

Reflect on this! Series 6

The Parables

MICHAEL A. ELEYINAFE

DEDICATION

*This book is dedicated to the
Honor, glory and adoration
of*

GOD ALMIGHTY

also to

*All the Bible Students in the entire world
who will not settle for less
but constantly seeking after the truth:
The truth shall make you free,
in Jesus Name, Amen.*

TABLE OF CONTENT

Introduction	vii
1. KINGDOM OF GOD	
➤ Parable of the Sower	1
➤ Parable of the Wheat and the Tares ..	13
➤ Parable of the Mustard Seed	17
➤ Parables of the Treasures and the Pearl	26
➤ Parable of the Fishing Net	32
➤ Parable of the Leaven	35
➤ Parable of the Marriage Feast ..	41
2. GOD’S LOVE TOWARDS HUMANITY	
➤ Parable of a Good Shepherd	47
➤ Parable of the Prodigal Son	60
➤ Parables of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin	69
➤ Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard	74
3. A FRESH START	
➤ Parable of the Barren Fig Tree	83
➤ Parable of the Shrewd Manager	87
➤ Parables of the Cloth and Wineskin ..	93
➤ Parable of the Two Foundations ..	97
4. OUR SERVICES TO GOD	
➤ Parable of the Two Sons	103
➤ Parable of the Blind Leading the Blind	108
5. THE GRACE OF PRAYER	
➤ Parable of the Friend at Midnight ..	117
➤ Parable of the Persistent Widow ..	125

6.	HUMILITY		
➤	Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican		131
➤	Parable of the Rich Fool		136
➤	Parable of an Ambitious Guest ..		142
7.	APPRECIATION LEADS TO FULL RESTORATION		
➤	Parable of the Two Debtors		149
8.	WHO IS YOUR NEIGHBOR?		
➤	Parable of a Good Samaritan		155
9.	IMMINENT RETURN OF THE KING		
➤	Parable of the Ten Virgins		161
➤	Parable of the Talents		167
➤	Parable of the Wicked Tenants ..		176
➤	Parable of an Unmerciful Servant ..		183

\

INTRODUCTION

In all ages and customs, there exist sayings and stories handed down to us by our parents who received them from own their parents. The stories always added strength to the theme of their discussions. However, they are not in any way comparable to the persuasive power in the parables of Jesus Christ.

The parables of Jesus Christ are simple and illustrative anecdotes that drive home both moral and spiritual maxims through which a man of understanding may draw inspiration to live righteously. Parables may be in form of metaphorical expressions that stick easily to our memory. Because of their remarkable relation to day-to-day activities, they become very difficult to forget. The parables of Jesus Christ support the authenticity of the word of God. The importance of His parables cannot be over-emphasized. Several years before He came to this earth, a God's servant prophesied one of the formats that Jesus Christ will reach out to humanity with His message of deliverance. *"I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old, which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us."* (Psalm 78:2-3) This is the more reason we should pay serious attention to these parables. Parables are often expressed in puzzling ways that create a craving for understanding the wisdom of God. The parables of Jesus Christ are spiritually designed to place a man of understanding in a seat of judgment. Patiently, through the guiding of the Holy Spirit, when the man eventually grasps the meaning of these sometimes puzzling parables, he will be able to apply the spiritual wisdom gained in taking spiritual decisions.

In all His parables, our Lord Jesus Christ always used enduring symbols, everyday things that existed in His time period and continue to exist in ours. These symbols drive home His teaching and the important spiritual principles, making it harder for a man to forget what he learned. Even if the principles are forgotten, the enduring characters sticks to mind and the parable lives on in our minds. There is one thing that is amazing about the parables of Jesus Christ: the wisdom they reveal cannot be outlived. Whenever a parable of Jesus Christ comes to the understanding of man, it always brings forth indisputable facts. The meaning of the parable becomes new every day as we continue to meditate more and more on God's word. The rapid changes of the modern era cannot make His parables obsolete or anachronistic. These parables continue to manifest themselves in many current events of mankind.

The important point we should bear in mind is that when God reveals His word, He is preparing the mind of man for His divine blessing. No doubt that these parables have been in the scripture for ages. Perhaps because the parables are scattered in difference chapters of the bible, we do not pay them the serious attention they deserve. It is my belief that God has empowered His in-depth messages in this book to come to His people in this season to prepare them for the blessing of the season. Prepare your mind in purity in order to receive the blessings of God as you are reading this book. God bless you.

CHAPTER **1** **Kingdom of God**

PARABLE OF THE SOWER

Scripture Reading:

Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying: "Behold, a sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" 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. For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: 'Hearing you will hear

The Parables

and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive; For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.' "But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it. "Therefore hear the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty." (Matthew 13:3-23)

Other Scripture Readings: Mark 4:10-25; Luke 8:4-15

The parable of the Sower is a thought provoking message of God to humanity. The parable appeared in the three gospels of Jesus Christ as indicated above to point man to its importance. In this parable the *farmer* is our Lord Jesus Christ and the *seed* is the word of God otherwise

known to the people of the world today as the gospel or good news of salvation. The word *scatter* is indicative of the even distribution of the word of God and also of the equal opportunity for every package of the word to excel and thrive wherever it is planted. The word of God is preached throughout the world. Each of these gospel seeds possesses a divine potential to deliver man from the clutches of Satan. But the ground's fertility, the environment and the seasonal timing of the sowing determines whether the seed will germinate at all and possibly bear fruit. This parable addresses the foundational importance of God's word in the hearts of those who have listened to the gospel.

The seasonal timing of the sowing is determined by the farmer which of course, is God incarnated Son Himself. And like a dutiful farmer, He will surely clear the farmland, till the ground and prepare it for sowing. At the right season, when He is sure that the seed will grow, He plants a choice seed in the ground. Thus, the Son of Man completed His own part of the planting. The moment you hear the word of God is His planting season. It is not only the right time but also a time carefully chosen and ordained by God to perfect His glory in your life.

This parable is the spiritual model of human receptivity to the word of God. In this model, there are four different quadrants upon which the gospel of Jesus Christ is received. Each of these quadrants expresses the level of fertility and the type environment within a man when the message of salvation is planted. In each of the quadrants there are spiritual factors that promote or inhibit spiritual

The Parables

growth of the word of God. Each quadrant denotes a specific type of ground.

1 Seed fell along the path and the birds came and ate it up	2 Seed that fell on a rocky place where it did not have much soil
3 Seed fell among the thorns, which grew up and choked the plants	4 Seed fell on good soil, where it produced fruits some- hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.

In the first quadrant, the **seed fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up**. The problem of the first quadrant was not about the quality of the ground. The ground was fertile, plants can thrive on it. However, the seed fell on a pathway as against a well cultivated a plot of farmland. Many people pass through this pathway. The seed which denoted the word of God upon this ground is turned to a ball that people kick around as they move on. There was no room for the seed to settle on the ground to begin the process of germination. The enemy soon discovers this seed and its potential and decides to nibble it at the tip. Some people receive the message of salvation but instead of allowing the word to reside in them, instead of watering this seed by daily meditating upon the word, some carelessly spill out the message of truth and make it a subject of debate in the gathering of idolaters and heathens in the pathway of his life. These people joked, jested, ridiculed and trivialized the message

of salvation until it is reduced to nothing and the memory of it was completely erased in the heart of the man that received the word. They always exchange their deceitful ideas for the truth persuasively, by saying “I do not believe in such a thing.” The innocent one will begin to see the reason why he should not believe until the season of grace slips away from him. Your family, relatives and friends are the people that are journey on with you in the pathway of your life. You’re your family and friends can help you grow in your Christian life journey *if* you have the right friends supporting you spiritually and the wrong friends can drag you to hell fire. **Beware of the kind of friends you keep!**

In the second quadrant the **seed fell on a rocky place where it did not have much soil**. The fertility of the soil is not a problem in this quadrant. The seed at least sprung out indicating that the soil was fertile. The problem was the shallowness of the good ground due to the stony rocks beneath the ground. The embedded troubles in the ground’s foundation created problems for the seed germinating upon it. Many people received the message of salvation wholeheartedly but the message could not have a strong grip in their hearts because of various problems underneath that militated against the truth. Some of the major problems include: traditional customs, mindset and persecution.

There are two types of traditional customs. The first is the righteous custom with righteous origin. Righteousness in this context is not about the behavior of man; rather it is the righteousness of God according to His inspired

The Parables

scriptural precepts. There is nothing wrong if anyone takes a righteous decision within Christian norms. And the second is moral or immoral customs with evil and idolatrous origins. There are some people that are morally good because of their religious or customary laws. However, within the same law there exist some horrendous immoral behaviors. An accepted truth in Christendom is that Jesus Christ is the Son of the Living God. This foundational principle has been the reason some people will never accept salvation through Christ. They believe their own religious dogma that says, “God has no Son.” Some idolatry minded would say, “I love the good news and your preaching is superb but my parents worship traditional gods and so do I.” Essentially, their idolatry customs act like rocks beneath the good ground in their minds and blind their spiritual eyes. As it was difficult for a seed to grow on a rocky ground, the people that received the message of God found it difficult to perceive the truth.

A mindset is a fixed mental attitude or a disposition that predetermines person's responses to and interpretations of situations.¹ Before the word of God is preached to some, they have already made up their minds about what their responses will be. In most cases, their reactions are always repulsive because they have made up their minds and never surrender it to allow the truth a grip in their mind. These types of people are in a perpetual chain of

¹ *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition* copyright © 1992 by Houghton Mifflin Company.

worldliness. The gods of world had blindfolded them and that is why they closed the door of their hearts against the truth. Like a seed that sprung up and later dies because of the rock underneath, every good news of the scripture that can set them free always dies behind the door of their heart.

Another effective weapon in the enemy's arsenal is persecution. Persecution manifests in various ways against a believer but the ultimate aim of persecution is to kill the growing seed of salvation that possesses ability to spread deliverance for others. Persecution is the reason some people made an evil choice to burn up a church building in a community. Persecution is one of the reasons some people think that people of other faith do not deserve any right to live and therefore kill innocent people because of their resentment towards their faith. Persecution is the reason certain communist countries ban the distribution of Bible. Persecution is the reason some people are pettily agitating to remove "In God we trust," from dollar in order to propound secularist theory in the state. Persecution was the reason some use the powerful hands of secular law to remove The Ten Commandments, from the front of a state High Court which had been a relic symbol of righteousness in United States of America. Persecution is the result of two of Satan's cardinal evil operations – to steal, to kill, and to destroy. "*The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy...*" (*John 10:10*) Satan steals anointing with deceit but he kills and destroys one way or the other with persecution. Persecution is one of the foundational problems of mankind. Its level of evil operations varies

The Parables

from one nation to the other. More than ever before, it surfaces in all parts of the world, striving hard to burn out the fabric of truth, the good news in the hearts of people and does not allow the seed of the truth to germinate and bear enduring fruits of salvation. As a soldier of Christ, stand up in righteousness to defend the truth. I have a good-news for you, enemy can only kill the body, but it cannot touch nor tamper with the soul and spirit of the righteous.

In the third quadrant the **seed fell among the thorns, which grew up and choked the plants.** The third problem was not also of the fertility of the soil. Here the seed fell upon a fertile but hostile ground. The ground was hostile because an overwhelming demand was placed upon the nutrients in the ground—nutrients meant to allow the seed to germinate, blossom and bear fruit. The heart of a man is the center of all his activities and operations. The mind of an average man is like a piece of fertile ground and each fraction of the mind represents what the individual man is currently doing. Imagine the portion we set aside for education that began from first grade to any level of education attained. Imagine the portion we set aside for our immediate family and extended activities. Think about the portion we set aside for our jobs – some involving themselves in two job schedules that take the whole seven days in a week. Think about running around health needs of the family – keeping hospital appointments and dental appointments. What about our quest for investment opportunities available to us— everybody wants to have a house to his name, perhaps as a legacy of inheritance for his family.

The system we operate in is another factor. Even if you want to devote time for the things of the Spirit, who will pay the mortgage bills, who will pay the credit cards bills? You can behold the battle between being credit worthy and being heavenly worthy. What about the vacation trips that keeps you away from the hullabaloo of the everyday busy schedules? All these activities are very important to every man living well on earth. You will now realize that it takes a great struggle to create room for prayer meeting during the week. It is a great struggle to slot in time for Weekly Bible Studies. It is great struggle to even have family morning and evening devotions especially when you have that modern idol called TV in your living room harassing you with all sorts of appealing entertainments to take your heart away from the responsibility of fellowship with God in your family. Your interest in the TV determines whether it is your god or another instrument of information under your control in your sitting room. Even if you are in the church on Sunday, you will now realize why people easily feel bored after one hour fellowship with their Creator but they can spend 24/7 worshipping the god of dollar or attending sporting events and they would never complain. Any activities outside our fellowship with God that can choke the seed of salvation in our hearts are the hostile thorns in the fertile soil. The question we need to ask ourselves is, *“For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?”* (Matthew 16:26) If we truly want the seed of the gospel to bear fruit in our hearts, we need to deliberately create quality time out of our busy schedules for sweet fellowship with our Creator.

The Parables

In the fourth quadrant the **seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop – hundred, sixty or thirty time what was sown.** The first thing that comes to mind when we hear about a "good ground" is the high quality fertile soil that one can plant seeds with assurance that it will germinate at the right time and bear fruit in its due season. From the stand point of a farmer, good ground can be described as a land that is not porous as sandy soil that cannot hold water, a land that is not sticky as clay soil that does not absorb water easily. The land is naturally fertile, not a swampy soil that is covered with water all the year and not a desert that does not have adequate rain and suffer constant wind erosion. In this soil, the sunlight is never in short supply to this ground and it is not embedded with rock that will not allow the roots of the plant to have a good grip to the soil. The ground is ever fresh—fresh because it is well watered, and well sun-lighted. This is the type of ground that farmers always look for in order to plant their seeds. The hearts of believers are the metaphorical good ground that the distinguished of all farmers, Jesus Christ, came to plant a precious seed of the gospel about two thousand years ago. The seed was sown in good grounds in the city of Jerusalem. The seed germinated and bore much fruit so that about three thousand fruits were harvested one day on the Day of Pentecost.

Believers that are living in the precepts of God's word belong to this fourth category. The word of God manifested its divine purposes for the glory of God according to the intention of a Sower who wanted his efforts in his farmland to produce a high yield. Within the fourth quadrant, in this good ground, there are three

divisions—the high yield crop, the medium yield crop and lastly the low yield. The seed that yielded hundred fold can be described as matured Christian, and the levels progress according to their maturity in the Lord. What determines their maturity is not their ability, it is their availability. It is the time they spend in the presence of the Lord, it is their focus on Him. The less they see themselves, the more they experience the fullness of God. The less they depend on their power of intellect and skills, the more they experience the divine ability of God. In other words, there is an ever present challenge to those Christians in this quadrant: there is yet a higher level to attain in the vineyard of God.

The precious seed was taken from the Seat of Mercy in Heaven and brought to this world through our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of Living God. Jesus Christ considers your heart to be the best place for this precious seed to grow, for you were created to bear fruit for the glory of God and from the beginning you have been prepared for this purpose. You have been hearing about the word of God, the good news or the gospel, in the church, in the crusade ground, on the radio or television; or perhaps you have read about the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the Bible. What impact has this made in your life? Where has this precious seed fallen in your heart? Does the seed fall on a good ground or on the rocky ground or among the thorns? You will not find it difficult to locate yourself in the spiritual model of receptivity of the good news in the quadrant above. Do not allow the death of Jesus Christ on the Cross to be in vain in your life. Won't you this day open your heart to receive this seed of love that will change your life

The Parables

for good? That was why He came to die for you so that you can embrace salvation. Repent and turn from your sin, you will partake in the finished works of the Cross. Let Jesus Christ have His way in your good ground.

Think and Pray

The seed is not the problem, the ground is not the problem neither was the Sower the problem, the environment determined whether the seed will grow and bear fruit.

O Lord, I yield my heart unto you as a good ground, for the seed of salvation today. Let the seed germinate in my heart and bear a hundred fold of fruit for your glory, in Jesus name.

PARABLE OF THE WHEAT AND TARES

Scripture Readings

Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?' But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn." ' (Matthew 13:24-30)

Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field." He answered and said to them: "He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom

The Parables

of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!
(Matthew 13:36-43)

The Parable of the Tares is one of the parables that Jesus Christ took time to explain to the disciples in the Bible. If we do not deliberate further on this parable the divine wisdom in the explanation of our Lord Jesus Christ is sufficient. We are just looking at this parable again to relate it to our present day situations.

The first thing we notice in this parable was that Jesus Christ compared it with the kingdom of God. If careful attention is paid to this parable we will realize that Jesus Christ succinctly summarized the story of crisis after the creation and the effective way the Heavens had managed the crisis. In the parable we understand the good intentions of God about creation. At the beginning, God created perfect man in His own image, with all the Godly spiritual attributes. Satan stealthily slipped into the Garden of Eden to pollute the perfect man that God created. Jesus Christ came to the Earth to do the opposite. He came to sow the good seed with high yield in to His field.

Among the key words we need to understand very well are, the sower of the seed and the owner in the parable are the same, the good seed is the word of God. The field is the earth, the tares is the seed of devil and the enemy is Satan. The sower of the seed is Jesus Christ as the scripture had revealed. The sower is known in the book of Genesis as the Seed of the woman. In the judgment of God between the serpent the Devil and the woman (Eve)

God said, *“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; ...”* (Genesis 3:15) The **good seed** in the parable is pregnant with analysis that needs to be broken down for the purpose of understanding. The good seed is the transforming message of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the heart of mankind. The good seed is a new order from heaven that emanates from the presence of the merciful God specifically designed for the salvation of mankind. The good seed is encapsulated in the word of God and Apostle John revealed that, *“as many as received Him (the word of God) to them He gave right to become the children of God ...”* (John 1:12) This good seed, the message of the gospel is not for other creations of God and up to this moment, it is still a mystery to the angels. The **field**, as mentioned earlier, is the planet earth, the dwelling place of mankind. The **tares** in the parable are the encapsulated work of enemy that are primarily designed to pollute, to corrupt, to deceive, to frustrate and eventually destroy the message of the truth that the gospel of Jesus Christ represented. The tare is also known in Genesis as the seed of devil. (Genesis 3:15) Anyone that has been influenced and transformed by the polluted and deceitful message of Satan are known as the seed of devil. *“You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is not truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.”* (John 8:44) The **enemy** is Satan the Devil. The servants of the owner in the parable are the pastors, the evangelists, prophets, and anyone serving in the vineyard of God.

The Parables

In a plain language, the sower, which is Jesus Christ, the Seed of the woman came to sow the precious seed which is the gospel in to the field which is the heart of all men on earth. In the night while men slept, (the timing denoted the nature and strategy of the evil activities) his enemy which is Satan the Devil came to sow tare which is the seed of Devil in the same field. The servants who witnessed the process of sowing of the good seed raised alarm when they discovered tares were growing among the wheat. The nature of man in them made them feel so bad and they ran to the Master to report the discovery. The servants had plans to deal with the issue, but their Master, the owner had a better plan. He said let them grow together until harvest time.

Every believer that has accepted the gospel of Jesus Christ is an object of the enemy's attack. The moment the word of God begins to have its free course in your life, the moment it begins to germinate and blossom, the impact of the word's growth will become noticeable. This change creates a class difference between the believers and the unbelievers. The devil's purpose of growing tares among the wheat is to choke up the good seed -- in other words, to frustrate the new life the believer had found in the Lord. One of the clear identities of the children of the kingdom of God is persecution. It is not a pleasurable identity. It is an inevitable identity. It is the price of choosing Christ instead of the world. When you identify yourself with Jesus Christ, Satan becomes jittery. He sets in motion the people that are very close to you to

persuade you away from taking the righteous stand. Their persuasion may take different forms ranging from jesting, punishment, denial, alienation and in some cases, death. (Matthew 5:11-12) They may start with name-calling. The Pharisees did not spare the Lord Jesus Christ, they called Him Beelzebub. (John 15:18-20)

The servants of God would look at the situation of the new convert they had labored on and feel frustrated as well. They would feel like taking law into their hands and detail a rescue team to go into the camp of the persecutors, perhaps to destroy the persecutors in order to rescue the new convert. But Our Lord Jesus Christ would reveal to His servants that this is a wrong approach. He would say, "Let them grow together," -- meaning that let the new convert weather the storm of his Christian life. The reason is simple. An attack from the team of God's servants against the persecutors will have a negative impact in the life of new convert. If the persecutors are the member of his family, the new convert may resent this rescue attempt and say, "I did not accept the gospel of Jesus Christ so as to permit anyone an unjust access to my family affairs." If care is not taken, the vengeance may uproot the germinating word of God in the heart of the believer. Instead the role of the faithful servants of God should include—continuous encouragement of the new believer in the word of God, praying for him for divine strength and counseling him in righteousness to be strong. This is why it seems that Christians are weak in the area of exercising physical force for self-defense. It is not weakness as such, rather is the righteous response to the

The Parables

spiritual senselessness of the persecutors whom Satan had manipulated to torment the children of God.

Our Lord Jesus Christ had assured us that, “... *the gate of hell shall not prevail against His church.*” He knew that no matter how much the enemy tried they will not be victorious upon the believer as long as the believer can look unto Jesus, “the Author and Finisher of our faith.” The day of harvest is very near, the righteous elect will be gathered together in the bosom of Abraham, and the wicked will be separated and be told, “Depart from me, you the workers of iniquities, I know you not.” They will be also be gathered together eventually in the presence of Satan, and subjected to everlasting judgment in the hellfire. “*Stand still and see the salvation of God which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever. The Lord will fight for you, and shall hold your peace.*” (Exodus 14:14-15)

Think and Pray

Patience and perseverance approach separates the tares from the wheat; at last the wicked will not be gathered with the righteous.

O Lord, grant me the divine ability to weather the storm of my Christian life journey and let me be victorious at last, in Jesus name.

PARABLE OF MUSTARD SEED

Scripture Readings:

Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches."
(Matthew 13:31-32)

So Jesus said to them, "Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. (Matthew 17:20)

"You, O king, were watching; and behold, a great image! This great image, whose splendor was excellent, stood before you; and its form was awesome. This image's head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. "This is the dream. Now we will tell the interpretation of it before the king. You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory; and wherever the children of men dwell, or the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven, He has given

The Parables

them into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all--you are this head of gold. But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours; then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others. Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay. And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile. As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay. And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold--the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure." (Daniel 2:31-45)

Other Scripture Readings: Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18-19

There is no way we can consider this parable without touching generally on the dynamism of a seed. Every seed is an expression of the infinite wisdom of God. In every seed, there exists a blue print of life of the plant—the root, the stem, the branches, the leaves, the fruits and the

ability to stand the tenuous season of the plant's life, are all divinely programmed and locked into the seed by God. In addition, the quickening power of God is also locked-in in the seed—the livening power to respond miraculously to the process of germination. Perhaps we are taking this for granted. Have you ever considered how the germinating seed follows the law of gravity? The radicle grows out of the seed to form the root of the plant and continues to grow downward to give the plant a good grip upon the soil. At the same time, the root provides its stem with all nutrients that can make the plant grow very well. Likewise the plume continues to grow vertically to form the stem, branches and leaves of the plant. In between this miraculous process of germination, the cotyledon supports both the radicle and plume at the point of growing until the two parts of the plants can stand on their own.

Each of the seed of mustard is smaller than the 'period' marks you can find at the end of each sentence in this book, yet all the divine ability to germinate and grow to a tree of an awesome size is locked into each of these tiny seeds. If you happen to see this seed physically, there is tendency to disregard and despise its ability because of its scanty and almost microscopic appearance. If mustard seeds are spilled unto the ground, there is no way you can gather them together again with your fingers.

In comparing the kingdom of God to a mustard seed, our Lord Jesus Christ is also expressing the amazing spiritual dynamism of the kingdom. The kingdom of God is that tiny little stone that struck the image in the dream of

The Parables

Nebuchadnezzar, and grew to become a great mountain that filled the whole earth. *“You watched while a stone was cut out without hands which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay and broke them in pieces. ... And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.”* (Daniel 2:34-35b) The kingdom of God is the Church of Jesus Christ. It all began with a tiny little baby born in the manger in the little village of Bethlehem. Like a stone cut out without hands, He was born of a virgin and His conception was not by man but by Holy Spirit through the spoken words of angel Gabriel. *But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, Are not the least among the rulers of Judah; For out of you shall come a Ruler who will shepherd My people Israel.* (Matthew 2:6) The Church of Jesus Christ is on the move, and the scope of His glory in her is beyond human imagination. It had been providing refuge for millions of elects that came to the Kingdom of Jesus Christ for the past 2000 years. Our Lord Jesus Christ assured *that the gate of hell shall not prevail against the Church.* (Matthew 16:18)

In teaching about faith, Jesus Christ also used the mustard seed to express the dynamism of faith. With the seed, He quantified the minimum level of faith required to command the mountains of our lives to shift into the sea. In other words, Jesus Christ was trying to unfold to mankind that our natural abilities to get a certain job done do not amount to anything. But a little trust in the word of God and confidence in His divine ability is all man needs to receive an abundance of blessing from the Heavenly Father. God does not need much to bless His people.

During the three and a half year drought that came upon Israel, God was able to preserve his servant Elijah from the hands of Queen Jezebel. He also made His provision available for him to sustain him. Divine direction led the prophet to the widow of Zarephath, (I Kings 17:9-16) so that the widow might look after the man of God. The famine in the land was so devastating that the widow was preparing the last meal for herself and her son. Prophet Elijah approached the widow with his needs and also gave her prophetic instructions on the simple steps she need to take so that she would be able to meet those needs. The widow of Zarephath was initially hesitant but however she exercised that tiny mustard size of faith and she believed in the word of the man of God and did according to the directive of Elijah. God glorified Himself in the faith of the widow. The barrel of her flour was not exhausted and her cruse of oil did not dry up.

A widow of a deceased priest of God cried out in despair to Elisha, the prophet of God, “The creditors are coming to take my two boys as slaves.” Even if she did not know exactly how to solve her problems, she knew where to go. She brought her case to the man of God. Her mustard seed size of faith in the Lord assured her that God could intervene in her situation. Prophet Elisha was not ignorant of the divine power of God. He replied to her, “*How can I help you? Tell me, what do you have in your house?*” *The widow replied, “Your servant has nothing there at all, except a little oil.”* ‘A little,’ that was all that the man of God wanted to hear because God does not need ‘a lot’ to bless a daughter of Abraham. Elisha said, “*Go around and ask all you neighbors for empty jars. Don’t ask for*

The Parables

just a few. Then go inside and shut the door behind you and your sons. Pour oil into all the jars, and as each is filled, put it to one side." (II King 4:1-4) After she completed the instruction of the prophet, she came back to tell him and Elisha told her, *"Go, sell the oil and pay your debt and you and your sons live on the rest."* That was how the first oil industry began commercial trading with next to nothing little oil resources of the widow.

When the disciples of Jesus Christ reported that there were only seven loaves left, Jesus Christ bid the multitude to sit on the ground because the glory of God was about to be manifested in the little food for the multitude. (Mark 8:1-8) Jesus Christ took the seven loaves along with two pieces of fish and gave thanks and set it before the multitude. Of course, this is a clear sense of appreciation. It is not only a lesson that we should thank God before and after our meal every day. More importantly, it is a lesson that we should thank God for the *'little,'* those things we considered insignificant. Whatever *'little'* that is manifested in your life is a message from God that His multiplying effect is on the way towards you. It is the beginning of a new song of praise that God will give you. It is intended for the glory of God. No wonder, after the thanksgiving, the miracle of multiplication took place upon the little food. The multiplying effect of the little treasure in your hand is the fruit of compassion of God towards us. It was cultured in faithfulness, flourished in trust and obedience, and launched out in thanksgiving. Anytime you apply this spiritual principle to your material situations, whatever may be its nature, you will experience the mightiness of God in your *'little.'* The

scripture revealed that four thousand people were fed with it and seven large baskets of leftover fragments were gathered. We now understand that in any situation we may find ourselves, we still need to behold that the divine presence of God is there with us in our little.

God always pay attention to the insignificant things. The tiny little ‘ants’ made it to the Bible. God used the tiny creature as a prescription to obtain wisdom for mankind, “*Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways and be wise.*” (*Proverbs 6:8*) I do not think that word ‘elephant’ was ever found in the Bible. Multitudes of unrighteous people in a church do not count before God but a consistent little effort in a small congregation of the righteous will receive divine encouragement of God and will become a mighty blessing to the populace.

Think and Pray

The size of a seed does not determine its dynamism; it is the power of God that makes difference.

O Lord, You are the lifter of my head. I put my trust in You; let me experience your divine increase in my righteous little efforts in the course of my Christian journey on earth, in Jesus name.

PARABLES OF THE TREASURE AND PEARL

Scripture Reading:

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, and who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it. (Matthew 13:44-46)

In these two parables Jesus Christ simultaneously reveals both the precious and elusive nature of the kingdom of heaven. One of the reasons for this elusiveness is that the kingdom’s activities are not popular in the world. In any business that man involves, his first thought will be, “What is in the business for me?” I bet that a farmer will not endeavor to plant if he was sure that nothing will come out for him in return. When we compare the earthly result oriented activities of man with the result of the kingdom of God activities, some consider the unknown result of the spiritual activities as a waste of precious time. But Christ had assured that, “*Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.*” (Matthew 19:29) This is why the kingdom of heaven is hidden to the people that put their hope on the material things of the flesh. However, it is not hidden to the people that placed their hope on the things of the spirit. It is not hidden to those who have

known God Almighty as the Creator of heaven and earth. It is not hidden to those who have accepted Jesus Christ as the Lord and Savior of the entire world.

Kingdom of heaven is not a treasure that you just accidentally stumble upon. One of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven is that it seeks every human being on earth. This was why Jesus Christ, the precious gift of God, came to this world to bring man to the knowledge of God. The kingdom searches man through the word of God, through the good news of salvation from the servants of God ordained for this purpose. The power of the kingdom heals our infirmities and set the people in the shackles of demonic oppression free. Our Lord Jesus Christ, the King of the kingdom revealed to John in the Revelation 3:20 and said, *“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come into him and will sup with him and he with me.”* The kingdom seeks man through the good and righteous works of the believers. The ministry of kindness to which all believers are called causes the people they blessed to seek the secret of their loving kindness. The search may lead the recipient of their benevolence to know God and establish a lasting relationship with Him.

One of the major problems of man from ages was looking for God in the wrong direction. Man possesses a natural tendency towards establishing relationship with beings beyond them. They behold the glory of the sun and moon as well as the stars. They know that the heavenly bodies are beyond the creative ideas of mankind. In their

The Parables

passionate but ignorant search for relationship, they considered that the deity that supplied their needs as the object of their worship. That is why some sought to worship the god of sun, moon or star or anything they chose to represent these deities. Christians call this inordinate tendency *idolatry*. Ignorance makes man to abandon the Creator in order to worship a creature. Unfortunately, idolatry is still rampant in all human societies. There are many forms of idolatry today. The Bible reveals that, “...*money answereth all things.*” (*Ecclesiastes 10:19*) This is true. But the negative implication of this truth is the mentality behind the blind and ferocious search for money by people across all ages. This, of course, is another form of idolatry in the life of anyone who does not place God Almighty in the position of preeminence over and above the god of mammon. That is why, a lot of crimes and atrocities today are related to money in some way or another.

Ignorance is another problem that obscures the kingdom of heaven from the eyes of many. Do not be surprised that in this century, two thousand years after Jesus Christ has walked the earth, when you tell someone about Jesus Christ, they tend to behave as if you are speaking gibberish. Their usual response is not always intended to exhibit their resentment or vent their angers towards the Christian ideologies. The truth is that they are simply ignorant of the basic truth, and they do not know how to approach God to obtain salvation.

Saul of Tarsus was an educated lawyer, a legal luminary of his time. He was also a religious man. Yet, for all his

intelligence and religion, he did not know about the hidden treasure of the kingdom of heaven. He still led other persecutors in a campaign to stamp out the name of Jesus Christ. He applied his legal education and his career as a lawyer to enhance his ignorant beliefs. He was pursuing an ignorant venture to expand the scope of his persecution of believers when he encountered Jesus Christ as a bright light from heaven on his way to Damascus. Jesus Christ, the Everlasting King of the kingdom visited him and he could not remain the same again after that divine encounter. He discarded all worldly activities to follow after the King of Heaven.

Saul of Tarsus, now Paul after his conversion, was a typical example of the man Jesus describes in his parable. After finding a treasure or a pearl of a great price, he decided to sell all he possessed in order to possess the kingdom of heaven which is depicted as a priceless treasure. He went in the understanding and the strength of the kingdom to preach to the philosophers in Athens, the Epicureans and the Stoics who spent their precious time learning new things. He said, *“Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you. (Acts 17:22-23)* The forum provided an opportunity for Paul to introduce and explain God to the Athenian philosophers. Some of the ignorant philosophers mocked him but some believed.

The Parables

There comes a stage in a believer's walk when he must say with resolve, "Forward ever and backward never," in his relationship with the kingdom of heaven. At this point nothing matters anymore. If the believer lives, he knows that he lives for Christ, if it is death, "Oh, to God be the glory!" This heavenly consciousness will make the believer utter an encouraging word like Paul that says, *"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword ... For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, not things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

In the inseparable spirit of the heavenly kingdom relationship of Paul, he revealed his resolute intentions to the believers in Philippi. He said,

"But what this were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all thing loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to his death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the death." (Philippians 3:7-11)

The important question that man never asks his Creator is, “Why do you love me so much that you seek me in order to demonstrate your love to me?” Whoever reflects upon the reason the Savior came to this earth and endeavors to understand the thoughtful purposes of God will appreciate and always hope for the kingdom of God to come. Stephen understood this purpose. He beheld in the open heavens, and saw the glory of God. Stephen saw Jesus standing on the right hand of God and the world did not matter anymore to him. Even at the point of death, when the persecutors were hauling stone on him, in intense pain he could still intercede for his enemies and said, “*Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.*” Has it ever crossed your mind why the apostles of Jesus Christ did not back out from their callings? The reason is not far fetched. They discovered the priceless treasure of the heavenly kingdom; they forsook their fathers and mothers, their wives and children, their careers and earthly goals for the kingdom of heaven. Brethren, if you are still holding any earthly thing closely and tightly to your heart and you do not feel like letting it go, perhaps you have not yet found the kingdom of heaven. If you find that spiritual treasure, the kingdom of heaven, you will never remain the same.

Think and Pray

Tons of money will be required to purchase treasures and pearls; but the kingdom of God is priceless and free. Get hold of it.

O Lord, the treasures and pearls are precious but not as the kingdom of Heaven. Reveal the mystery of this priceless kingdom to me and give me the grace to uphold it till eternity, in Jesus name.

PARABLE OF FISHING NET

Scripture Reading:

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth." (Matthew 13:47-50)

In this parable Jesus Christ gives us a scenario of how the righteous believers will be ushered into the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God was like a net that was let down into a lake and caught all kind of fishes. When the net was full, the fisherman pulled it up on the shore. When fishes are taken out of their natural abode, they could only display a feeble struggle if any at all. These fishes can not put any argument against their captor. The way fishermen are harvesting fishes from their fishing net can give us idea of what will happen in the Day of Judgment.

In the presence of the righteous Judge of the whole earth, there is no defense lawyer that can advocate for you. No one can raise up his hand and say, "*Objection my Lord!*" in the God's kingdom. There is no approach the bench for a brief discussion. As the fate of the fish is in the hand of its captor, so also is the fate of every soul on the surface of the earth in the presence of God at last.

The fishermen always sit down; take his time to sort out the good fish from the bad ones. The good were preserved but strangely, the bad ones were not thrown back into the sea but were junked in the garbage. The same way the Heavenly Father will sit down majestically on His Judgment Throne to patiently sort out the righteous people from the mixture of multitude of souls before Him.

And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. (Revelation 20:12-13)

In the presence of the Mighty King, all things are laid bare. Nothing is hidden before the Creator of Universe. The whole theatre of our lives both spiritual and secular will play-back as motion picture. The judgment will be swift and grim in accordance to the rewards of our earthly works. As the good fish will be preserved in a basket for the honorable use of the fisherman, the same way God shall preserve the righteous people in His kingdom. This doesn't mean God is going to eat the good fish; it is indicative of the certainty that the righteous will not be forsaken before the Mighty God at last. And the Heavenly Judge would say, "*Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*" The cycle of life comes to an end here. The bad fish would not be recycled into the lake

The Parables

again. In other words, there is no room for repentance after the death of mankind. The bad fish will be junked in Hell Fire. The Righteous Judge would say to the unrighteous on that day, *“Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”*

The net of salvation had been let down under everyone in the mighty lake called earth but the net has yet to be full. Like fish swimming unperturbed in the lake, the people of this world are living life oblivious to the imminent descending judgment around them. The net in the parable is not synonymous with the evil net that enemy always lay down for the destruction of souls. The net is that of accountability. At the appointed time of God, the fishermen, which are the angelic harvesters, will be commanded to harvest souls into the kingdom of God. But before this, God had extended to mankind His attractive and free plan of salvation along with spiritual blessings all within the package of His grace. Man is now free to abandon his self destructive schemes and follow the righteousness of God. In today’s world, we are in the season of opportunity. Opportunity to make a righteous change before the end arrives suddenly. The grace is presented to everyone on the surface of the earth with love from the very heart of the Father in Heaven. Many have cashed in on the opportunity, and sadly, many have also rejected it. Now is the time to change because the end will surely come. Repent.

Think and Pray

Both the wicked and the righteous are operating in the fishing net of God. The harvest time is near and your earthly works will determine your deserving spiritual rewards.

O Lord, Heaven is real and hell is grimly certain, let me be on the righteous side in your presence at last, in Jesus name.

PARABLE OF THE LEAVEN

Scripture Readings:

Another parable He spoke to them: "The kingdom of heaven is like a leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened."
Matthew 13:33

And again He said, "To what shall I like the kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened."
Luke 13:20-21

There is no way we can understand this parable without a clear definition of the word leaven. The dictionary definition of the word 'leaven' includes— *an agent, such as yeast, that causes batter or dough to rise, especially by fermentation. An element, influence, or agent that works subtly to lighten, enliven, or modify a whole.* We try to incorporate as many definitions of the word in our following discussion of the parable.

The Parables

In most of the time, the word ‘leaven’ is used to express the effect of negative influence of corruption in the lives of some people. But in this parable, Jesus Christ positively uses the word to express the influence and transforming power of the kingdom of God. His intention was to point out the resultant effect of the influence of the kingdom of God when the dramatic power of salvation sinks in to the life of a once-upon-a-time sinner.

Looking at the resultant processes of leavening as fermentation—Yeast reacts on the sugar to cause transformation within the dough through a process known as fermentation. The dough is forever changed through this process but the yeast remains the same. Not only this, the yeast is able to multiply and grow through the process of fermentation. That is the essence of leavening in the perspective of Jesus Christ in this parable. The process of spiritual fermentation causes flesh—the old man in us, the sinful nature--to die in order that the new man in Christ may be revealed. That is why Jesus Christ said, *“Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth much fruit.”* (John 12:24) When Jesus Christ died on the Cross with the burden of our sins, His earthly garment was shed, and when He resurrected, the brilliant glory of God was revealed. He set the pace of resurrection for mankind and all who believed in Him were drawn unto Him.

The leavening process thrives better in an enclosure. One goes through so many experiences when growing up. When you look back and considered what you have gone through in life, you will appreciate the processes that God

had taken you through. I remember my participation in mixing dough for bread when I was working in a bakery. A certain measurement of flour will be made into a clean and big rectangular container, as well as a measurement of industrial sugar and yeast – a leavening agent. After this, water will be added and the lid of container will be tightly closed. The mixture will be left to ferment and rise for about eight hours or to the level desired by the baker. After this, the fermented dough will be kneaded on the kneading machine and cut into baking pans. The baking pans may be closed or left open depending upon the type of bread the baker intends to make. The kneaded dough in the baking pan will be placed in closed room at a regulated temperature. The reactive power of the yeast remains even after the kneading process. The yeast causes the kneaded dough to fill the baking pans to a certain level after which they are transferred them into the oven.

The Church of Jesus Christ is the warm enclosure of the kingdom of God through which the spiritual fermentation takes place in the lives of various sinners. In this way, the beauty of Christ is manifested in their lives and the glory of God is revealed in them. Unity in the Lord is the blessed cord that binds the believers together. Just like the measured ingredients were mixed in a separate rectangular container, the believers in the kingdom of God also require separation. They must separate themselves in all manner of life and be subjected to the ruler-ship of the Master Builder, Jesus Christ that He may mold, shape and transform them to fit in for His kingdom. There must be a separation of like-minded people for the purpose of understanding the mind of God in our

The Parables

relationship—first of all in our fellowship with Him and secondly our relationship with our fellow mankind. Separation of self unto the Lord is required in order to worship God in truth and in Spirit. It is necessary for living in a righteous way according to the precepts of God. Separation unto the Lord helps a believer determine his priorities because the priorities of the kingdom's children are different from those of the world. It is also important for a believer to surrender to the wisdom of God as reveal in His word. We must separate ourselves to live a holy and acceptable righteous life that is completely different from the acceptable norms of the worldly people. *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”* (Romans 12:1-2) Because of the laudable transformation processes of the kingdom, the scripture commands, *“... let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”* (Hebrew 10:25 NIV)

Perhaps you are asking, “What is this spiritual leaven in believers that brings about their transformation?” The answer is not far fetched—He is the Holy Spirit of God. There is no single person in the whole world that can be pointed out as good. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9) A moralist may be a cool and kind

person but in another minute he may behave like a monster if Christ is not in his life. If you ever come across anyone that is truly good and endowed with the godly attributes, consider him or her closely. You will find out that Christ is behind all the loving-kindness he is demonstrating to the humanity. An individual can only be transformed according to the desire of God by the power of the Holy Spirit. The changes resulting from the transformation of Holy Spirit can be found in Galatians 5:22. *“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”* When you are cleansed in the redemptive blood of Jesus Christ through salvation, endowed with the knowledge of the word of God and filled with the indwelling Spirit of God, you will certainly experience the true meaning God’s love. You will now understand why you need to share the same love with others. You will possess that internal joy that mouth cannot explain. You will experience peace in the stormy situation around you. In humility, patience and love, you will consider others above yourself. You will behold the goodness of God in your endeavors and will be able to share the goodness of Christ with others as the Lord leads you. Self-control will manifest naturally in all your activities because the new life you live is no longer your own, you are now living for Christ.

The presence of leaven agent among other ingredients in the dough cannot be hidden. It is visible in its smooth outlook and you can feel its fluffiness when you touch the bread. This is the reason for the sponge-like textures we find in a loaf of bread. It causes bread or bread products

The Parables

to rise before the final baking process. One can easily distinguish leavened bread from the unleavened bread. The texture of leavened bread is fluffy and the unleavened is somehow hard. That is why Jesus Christ described the intending natural attributes of children of the kingdom of God in saying, *“You are the salt of the earth...You are the light of the world. You are like a city on a hill that cannot be hidden...In the same way let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in Heaven.”* (Matthew 5:13-16) Salt is usually invisible when it’s added to food, but its taste is undeniable. Jesus Christ mentions the taste of salt to express how our inward spirit, which is invisible, should minister to the spirit of the people we touch for God’s glory. This can be demonstrated in the way we intercede for others in prayer and thoughtfully consider them in love even without their knowledge. In the same vein, He referred to the visible brightness of light to express how our outward appearance, our utterances and deeds should create a brilliant radiance of love, peace and righteousness toward others that will bring glory to God.

Think and Pray

The salt preserves and as a sweeten agent that enhances pleasant taste. This will give you an idea of the spiritual leaven of the kingdom of God. Be ye transformed so that you can transform others with the new spirit of God in you!

O Lord, I have experienced the divine touch of salvation, let me make difference in the life others in the course of my services to humanity, in Jesus name.

PARABLE OF THE MARRIAGE FEAST

Scripture Reading

Now when one of those who sat at the table with Him heard these things, he said to Him, "Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!" Then He said to him, "A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, 'Come, for all things are now ready.' But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.' Still another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.' And the servant said, 'Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.' Then the master said to the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.' " (Luke 14:15-24)

In this parable, Christ led His audience through an event common to men in order to reveal the unknown eternity that will soon become reality to mankind. He chose the social event known as a banquet during His time. Quite typical of a host who organizes a social get-together, he would love the company of important dignitaries in his banquet. He would like to bring together people of a good

The Parables

reputation, men and women of high caliber and other high class people that are worthy of honor, the people he had associated with in his community.

In accordance to the custom of the Jews at this time, a host always sends two invitations to the worthy invitees—the first announcing the events and dates. This is similar to the present practice of RSVP in the invitation cards. The host is able to know the number of guests that will be coming and only prepare a contingency plan for those who did not RSVP. The second invitation would announce to the invited guests that all the arrangements have been completed. We can further analyze this to mean that the food, drinks, music and everything related to the banquet is ready.

At the supper time a reminder goes out to the worthy invitees that all things were ready. It's another way of telling them that their labor was over. Heaven's table had been laid. The best food was set on the table to feed the hungry souls. The Host of Heaven called His own to His divine table to partake in the supper of the Lamb that had been ordained for the righteous from the beginning of the world. This spiritual supper did not entail any contribution in terms of any work or effort from the invitees. They did not have to pay before partaking. It was offered freely from the abundant of the love of God. The supper was the metaphoric plan of free salvation that God has for man to deliver him from the clutches of Satan so that man can dwell eternally, beneath the protective wings of Almighty God.

When the first invitation was sent out to all worthy invitees, none of them declined. The host assumed that all the invitees would be coming for the wedding banquet. But when the second invitation was sent out, the invitees began to give excuses as to the reasons why they could not honor the invitation.

The first invitee said, “I just bought a piece of land, I must go to see it.” Consider this excuse critically. How can one purchase a landed property without first of all visited the site? It is obvious that the excuse is not a reasonable one. The second said, “I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them.” Also at this time, you cannot prudently purchase oxen without testing them first. For those who don’t know what yoke of oxen are, they are animals with crossbar of U-shaped pieces of wood that encircle the necks of drafted animals. The animals jointly drag the tilling tool attached to the yoke through the ground, thereby tilling the soil making it ready for planting. Of course that is another lame excuse. And lastly, another gave an excuse that he just got married, therefore he could not come. If marriage was the reason why he could not honor the invitation, why did he not decline it at the first invitation? Can’t a newly-wed couple attend another wedding banquet?

The first invitation was sent to the worthy invitees. The Israelites, the natural branch of the household of the people of God did not decline. Abraham father of faith honored the call of God and departed from the land of Ur, from his kindred and family to follow the directive of God. Moses turned aside from his busy duty of tending

The Parables

the flock of Jethro his father in-law, to hear the voice of God on Mount Horeb. God told him to lead the Israelites to the land flowing with milk and honey. Moses initially put up feeble excuses due to his speech impairment and lack of self-confidence but God strengthened him and assured him of His divine presence. Moses faithfully honored the calling of God and he excelled. The prophets and anointed kings were called for one assignment or the other, all honored God in their calling and they all have good reports. In fact they embraced and patiently waited for the real deal, the second invitation. Jesus Christ reminded the Israelites in one of his numerous discussions with them, *“Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.”* (John 8:56) The prophets prophesied loud and clear in Israel about the coming of Messiah, the Master of the banquet, the Prince of Kingdom of God. In their subconscious mind, the Israelites always knew that Messiah is coming. Even the Samaritan woman at the well was expecting the Messiah. She said, *“I know that Messiah (called Christ) is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.”* (John 4:25) When everything was ready and the Master of the banquet declared the door of the kingdom of God open, the second invitation now went out to the worthy invitees—the house hold of Israel. But they all developed cold feet. *“He came unto his own, and his own received him not.”* (John 1:11)

From the above untenable excuses you will observe that these worthy invitees placed their priorities wrong. They engaged themselves with less important events and activities but they denied themselves a life time

opportunity—the grace of salvation. They disregarded the open hands of the love of God towards them. They allowed worldly activities and cares to override and supersede eternity. Perhaps this seems strange to you but the following are common occurrence that related to the rejection of the worthy invitees. People prefer to attend sporting events today instead of going to the church on Sunday to worship God. They prefer to watch television programs at the detriment of family prayer meeting or quiet times with the Lord. They can read daily newspapers and magazines page to page but they find it boring to read the word of God. They can read voluminous fictional novel but would decline to read few pages of spiritual enriched Christian books. They have time to sit around to discuss politics and other worldly events but the moment the discussion relating to the word of God is introduced they lose interest.

It is not surprising that the worthy invitees, the backsliding believers are still rejecting this invitation today. There were people who had been given the grace to know the truth but deliberately do the unexpected evil deeds. Paul described them in II Timothy 3:5 as the people that *have the form of godliness but denying the power thereof*. Some think that they have all the time of life to themselves—they feel they can quickly dabble into sin and later repent of it. There are Christians that have such immense love for money and wealth but have misplaced their priorities by placing worldliness before godliness.

The Parables

The supper is ready and must not be wasted. Invitees refused to honor the invitation. Something drastic must be done to ensure that the efforts will not be in vain. As expected the master of the house was angry about the cold response he got from the invitees. Can God feel disappointed? Let the following scripture passage speak for itself and minister to you. *“Hear, O heavens! Listen, O earth! For the Lord has spoken. I reared children and brought them up but they have rebelled against me. The ox knows his master, the donkey his owner’s manger, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand. Ah, sinful nation, a people loaded with guilt, a brood of evildoers, children given to corruption! They have forsaken the Lord; they have spurned the Holy One of Israel and turned their backs on him.”* (Isaiah 1:1-4)

When the worthy people of God refused to honor the beckoning of His mercy, the unworthy people were reevaluated in the mercy and love of God and were adjudged worthy to be invited to the supper. He gave charge to his servants to go into the streets and the lanes of the city and bring in the poor, the less fortunate ones, the destitute and the blind to the supper. Thus the worthy invitees gave their portion out to the unworthy and less fortunate people because they were engrossed with the care of this world.

Paul declared the protocol through which the love of God was extended to man in form of salvation. It first of all came to the natural branch, the household of Israel. But they rejected the hands of fellowship of Almighty God. Paul said, *“I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who*

believes; first for the Jews, then for the Gentiles.” (Romans 1:16) When the Jews rejected the salvation plans, their rejection paved way for the Gentiles who wholeheartedly embraced it. Whichever angle we look at it, it still brought glory to God in the faithfulness to His words. He promised Abraham and said, *“In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”* God has spoken through His servant and the prophecy of Prophet Isaiah came to pass. *“The nations of the world will be summoned to come and buy wine and milk without money, and the nations (Gentiles) that do not know God will hasten to come.” (Isaiah 55:5)* Paul was divinely appointed to bring the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ to the Gentiles. He was previously a certified sinner who ruthlessly persecuted the church of Jesus Christ. Being a sinner, he knew the ways of sinners and was easily connected to those who thought that they would not receive the mercy of God due to their enormous sins. He made them realize that the love of God covered their multitude of sins. They accepted Jesus Christ the Son of God and they were given the grace to partake in the banquet of the love of God and His plan of salvation. There is a room to accommodate you in the banquet of His love. Come and partake, you will not be rejected!

Think and Pray

God invites man to His banquet of love to bless him. When man rejects the invitation of God, impliedly he accepts invitation and condemnation of Satan

O Lord, I understand the eternal gain of the invitation to your kingdom, let me whole-heartedly embrace your salvation plan and be counted worthy in your presence at last, in Jesus name.