To modern readers, many parables appear softened by familiarity. Repeated exposure has reduced them into moral sayings or children's stories. But in first-century Judea and Galilee, these teachings carried explosive implications.

Jesus taught within a land occupied by Rome.

Heavy taxation crushed ordinary people. Herod's political machinery enriched elites while peasants struggled to survive failed harvests and mounting debt. Religious life had become fragmented between Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Zealots, scribes, priests, and competing interpretations of covenant faithfulness.

Israel longed for deliverance.

Many expected a Messiah who would overthrow pagan oppressors and restore national glory. Instead, Jesus announced something both greater and more unsettling:

```
"The kingdom of God is at hand."
```

Yet the Kingdom arrived differently than expected.

Not through military revolt.

Not through aristocratic power.

Not through temple dominance.

The Kingdom came like seed scattered into soil. Like leaven hidden in dough. Like treasure buried beneath a field. Quiet. Patient. Hidden. Growing beneath the surface of ordinary life.

This deeply frustrated many expectations.

According to scholars such as The Parables of the Kingdom and Jesus and the Victory of God, Jesus used parables to announce that God's reign was already breaking into history, even while final judgement still awaited fulfilment.

The Kingdom was both present and coming.

Already here.

Not yet complete.

This tension runs through nearly every parable.

3

Why the Parables Feel Unsettling

Modern readers often search for a single neat "lesson" inside each story.

But the parables resist simplification.

According to Stories with Intent, many parables operate on multiple levels simultaneously:

- social,
- prophetic,
- theological,
- personal,
- communal,
- and eschatological.

A parable may:

- expose hypocrisy,
- reveal divine mercy,
- warn of judgement,
- redefine neighbourliness,

- challenge wealth,
- reveal hidden faith,
- and confront spiritual blindness all at once.

This is why interpretations often differ.

Even the disciples struggled to understand.

4

Parables in the Old Testament

Jesus did not invent symbolic storytelling.

The Hebrew Scriptures are saturated with prophetic imagery:

- vineyards,
- shepherds,
- harvests,
- weddings,
- banquets,
- fig trees,
- lamps,
- seeds,
- kings,
- servants.

The prophets frequently used symbolic narratives to confront Israel.

Nathan confronted David through a parable before exposing the king directly:

```
"You are the man!"
 -- 2 Samuel 12:7
```

Isaiah described Israel as God's vineyard:

```
"For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house
of Israel."
 -- Isaiah 5:7
```

Ezekiel spoke of shepherds who failed the flock.

Daniel described Kingdoms through symbolic imagery.

Jesus stands firmly within this prophetic tradition.

But He intensifies it.

He places Himself at the centre of the story.

The vineyard belongs to His Father.

The shepherd is Himself.

The bridegroom is Himself.

The rejected son is Himself.

The coming judge is Himself.

The parables ultimately reveal not only the Kingdom, but the King.

5

How to read Parables

Several dangers appear repeatedly in interpretation.

1. Over-Allegorising

Some readers attempt to assign symbolic meaning to every tiny detail.

Not every lampstand, coin, branch, or animal carries hidden theological significance.

Yet neither are the details meaningless.

Wisdom is required.

2. Flattening the Story

Others reduce the parables into generic morality:

- "Be kind."
- "Have faith."
- "Try harder."

But Jesus was not merely teaching ethics.

He was announcing a cosmic invasion:
the reign of God entering history.

3. Ignoring Jewish Context

Without understanding first-century Jewish culture, major parts of the stories disappear.

According to Poet and Peasant and The Parables of Jesus:

- inheritance customs,
- honour and shame,
- purity boundaries,
- labour systems,
- patronage structures,
- hospitality obligations,
- and agricultural realities

all dramatically affect interpretation.

For example:

The Prodigal Son is not shocking merely because the son leaves home.

It is shocking because he effectively wishes his father dead before demanding inheritance.

The father then humiliates himself publicly by running to meet him.

Every original listener would have felt the scandal.

6

About This Study Journey

This journal was designed as a documentary-style devotional journey through the parables of Jesus. Rather than approaching the parables as isolated stories or simple moral lessons, each chapter explores the historical setting, cultural background, theological meaning, Old Testament connections, and spiritual implications behind Christ's teachings.

The goal is not merely information.

It is transformation — to slow down, listen carefully to the voice of Christ, and allow the stories to examine us.

Because eventually every reader must ask:

Am I the hardened soil? The fearful servant? The elder brother? The distracted guest? The foolish builder? The blind guide? The wandering sheep?

Or the one who finally hears the voice of the Shepherd?

Chapter Format

Every chapter follows a structured format designed for both study and reflection:

- Opening Meditation

- Scripture Reading
- Historical and Cultural Context
- Verse-by-Verse Exploration
- Old Testament Echoes
- Christ's Object Lessons Integration
- Theological Reflection
- Personal Reflection
- Prayer
- Journaling Space
- Companion Illustration

Scripture Translations

Scripture references throughout this work primarily utilise the NKJV, alongside comparative insights from the NASB and Clear Word Paraphrase where helpful for study and devotional depth.

Companion Illustrations

Each chapter includes a companion line-art illustration inspired by the parable being studied. These illustrations were intentionally designed in a monochrome devotional style so they may be coloured, painted, shaded, or reflected upon prayerfully during study.

Like the parables themselves, the illustrations are intended to reveal deeper meaning through careful attention and reflection.

Scholarly Sources

A full list of primary biblical texts, historical scholarship, theological commentary, and devotional writings drawn upon throughout this study can be found in the following chapter.

7

Primary Study Sources & References

This study journal draws from a combination of biblical texts, historical scholarship, theological commentary, and devotional writings in order to explore the parables of Jesus within their historical, cultural, prophetic, and spiritual context.

Primary Biblical Sources

- New King James Version (NKJV)
- New American Standard Bible (NASB)
- Clear Word Paraphrase
- King James Version (KJV)

Historical & Scholarly References

- Joachim Jeremias — *The Parables of Jesus* (1954)
- C.H. Dodd — *The Parables of the Kingdom* (1935)
- Kenneth E. Bailey — *Poet and Peasant* & *Through Peasant Eyes* (1976, 1980)
- Klyne Snodgrass — *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive*

Guide to the Parables of Jesus (2008)
- Brad H. Young — *The Parables: Jewish Tradition and Christian Interpretation* (1998)
- Amy-Jill Levine — *Short Stories by Jesus: The Enigmatic Parables of a Controversial Rabbi* (2014)
- N.T. Wright — *Jesus and the Victory of God* (1996)
- Craig S. Keener — *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (1993)

Devotional & Spiritual Commentary

- Ellen G. White — *Christ's Object Lessons*

Insights, themes, historical context, and theological reflections throughout this journal have been prayerfully synthesised and adapted from these sources alongside direct study of Scripture. This work was created as a devotional study companion designed to encourage deeper reflection upon the teachings of Jesus and the mysteries of the Kingdom of God.

8

The Purpose of Parables

Opening Meditation

The disciples waited until the crowd had thinned.

They had watched Jesus teach from the boat all morning. They had seen the farmers nod at the soil imagery. They had heard the laughter, the murmuring, the silence that fell when a story suddenly turned unexpectedly.

But they were confused.

They had heard the same words as everyone else.

Yet something about the way Jesus taught unsettled them. He was not explaining theology directly. He was not issuing commands. He was not debating the Pharisees in the language they expected.

He was telling stories about seeds.

Finally they came to Him privately.

"Why do You speak to them in parables?"

It was not a hostile question.

It was an honest one.

They sensed that something important was happening beneath the surface of the stories. That the parables were not merely illustrations added to a sermon.

They were the sermon.

And the disciples wanted to understand why.

Jesus' answer would reveal one of the most profound and difficult truths in all of His ministry:

The parables were not designed to make truth easier.

They were designed to reveal the condition of every heart that encountered them..

Primary Scripture Reading

```
"And the disciples came and said to Him, 'Why do You
speak to them in parables?'
He answered and said to them, 'Because it has been
given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of
heaven, but to them it has not been given.'"
```

Comparative Translation Notes

NASB

The NASB emphasises "mysteries" as truths previously hidden but now being revealed through Christ and His Kingdom.

Clear Word Paraphrase

The Clear Word expands the emotional and spiritual atmosphere surrounding the disciples' confusion, helping modern readers sense the divide between superficial listening and genuine spiritual perception.

Historical and Cultural Context

Jesus taught in a world saturated with expectation.

First-century Israel lived beneath Roman occupation. Heavy taxation burdened ordinary labourers and farmers. Political unrest simmered beneath daily life. Many Jews longed for a Messiah who would overthrow pagan rulers and restore the kingdom to Israel.

Instead, Jesus spoke about seeds growing slowly in soil.

This frustrated many expectations.

According to Joachim Jeremias, the parables cannot be separated from the historical crisis of Israel standing at the edge of divine visitation. The Kingdom of God was arriving, but not in the form many expected.

Kenneth Bailey notes that Jesus deliberately used ordinary village imagery because the stories emerged directly from the lived reality of Galilean peasant life:

- sowing fields,
- baking bread,
- tending vineyards,
- negotiating debts,
- hosting guests,
- and protecting family honour.

The familiar images lowered the listener's guard.

Then the story would suddenly turn.

And the hearer would discover that the story was actually about him.

Verse-by-Verse Exposition

```
"Why do You speak to them in parables?"
```

The disciples recognised something unusual.

Jesus was not merely simplifying theology.

The parables concealed truth as much as they revealed it.

This tension is central to understanding the ministry of Christ.

```
"Because it has been given to you..."
```

The language of "given" is important.

Spiritual understanding is not merely intellectual achievement.

The Kingdom must be received.

Jesus repeatedly taught that hardened hearts, pride, hypocrisy, and self-sufficiency blind people to spiritual truth.

```
"The mysteries of the kingdom of heaven"
```

In Jewish thought, a mystery was not something permanently unknowable.

It referred to divine truth once hidden but now revealed by God.

The great mystery being unveiled was this:
The Kingdom had arrived in the person of Jesus Himself.
But it arrived quietly.
Not through military revolt.
Not through political domination.
Not through aristocratic power.
The Kingdom came through:

- repentance,
- transformation,
- mercy,
- judgement,
- and spiritual rebirth.

```
"But to them it has not been given"
```

This statement often troubles modern readers.

Yet throughout Scripture, persistent rejection produces spiritual blindness.

Pharaoh hardened his heart.

Israel ignored the prophets.

Religious leaders resisted divine correction.

Eventually people become incapable of hearing what they refuse to receive.

The parables therefore act like mirrors.

The humble lean closer.

The proud walk away confused.

Old Testament Echoes

Primary References:

- Isaiah 6:9–10
- Psalm 78:2
- Jeremiah 5:21
- Ezekiel 12:2

Jesus quotes Isaiah 6:

```
"Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and
seeing you will see and not perceive."
```

Isaiah originally spoke these words during a period of covenant rebellion in Israel.

The nation had become religious outwardly while spiritually resistant inwardly.

Jesus applies the same diagnosis to many within His own generation.

The issue was not lack of information.

It was resistance to repentance.

Christ's Object Lessons Integration

Primary Reference:

Christ's Object Lessons, Chapter 2: "Teaching in Parables" pp. 17–27

In Christ's Object Lessons, Ellen G. White emphasises that Christ used parables both to awaken inquiry and to protect sacred truth from those who approached only with hostility or superficial curiosity.

She writes that truth received without surrender hardens rather than heals.

The parables therefore become instruments of mercy.

Those genuinely seeking God are drawn deeper.

Those merely seeking entertainment or intellectual superiority remain outside the spiritual reality being described.

White repeatedly emphasises that spiritual perception depends upon the condition of the heart.

The issue is not intellectual capacity.

It is willingness to obey revealed truth.

Theological Reflection

The parables reveal several foundational realities:

- The Kingdom of God is both revealed and hidden.
- Spiritual truth requires humility.
- Divine revelation demands response.
- Neutrality toward Jesus is impossible.
- Repeated rejection produces blindness.

The parables therefore function simultaneously as:

- invitations,

- revelations,
- warnings,
- and acts of judgement.

The Uncomfortable Question

What if spiritual blindness is not caused by lack of evidence, but by resistance to surrender?

Many who heard Jesus understood His stories intellectually.

What they rejected were the implications.

The parables forced listeners to confront:

- pride,
- greed,
- hypocrisy,
- self-righteousness,
- loveless religion,
- and false security.

The danger still remains.

It is possible to study the parables academically while resisting their demands personally.

Personal Reflection

How do I approach Scripture?

As information?

As tradition?

As intellectual curiosity?

Or as divine truth that requires transformation?

Am I listening merely to analyse?

Or am I listening to obey?

Personal Notes



Prayer

Lord, give me ears to hear.

Break through pride, distraction, and spiritual dullness. Teach me to receive Your truth with humility and obedience. Let Your Word expose what is false within me and cultivate a heart ready for Your Kingdom.

Amen.

II

Wealth, Stewardship, and Eternity

The Kingdom of God confronts humanity's relationship with wealth, possession, and earthly security. Through stories of rich men, dishonest stewards, and eternal consequences, Jesus exposes the danger of greed, self-deception, and misplaced priorities. These parables reveal that earthly resources are temporary, but the choices made with them carry eternal significance.

9

The Rich Fool

Opening Meditation

The man stands surveying overflowing fields.
Barns strain beneath abundance.
Harvest spills beyond storage capacity.
The future appears secure.
At last, he believes, life can slow down.
Years of labour have succeeded.
Wealth has increased.
Comfort now seems guaranteed.
So he begins planning larger barns,
larger reserves,
larger security.
His conversation never rises beyond himself:

"My crops."
"My barns."
"My goods."

"My soul."

Then suddenly God speaks.

And in a single sentence, the illusion collapses:

"Fool! This night your soul will be required of you."

Jesus tells this parable because human beings repeatedly confuse possession with life itself.

The Kingdom measures wealth differently.

Primary Scripture Reading

Luke 12:13–21 (NKJV)

```
"So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is
not rich toward God."
```

Comparative Translation Notes

NASB

The NASB preserves the chilling directness of God's interruption:

```
"You fool! This very night your soul is required of
you."
```

The suddenness of judgement becomes central.

Clear Word Paraphrase

The Clear Word expands the man's false sense of security and the spiritual emptiness hidden beneath material success.

Historical and Cultural Context

Agricultural wealth represented stability and status in the ancient world.

According to Stories with Intent and The Parables of Jesus:

- bumper harvests were viewed as signs of blessing,
- barns symbolised long-term security,
- and land ownership carried enormous economic power.

The man's problem is not agriculture itself.

Nor is wealth automatically condemned.

The deeper issue lies in:

- self-sufficiency,
- greed,
- misplaced trust,
- and complete absence of God from his vision of life.

The parable begins when someone asks Jesus to settle an inheritance dispute.

Jesus responds by exposing the spiritual danger hidden beneath material obsession.

Verse-by-Verse Exposition

```
"Take heed and beware of covetousness"
```

Jesus begins with warning.

Greed operates deceptively.

People often recognise immorality in others while remaining blind to material idolatry within themselves.

```
"One's life does not consist..."
```

This statement forms the theological centre.

Modern culture defines identity through:

- accumulation,
- success,
- status,
- productivity,
- and ownership.

Jesus rejects this entirely.

Human life transcends possessions.

```
"The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully"
```

Notice carefully:

the ground yields.

The harvest itself already depends upon factors beyond the man’s control.

Yet gratitude never appears.
Only self-concern.

```
"What shall I do?"
```

The man consults only himself.
God never enters the conversation.
Neither do:

- the poor,
- neighbours,
- generosity,
- stewardship,
- or eternity.

His world narrows entirely inward.

```
"I will pull down my barns"
```

His solution to abundance is greater storage.
More security.
More insulation.
More control.
Yet earthly security remains temporary.

```
"Soul, you have many goods..."
```

The man speaks to himself as though wealth guarantees peace.
This is one of humanity's oldest illusions.
Money can:

- purchase comfort,
- reduce hardship,
- and provide stability,

but it cannot secure eternal life.

```
"Fool!"
```

Biblically, foolishness refers not merely to lack of intelligence, but spiritual blindness.

The man planned extensively for temporary life while ignoring eternity completely.

```
"This night your soul..."
```

Death destroys the illusion of ownership instantly.

Everything accumulated remains behind.

The Kingdom continually confronts human beings with mortality.

Old Testament Echoes

Primary References:

- Ecclesiastes 2:18–23
- Psalm 39:4–7
- Proverbs 11:28
- Jeremiah 9:23–24
- Psalm 49

Psalm 49 especially parallels the parable:

```
"Those who trust in their wealth... none of them can
by any means redeem his brother."
```

Ecclesiastes repeatedly exposes the emptiness of earthly accumulation disconnected from God.

Christ's Object Lessons Integration

Primary Reference

Christ's Object Lessons Chapter 12: "The Rich Fool" pp. 252–259

Ellen G. White emphasises that the rich man measured success entirely through earthly prosperity while neglecting the needs of both his soul and others.

She repeatedly warns against selfish accumulation disconnected from stewardship.

The danger is not possession itself,

but possession replacing dependence upon God.

Ellen G. White also stresses that life's uncertainty exposes the fragility of material security.

Only treasure invested in the Kingdom possesses eternal permanence.

Theological Reflection

This parable reveals several foundational Kingdom truths:

1. Life transcends material possession.
2. Wealth cannot secure eternity.
3. Greed narrows the soul inward.
4. Death exposes false security.
5. Stewardship matters eternally.
6. True riches are spiritual rather than material.

The Kingdom challenges humanity's entire understanding of success.

The Uncomfortable Question

What do I secretly trust most for security?

Many people verbally trust God while emotionally trusting:

- savings,
- status,
- career,
- control,
- or material stability.

The rich fool's greatest problem was not wealth.

It was functional independence from God.

Personal Reflection

How much of my thinking revolves around accumulation and security?

Do I view my resources as ownership or stewardship?

What would being "rich toward God" look like practically in my life?

Where has fear shaped my relationship with money?

Personal Notes



Prayer

Lord, protect my heart from greed and false security.

Teach me to value eternal treasure above temporary possession. Help me live as a faithful steward rather than a fearful accumulator. Make me rich toward You in faith, generosity, and obedience.

Amen.

10

The Rich Man and Lazarus

Opening Meditation

Two men live side by side.
One feasts daily in luxury:

- clothed in purple,
- surrounded by abundance,
- insulated by wealth and comfort.

The other lies at his gate covered in sores.
Lazarus hungers for crumbs.
Dogs wander near him.
Suffering becomes his daily companion while the rich man passes by continually.
The contrast is unbearable.
Yet the rich man never strikes Lazarus.
Never openly curses him.
Never commits visible violence.

He simply ignores him.

Then both men die.

And suddenly the invisible world becomes visible.

Jesus tells this parable to expose the terrifying danger of comfortable indifference toward suffering while warning that eternity overturns earthly appearances completely.

Primary Scripture Reading

Luke 16:19–31 (NKJV)

```
"Son, remember that in your lifetime you received
your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things;
but now he is comforted and you are tormented."
```

Comparative Translation Notes

NASB

The NASB preserves the solemn finality of the great separation:

```
"Between us and you there is a great chasm fixed."
```

The language emphasises irreversible division.

Clear Word Paraphrase

The Clear Word expands the emotional contrast between earthly comfort and eternal reality while highlighting the spiritual

blindness of the rich man.

Historical and Cultural Context

Purple garments symbolised immense wealth and status in the ancient world.

According to Stories with Intent and The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament:

- purple dye was extraordinarily expensive,
- feasting daily reflected elite luxury,
- and beggars often depended upon scraps from wealthy households.

The rich man's sin is not mere possession.

It is persistent indifference.

Lazarus remains directly at his gate.

The suffering was visible continually.

The parable also reflects Jewish imagery concerning reversal and final judgement.

Jesus uses dramatic imagery to expose moral blindness rather than provide a literal geographic map of the afterlife.

Verse-by-Verse Exposition

```
"There was a certain rich man"
```

Unlike Lazarus, the rich man remains unnamed.

Ironically, the socially invisible poor man receives identity

while the wealthy man becomes anonymous.

“Lazarus”

The name means:

```
"God has helped."
```

Though abandoned socially,

Lazarus remains seen by Heaven.

```
"Desiring to be fed with the crumbs"
```

The image reveals extreme suffering existing beside extreme abundance.

The Kingdom continually confronts this moral contradiction.

```
"The rich man also died"
```

Death becomes the great equaliser.

Status,

wealth,

and earthly prestige cannot prevent mortality.

```
"Being in torments..."
```

The reversal shocks the audience.

Earthly appearance did not reveal eternal reality accurately.

```
"Father Abraham"
```

The rich man still assumes covenant privilege.

Yet lineage alone cannot replace transformed character.

```
"They have Moses and the prophets"
```

This becomes central.

The rich man's brothers already possess sufficient revelation.
Scripture repeatedly commanded care for:

- the poor,
- widows,
- strangers,
- and the vulnerable.

The issue was not lack of evidence,
but refusal to listen.

```
"Neither will they be persuaded..."
```

Even miraculous signs cannot soften hearts unwilling to repent.

Jesus subtly foreshadows His own resurrection here.
Many would still refuse belief despite overwhelming evidence.

Old Testament Echoes

Primary References:

- Amos 6:1–7
- Isaiah 58
- Proverbs 14:31
- Deuteronomy 15:7–11

- Psalm 41:1

Amos especially condemns luxurious indifference toward suffering:

```
"Who lie on beds of ivory... but are not grieved for
the affliction of Joseph."
```

The prophets repeatedly warn that neglecting the vulnerable reveals spiritual corruption.

Christ's Object Lessons Integration

Primary Reference

Christ's Object Lessons Chapter 21: "A Great Gulf Fixed" pp. 260–271

Ellen G. White emphasises that the rich man's condemnation resulted not from wealth itself,

but from selfish misuse of opportunity and complete neglect of suffering humanity.

She repeatedly stresses that character becomes fixed through repeated choices.

The "great gulf" reflects moral separation established before death.

Ellen G. White also warns against delayed repentance.

The Kingdom continually calls people to respond now rather than assuming future opportunity.

Theological Reflection

This parable reveals several foundational Kingdom truths:

1. Earthly status does not determine eternal reality.
2. Indifference toward suffering carries spiritual consequences.
3. Death exposes hidden moral realities.
4. Scripture already provides sufficient warning.
5. Character forms through repeated choices.
6. The Kingdom reverses worldly assumptions about success and blessing.

The parable confronts comfortable religion without compassion.

The Uncomfortable Question

Whose suffering have I learned to ignore?
The rich man's danger was familiarity with injustice.
Lazarus remained visible daily,
yet eventually became emotionally invisible.
Modern culture produces similar blindness through:

- constant distraction,
- excess comfort,
- endless consumption,
- and emotional insulation.

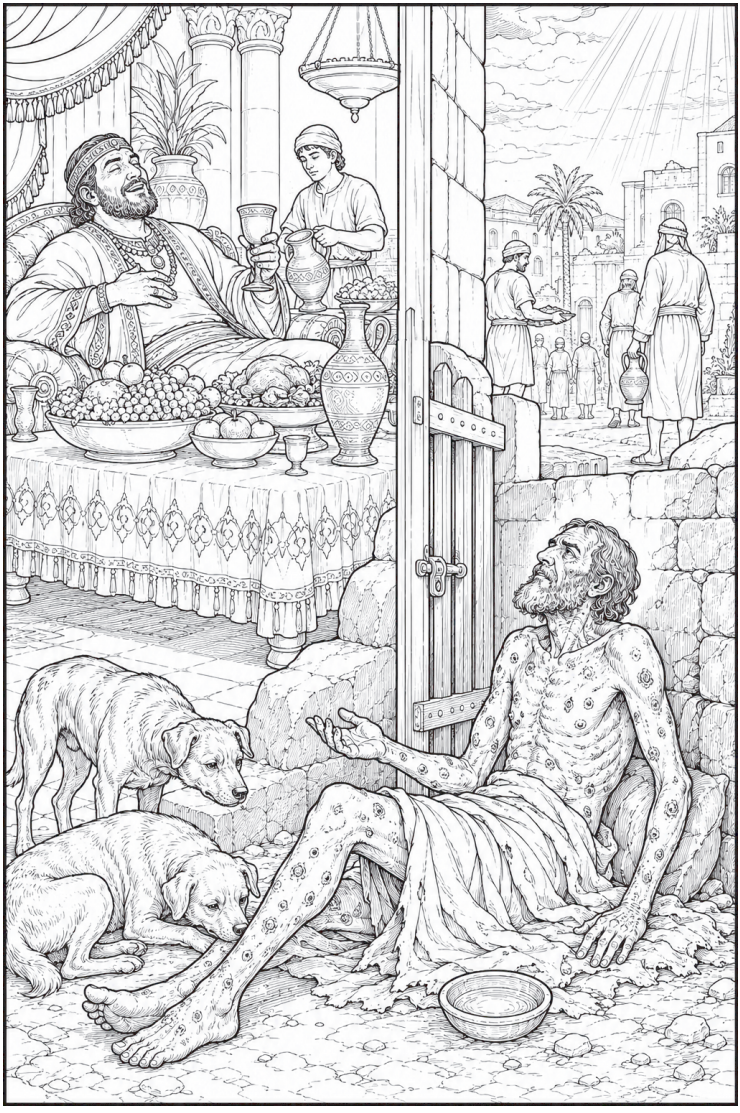
The Kingdom refuses to let suffering remain invisible.

Personal Reflection

How do I respond to suffering around me?

- Where has comfort dulled my spiritual sensitivity?
- Do I truly believe eternity reshapes the value of earthly life?
- How can I practice greater compassion intentionally?

Personal Notes



Prayer

Lord, protect me from selfishness and spiritual indifference.

Open my eyes to the suffering around me and teach me to reflect Your compassion. Help me value eternal realities above temporary comfort and live faithfully before You with mercy, generosity, and humility.

Amen.

11

The Shrewd Manager

Opening Meditation

The accusation spreads quickly.

A wealthy master discovers that his manager has wasted his possessions. The steward's position collapses instantly.

Termination is coming.

Security is disappearing.

Time is running out.

And suddenly the manager becomes very alert.

He knows he is too weak for manual labour and too proud to beg.

So he begins acting strategically.

Quietly he calls the debtors one by one and reduces their debts before losing authority completely.

The master eventually praises the manager —

not for dishonesty,

but for shrewdness.

At first the parable feels deeply uncomfortable.

Why would Jesus use such a morally compromised figure as an example?

Because the parable exposes a disturbing truth:

worldly people often show greater urgency regarding temporary realities than believers show toward eternal realities.

Primary Scripture Reading

Luke 16:1–13 (NKJV)

```
"For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their
generation than the sons of light."
```

Comparative Translation Notes

NASB

The NASB preserves the practical force of the steward's actions:

```
"acted shrewdly."
```

The emphasis lies upon foresight and strategic preparation.

Clear Word Paraphrase

The Clear Word expands the steward's desperation and highlights Christ's warning concerning stewardship and eternal priorities.

Historical and Cultural Context

Estate managers in the ancient world often possessed broad authority over financial administration.

According to The Parables of Jesus and Stories with Intent:

- managers negotiated debts,
- handled contracts,
- and represented wealthy landowners.

Scholars debate whether the steward reduced:

- his own commission,
- inflated interest,
- or the master's profits directly.

Regardless, Jesus focuses not upon the ethics of fraud,
but upon strategic foresight in light of coming accountability.

The steward understands crisis is approaching and acts decisively before time expires.

Verse-by-Verse Exposition

```
"Give an account of your stewardship"
```

The steward faces accountability.

This becomes foundational:
human beings are managers rather than ultimate owners.
Everything belongs ultimately to God.

```
"What shall I do?"
```

Crisis exposes reality quickly.

The steward suddenly recognises:

- time is limited,
- position is temporary,
- and preparation matters.

```
"I have resolved what to do"
```

Unlike spiritual complacency,

the steward acts urgently.

His future shapes his present decisions.

```
"Take your bill..."
```

The manager uses present opportunity to prepare for future survival.

Again, Jesus does not praise dishonesty itself.

He praises strategic awareness.

```
"The sons of this world..."
```

This becomes the centre of the parable.

Worldly people often display remarkable focus regarding temporary gain:

- planning,

- investing,
- networking,
- preparing,
- sacrificing.

Yet believers frequently approach eternal realities carelessly.

```
"Make friends for yourselves..."
```

Jesus calls believers to use temporary earthly resources for eternal Kingdom purposes.

Money itself is temporary.

But stewardship carries eternal consequences.

```
"He who is faithful in what is least..."
```

Small faithfulness reveals deeper character.

Stewardship is spiritual formation.

```
"You cannot serve God and mammon"
```

The parable ends with direct confrontation.

Wealth becomes dangerous when it transitions from tool into master.

The Kingdom demands singular allegiance.

Old Testament Echoes

Primary References:

- Proverbs 11:24–28
- Ecclesiastes 11:1–2
- Psalm 24:1
- Haggai 2:8
- Deuteronomy 8:17–18

Psalm 24 establishes the foundational principle:

```
"The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness."
```

Human beings manage resources temporarily entrusted by God.

Christ's Object Lessons Integration

Primary Reference

Christ's Object Lessons Chapter 26: "Friends by the Mammon of Unrighteousness" pp. 366–375

Ellen G. White emphasises that earthly possessions are temporary stewardship entrusted for Kingdom purposes.

She repeatedly warns against selfish accumulation disconnected from eternal mission.

Resources become spiritually meaningful when used:

- compassionately,
- sacrificially,
- and redemptively.

Ellen G. White also stresses urgency.

Human life and opportunity remain brief.

Wise stewardship prepares for eternity rather than merely temporary comfort.

Theological Reflection

This parable reveals several foundational Kingdom truths:

1. Human beings are stewards rather than owners.
2. Accountability before God is certain.
3. Eternal priorities should shape present decisions.
4. Spiritual complacency is dangerous.
5. Small faithfulness reveals character.
6. Wealth cannot serve as ultimate master.

The Kingdom demands wise preparation for eternity.

The Uncomfortable Question

Am I more strategic about temporary success than eternal reality?

Many people devote extraordinary energy toward:

- career,
- finances,
- reputation,
- and future comfort,

while approaching spiritual life casually.

The steward understood time was short.

Do I?

Personal Reflection

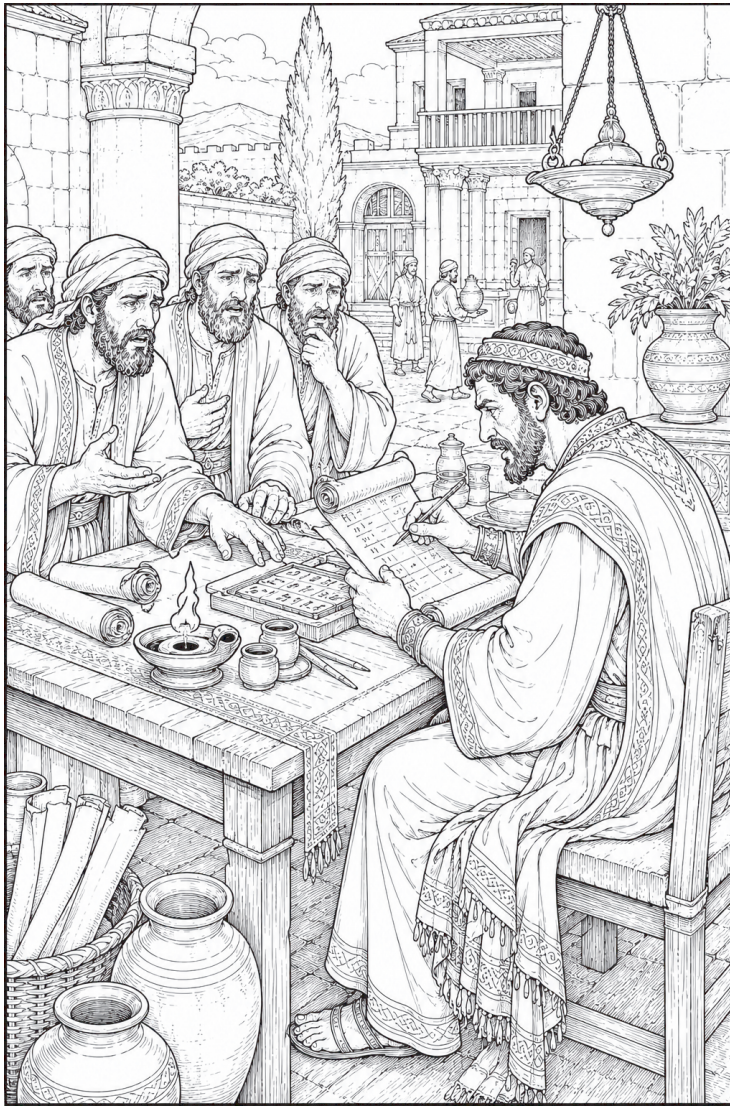
How do I currently use the resources God has entrusted to me?

Where has money subtly shaped my identity or security?

Am I preparing primarily for earthly success or eternal faithfulness?

What would wiser Kingdom stewardship look like in my life?

Personal Notes



Prayer

Lord, teach me faithful stewardship.

Help me use time, resources, influence, and opportunity wisely for Your Kingdom. Deliver me from greed, complacency, and divided loyalty. Teach me to live with eternal priorities and faithful dependence upon You.

Amen.

Last Word

The parables of Jesus do not close with the final page.
They continue quietly within the heart.
A seed has been sown.
A lamp has been lit.
A door has been shown.
A Shepherd has called.
A Kingdom has been revealed.

May this journal not only explain the parables, but help the reader sit beneath them, listen to them, and be changed by the voice of Christ within them.

May the words of Christ take root deeply.
May hidden truth become living obedience.
May grace restore what was lost.
May faith remain watchful until the Bridegroom comes.
And may every reader hear again the voice of the King:
"He who has ears to hear, let him hear."
Amen.