

Parables in Luke

Jesus	Reader 1 (<i>man, younger son, Lazarus</i>)	Reader 4 (<i>bandit, Samaritan,</i>
Pharisee 1	Reader 2 (<i>priest, older son, rich man, Zacchaeus</i>)	<i>floozy, bystander</i>)
Pharisee 2	Reader 3 (<i>Levite, servant, narrator</i>)	

Pharisee 1 (*to audience*): I am aware that some of you out there may find the story of Jesus to be quite fascinating. But I want you to know that not all of us share that opinion. You just watch what happens when I ask him a simple question. You'll see how slippery he can be. (*To Jesus*). Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

Jesus: What is written in the law? What do you read there?

Pharisee 1: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. And your neighbor as yourself.

Jesus: You have given the right answer. Do this and you will live.

Pharisee 1: Ok, fine. But who is my neighbor?

Jesus (*facing the audience while Reader 4 attacks Reader 1*): A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him and beat him and left him half dead.

Pharisee 1 (*to the audience*): Do you see what he's doing. I asked a simple question and I want a simple answer. And here he goes, telling some story that is completely off-topic.

Jesus (*as Reader 2 walks by*): Now by chance a priest was going down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

Pharisee 2 (*to the audience*): Well what do you expect! He's a priest after all. He needs to keep clean and can't be expected to dirty his hands by dealing with some guy in the ditch.

Jesus (*as Reader 3 walks by*): So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

Pharisee 1: So is this such a big deal? It happens all the time.

Jesus (*as Reader 4 enters and assists the man*): But a Samaritan who was traveling along that road came near to the man. And when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, and he poured oil and wine on them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, “Take care of him, and when I come back I will repay you whatever more you spend.”

Pharisee 2 (*to the audience*): Oh, come on! A Samaritan?? I don’t think so. I mean Samaritans don’t like Jews, and Jews don’t like Samaritans. Don’t you remember? When Jesus was traveling through a Samaritan village, the Samaritans did not want anything to do with him! And now Jesus makes a Samaritan into the hero of this cute little story. It’s the most ridiculous thing I have ever heard.

Jesus (*to the Pharisee*): So, which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?

Pharisee 1 (*to the audience*): Cornered by a cute little story! I should have seen it coming. (*To Jesus*) Ok, ok, it was that ... that ... that one who showed him mercy.

Jesus: Go and do likewise. (*pause*) So would you like to hear some more? There was a man who had two sons.

Reader 1 (*to the audience*): Life is just passing me by. I mean, there is nothing to do around here! You wake up in the morning and work all day. Then you come in at night and there is nothing to do. So what does it add up to? You work and sleep, and work and sleep. The old man says that it’s all for the best. He says I’m making a good living now, so that when he dies I’ll get my share of the property. But I don’t want to wait that long. I want to live now! (*To Jesus*) Please give me the share of the property that will belong to me – now!

Jesus (*to the audience*): So he divided his property between them. A few days later the younger son traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. (*Reader 1 and Reader 4 go behind the screen. Loud laughter.*)

Pharisee 1 (*to Pharisee 2*): Can you believe this story? The kid asks the old man for his inheritance and the old man gives it to him! What father in his right mind would do such a thing?

Jesus: When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country.

Reader 4 (*behind the screen*): What do you mean you're out of money? You say you haven't got a cent? Then get out of here! The party's over! (*Reader 1 comes stumbling out from behind the screen and sits on the floor*).

Jesus: And the boy began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating. And no one gave him anything.

Pharisee 2 (*to Pharisee 1*): This story is a real tear-jerker, isn't it? But get real. That kid had it coming! He totally blew it!

Reader 1 (*to the audience*): No one has given me anything. But how many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, and here I am dying of hunger! (*Stand up*) I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me like one of your hired hands."

Pharisee 1 (*to Pharisee 2*): Here we go, you can see it coming. Jesus is setting us up for the heart-warming conclusion to this sentimental story of his.

Jesus (*to the audience*): So the boy set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion. He ran and put his arms around him and kissed him.

Reader 1 (*to Jesus*): Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.

Jesus: But the father said to his servants, "Quickly, bring out the best robe and put it on him. (*Reader 3 puts a robe on Reader 1*) Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it. And let us eat and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again. He was lost and is found!

Pharisee 2 (*to Pharisee 1*): What a nice little fairy tale! And now I suppose he'll say that they lived happily ever after.

Jesus (*to the audience*): But the man's elder son was in the field. And when he came near to the house he heard music and dancing. He called one of the servants and asked him what was going on.

Reader 3 (*to Reader 2*): Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has gotten him back, safe and sound.

Jesus: Then the elder son became angry and refused to go in.

Pharisee 1: Well this is more like it! Finally there is someone who can see how absurd this whole thing is.

Jesus: So his father went out and began to plead with him.

Reader 2 (to Jesus): Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command. Yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came back – who has devoured your property with prostitutes – you killed the fatted calf for him!

Jesus (to Reader 2): Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life. He was lost and has been found.

Pharisee 2 (to the audience): I think all this grace is going to make me sick.

Jesus (to the audience): Ok, then let's try another one. (*Has Reader 2 sit on the tall chair while Reader 1 sits on the floor.*) There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen. And he feasted on fine food every day. (*Reader 3 serves him food.*)

Pharisee 1 (to Pharisee 2): Here we go again. Has Jesus got some problem with people who like nice clothes and a good meal? What is wrong with this guy?

Jesus: And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man's table. And the dogs would come and lick his sores.

Pharisee 2: And now we are supposed to feel sorry for this tramp on the street! Come on! If the guy was living on the street, he probably had it coming.

Jesus (Readers 1 and 2 change places. Jesus stands beside Reader 1): The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. And in Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side.

Reader 2: Father Abraham, have mercy on me! And send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in agony in these flames!

Jesus: But Abraham said, “Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things. But now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot do so. And no one can cross from there to us.

Pharisee 2 (to Jesus): Hey, wait a minute! Where is the grace now? How about a little grace for the rich man! You can’t just write him off like that!

Reader 2: Then, father, I beg you, send him to my father’s house, for I have five brothers. Have Lazarus warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment.

Pharisee 1 (to Jesus): Come on! That is the least you can do!

Jesus: But Abraham replied, “They have Moses and the prophets. They should listen to them.”

Reader 2: No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.

Jesus: If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.

Pharisee 1 (to Pharisee 2): I don’t like the direction this is going. We’ve got to start this whole discussion over again. After all, you’re a rich man. So this time, you try to get a straight answer out of him.

Pharisee 2 (to Jesus): Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

Jesus: Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not murder. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness. Honor your father and mother.

Pharisee 2 (to the audience): Fabulous! I have kept all of these since my youth.

Jesus (to the Pharisee): Oh, by the way. There is just one thing that you lack. Sell everything you have, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come and follow me.

Pharisee 2 (looks in silence at the audience)

Jesus: How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God. Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.

Pharisee 1 (*to Jesus*): Then who can be saved?

Jesus: What is impossible for mortals is possible for God.

Pharisee 1 (*to the audience*): So it does depend on grace?

Reader 3: Let's try a test case. Jesus entered Jericho and there was a rich man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and very rich. And he wanted to see who Jesus was, but he couldn't, because he was so short. (*Reader 2 stands on a chair with others standing in front of him.*) So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and saw him in the tree.

Jesus: Zacchaeus, hurry up and come down, for I must stay at your house today.

Reader 3: So he quickly came down from the tree, and he received him joyfully. But the bystanders complained.

Reader 4 (*to Reader 1*): He has gone in to be the guest of a sinner!

Reader 1 (*to Reader 4*): A tax collector no less!

Reader 2: Lord, I will give half my goods to the poor. And if I have cheated anyone, I will restore it four times as much.

Jesus: Today salvation has come to this house. For the Son of man came to seek and to save the lost.

Everyone sings the Zacchaeus song.