

The Parables of Jesus

James Montgomery Boice, *The Parables of Jesus* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983),

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The Pharisees were the most highly regarded of the various sects of Judaism. They were not political figures essentially, although they had great political power due to their being so highly regarded. They were a religious body whose chief concern was to observe the most minute of points of the law. Nicodemus was a Pharisee. So was the Paul. Those men were among the most honored of their contemporaries. 85

The Pharisee and the Tax Collector P. 83

Tax collector was ‘a no-good, money-grubbing, cheating, Roman collaborator,’ as most of the people of that day would have called him. Tax collectors were Jews empowered by the Roman government to collect the taxes they could. They were permitted to keep any excess above what the government required. So they were not loved but despised. People would cross the street to pass on the other side when they saw a tax collector coming. So when Jesus spoke of two men, a Pharisee and a tax collector, it was as though He had spoken of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and a rapist, or the President of the United States and a prostitute. ¹

The Rich Fool P. 103

As Boice noted, Jesus called the man “foolish” because, first, he misused the wealth God had given him. The man’s prosperity was from God, who made the ground and prospered the harvest but he failed to see that. He regarded the wealth as his rather than God’s. He thought it was all for him, and therefore, he stored it up (for himself), taking no thought of anyone else. He misused it. (Emphasis added). The Bible does not teach that money is evil in itself or that things in themselves produce evil. The fault is in those who use it. 105. Second, He allowed his concern for riches to eclipse the far more important concern that he should have had for his soul. Possessions are perishable goods while the soul is intended to dwell with God forever. The rich did not value his soul. Third, he was not rich in faith in God nor. He should be rich toward. God. ²

Solomon allowed the love of affluence to ruin his life. Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Lord about money. Paul wrote “The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.” (1 Tim. 6:10). The surrender of possessions would be the most significant blessing of their lives. This doesn’t mean, however, that possessions in themselves are wrong or, for that matter, that poverty is a particularly blessed form of Christianity. In that area of the Christian life the true solution does not lie in the accumulation or renunciation of wealth. It lies in the proper use and proper estimate of the things God has provided. In other words, we are not called to relinquish things but to use them under God’s direction for the health and well-being of ourselves and our families, for material aid to others and for promoting God’s truth: Boice, *Parable*, 106-107. Paul told Timothy to instruct those under his care ‘to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way, they lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age (1 Tim. 6:18-19). The opposite is those who build a life of ‘wood, hay or straw’ and who are saved, if they are saved, only as ...escaping though the flames’ (1 Cor. 3:12, 15). ³

¹ James Montgomery Boice, *The Parables of Jesus* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), 85.

² James Montgomery Boice, *The Parables of Jesus* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), 107-108

³ James Montgomery Boice, *The Parables of Jesus* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), 108-109.

Jesus said to young ruler to see what he had and give it to the poor. He did not say it to Mary and Martha or Lazarus or John the Evangelist or Zebedee. He said it to the *rich young ruler*, whose chief obstruction to a life of following Christ lay in his possessions (which he proved by turning away).⁴

Wise and Foolish Builders (Luke 6:46-49)

Few people build a structure without lasting foundation. Yet it is strange that so many people build their spiritual lives without foundations and are therefore carried away by the first strong winds of adversity. Our Lord must have seen many such people in his day, even among those who were apparently quite religious, and when they addressed him they said, "Lord, Lord,..." But they did not do what he said, and for that fatal failure Jesus compared them to people who were building without a foundation.⁵

(Luke 6:46-49)

Jesus said, "Everyone who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, it fell with a great crash" (Matt. 7:26-27). It is important to see that these words were not spoken of people who rebelled against Christ's teachings at all, but to people who listened to them and made profession of faith. It is the folly of people who have heard what is right, have acknowledged that it is right, and profess to be following it, but who do not put Christ's teachings into practice.⁶

Instead of really repenting, people talk about repentance; instead of heartily believing, say "I believe"; instead of true loving, talk of love without loving; instead of coming to Christ, speak about coming to Christ, and profess to come to Christ, and yet not come at all.⁷

The wise builder:

In contrast to the foolish man who built his house on the sand, the Lord also speaks of a wise man who built on rock. Lord says of such a man, "The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock" (Matt. 7:25). What does it mean to build your house on the rock or to dig deeply and lay a foundation? It is matter of building on Jesus himself. Clearly to practice his words means to believe that he is who he says he is and to turn from sin to faith in him as the way of salvation. That is the most important meaning of the word "rock" or "foundation" in Scripture. God or his anointed One, the Messiah, is the rock.⁸

I Tim. 6:17-19, Paul speaks of good works as a foundation: "Command those who are rich in this present world ... to do good .. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age." Paul also speaks of God's eternal decree in election as our foundation: "Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stand firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his"" (2Tim. 2:19). But those are exceptions, because each one of such texts there are many more that apply the same imagery to Jesus himself or to the Father.

⁴ James Montgomery Boice, *The Parables of Jesus* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), 107.

⁵ James Montgomery Boice, *The Parables of Jesus* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), 121.

⁶ James Montgomery Boice, *The Parables of Jesus* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), 122.

⁷ James Montgomery Boice, *The Parables of Jesus* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), 123.

⁸ James Montgomery Boice, *The Parables of Jesus* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), 124.

Paul declares, "You are ... built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone" (Eph. 2:19-20).⁹

According to Jesus, we cannot have his ethics without himself, but neither can we have him without his ethics. We must build on both. This parable comes as the conclusion to a substantial body of Jesus' ethical teaching - Sermon on the Mount in Matthew and Beatitudes in Luke .. love enemies, do not judge, treat others wellLuke 6:20-22.¹⁰ James Montgomery Boice, *The Parables of Jesus* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983),

The House will Stand:

The life that Jesus holds before us is not appealing at first sight, for it is utterly opposed to the kind of self-seeking life the people of the world (and most of us) practice. It does have disadvantages. There *is* sorrow, deprivation, persecution. There is a great advantage to offset those drawbacks, however; namely, that a life built on Jesus and his teachings will stand in eternity. We are going to have tribulations. Those are our common lot, but the Christians who is building on Christ and whose mind is captive to the will of God can triumph over them gloriously (Rom. 5:3). Each child of Adam - you and I and countless millions of others - will experience sorrow, pain, suffering, disappointment, and eventually death. What is solution? Not escape; escape is impossible. The solution is to build on the sure foundation. Jesus says that although rains will fall, floods will rise, and winds will blow, the life that is constructed on him will survive the blast and last forever. That was true for Job. That was true for Moses and David and Isaiah and Jeremiah and all the other great Old Testament figures. It was true for Peter and James and John and Paul.¹¹

The Good Samaritan P. 147

Boice names the four classes of people in the text – the victim, the victimizers, the indifferent, and the concerned – classes that cover nearly all of humanity: A man who was robbed, beaten and left half-dead. A priest was going by, the very type of man whom we might have supposed would be compassionate. But he did nothing. A Levite, an educated person and of the upper class. But he, too, passed by. A Samaritan came and ‘took pity on him.’ Samaritans were hated by Jews as being racially impure as well are members of a false religious sect. But it did not matter to the Samaritan in view of the victim’s obvious need. He bandaged his wounds, and then took him to an inn where he took care of him and paid innkeeper to continue his care after he himself had gone on. Jesus asked which do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers? Like most Jews of his time, the rich ruler would define ‘neighbor’ as a member of his own people and race. But Jesus, instead of answering the question of the rich lawyer, he turns the question around asking ‘who is the one who acts neighborly? He was asking the lawyer, ‘Do you act as a neighbor to the person who needs your help? The lawyer replied, ‘The one who had mercy on him’ Jesus then said, ‘God and do likewise.’¹²

⁹ James Montgomery Boice, *The Parables of Jesus* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), 124.

¹⁰ James Montgomery Boice, *The Parables of Jesus* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), 125.

¹¹ James Montgomery Boice, *The Parables of Jesus* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), 126-127.

¹² James Montgomery Boice, *The Parables of Jesus* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), 150-151.

Samaritan's neighborliness was not hindered by a *legalistic application of the law*; the precise thing that hindered the lawyer who asked the original question and possibly also hindered the priest and Levite. Those men were fanatics about the law and were also mean-minded legalists who sued their approaches to Scripture to limit it and thus escape the law's true scope and meaning. If the law has said, 'Help the poor man who is lying beside the road half dead,' they would have done it. But because it only said, 'Love your neighbor as yourself,' they could debate who that elusive 'neighbor' was and leave the poor man unattended.¹³

According to Boice, every sufferer whom we can assist has a claim of neighbor love upon us which we cannot repudiate without injuring him an dishonoring God. The second thing that might have hindered the Samaritan's show of love for the sufferer was *nationality or religion*.¹⁴ Jesus might have wanted to stress in particular that the only one who stopped to help the disabled was a Samaritan. The Jews hated the Samaritans and could not speak civilly of them. The outcast had acted as a neighbor though he had ample cause not to care, hated as he was, whereas the Jewish priest and Levite would not show mercy even to one of their own nationality. Christ's point is that love must transcend nationality, race and religion.¹⁴

About 750 years before the time of Christ, the Assyrians had conquered the northern kingdom of Israel, where Samaria was located, had deported the Jewish population and then had resettled the area with their own people. It is not possible to transport an entire population, of course, so some Jews remained. (Perhaps they had hidden out in caves, bribed their captors, or escaped deportation in some other way.) Those Jews intermarried with the newcomers, thereby producing a race that was half-Assyrian and half-Jewish. To the Jews of the south that was an unforgivable sin. In their judgment the Samaritans had clearly forfeited their Jewish heritage. Besides they had their own religion. When the Jews of the south returned to Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity and began to rebuild their Temple, the Samaritans offered to help. But because they were despised as half-breed outcasts, the Jews refused their offer, which angered the Samaritans enough to cause them to build their own Temple on Mount Gerizim. That became a rival Temple which in turn became the center for a rival religion.¹⁵

The Samaritan was not deterred from his work by what must have been *great personal inconvenience* both with time, money that most people are reluctant to give up. He interrupted his journey to take the injured man to an inn, where he cared for him overnight. The next day, he paid for his further care with two silver coins that he gave to the innkeeper. He gave what genuine neighbor love does.¹⁵⁴

What must I do to inherit eternal life? The irrevocable word of God remains valid, that he who observes the law perfectly will live. He who always loves God and his fellow-man will inherit eternal life. But no man has ever been able to observe this law perfectly, nor can anyone do so. And because no imperfect observance of the law can be accepted, and because the judgment of God that the soul that sins shall die is just as irrevocable, we know the no man can ever inherit eternal life on the grounds of his own merit. But God be praised that Christ Jesus as man lived the entirely innocent one, endured death for us

¹³ James Montgomery Boice, *The Parables of Jesus* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), 152.

¹⁴ James Montgomery Boice, *The Parables of Jesus* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), 153.

¹⁵ James Montgomery Boice, *The Parables of Jesus* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), 153.

on the cross, forsaken by God, so that by faith we are absolved from the death we deserve and inherit eternal life. This, however, does not remove the obligation to obey Jesus' words, "go, and do thou likewise.' 154

Boice put the difference as follows: the Law has said, 'Do this and thou shall live,' while Christ says, 'I have given you eternal life through grace, and this new life in you will enable you to have real love towards God and your fellow-men and to carry it out in practice; then we will live like that Samaritan. 154-155

No commentator raises issue with robber or victimizer. Elsewhere in preceding chapters, I wrote about the oppressive and exploitive socioeconomic and political situation of Jesus days and the fact that victimized poor peasants often turned into beggars, robbers and bandits to survive. The robber on the Jericho road was a victim himself of the system of his days. That doesn't condone his behavior. But we have to mention of his society that created robbers and condemn it along with the violent behavior of the robber.

Unprofitable Servants and Unprofitable Goats P. 199 Matt. 25:31-46

As Boice claims, the story of sheep and goats along with the parable of five wise and five foolish virgins and the talents occur in the last great body of teachings by Jesus recorded in Matthew's gospel.

A Coming Judgment

Boice proposes five most obvious points:

First, there is to be a day of future reckoning for all people.

As Boice reminds us, there used to be an argument over justification between Christians and Catholics. Protestant said that it is by faith alone (*sola fide*). Catholics said that justification is by faith plus works (*fide et operae*). But today that disagreement is outmoded in the minds of most people. A new development is saying 'get to heaven all one has to do is die.' One is 'justified' by death alone. 202

But Boice suggests that this is an evil world. All sins are not judged in this world, nor are all good deeds rewarded. The righteous do suffer. The guilty do go free. If this is a moral universe, that is, if it is created and ruled by a moral God, then there must be a reckoning hereafter in which those tables are balanced out. The good must prosper, and the evil must be punished.' In most theological volumes on eschatology (the last things) there are three great points of emphasis: the return of Christ, the resurrection of the body, and the final judgment. 202

He claims that the most logical thing in the universe and Scripture stories clearly say that there will be a final day of reckoning. It is when 'masters of those servants returned and settled accounts with them' (Matt. 25:19) and when 'the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angles with him' (Matt. 25:31). 203

Judgment by Works

The second point of the stories is the emphasis on works, indeed on judgment by works. That is surprising, and it troubles Protestants especially. We have been taught that salvation is by grace through faith apart from works, and here the judgment is on the basis of what people have done or not done. In the first case (Matt. 25:1), it is the use or disuse of the talents given to the servants by their master. In the second, it is the care or neglect of those who were hungry, thirsty, strangers, naked, sick, or imprisoned. Boice claims faith is important but asking what kind of faith. It is not a dead faith. A dead faith saves no one. It is a living faith. In that Jesus is one with the apostle James, who said, 'What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? (James 2:14-17). 203

Usually James is contrasted with Paul at this point. But Paul also said, 'to those who by patiently doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; while for those who are self-seeking and who obey not the truth but wickedness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be anguish and distress for everyone who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality (Rom. 2:7-11).

Boice also asks, does that mean we are saved by works. His answer is no, but it is statement of the necessity of works following faith. There is an unbreakable connection exists between what we believe and what we do, because we believe the gospel only because we are regenerate, and regenerate people will inevitably begin to live out the superior moral life of Christ. No one believes on Christ who has not been given a new nature, the nature of Jesus. So although that new nature does not show itself all at once, if we are justified we will have it and it will increasingly and inevitably express itself in forgiveness of and service to others, just as God has forgiven and served us. We are not justified by works. But if we do not have works, we are not justified. We are not Christians. 204.

Boice adds that we cannot get away with giving excuses to God as the wicked complained that they did not see Jesus in those who were needy. To Jesus that is no excuse. He says, 'whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me' (Matt. 25:45). 205

As Paul wrote, 'every mouth will be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God' (Rom. 3:19). 206

Jesus speaks of a division between the heaven and hell, joy and suffering, misery and the happiness of the Lord for not temporarily but for all eternity. Sheep are separated from the goats, the latter going away 'to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.' 'In to *darkness*' for it is apart from God, who is the source of all inner and outer light. *Outside*, because it is apart from Him who is the center of all things. In that darkness there is no hope, no joy, no love, no laughter. There is only weeping and the gnashing of teeth forever. The darkness and outside represent homelessness. 207

Boice exclaims; 'It is only our feeding the hungry, our giving drink to the thirsty, our receiving the stranger, our clothing the naked, our caring for the sick, and our visiting the prisoners that shows us truly to be Christ's disciples. Those things do not make us disciples, but their absence shows that we are not. 154

The Rich Man and Lazarus P. 209

There is no story more stirring or more disturbing than that of the rich man and Lazarus. It is stirring for its description of two men, one rich and one poor. They are set in contrast, the contrast is not only between their circumstances in this life but also between their destinies in the life to come. The latter contrast is sharp, absolute, and permanent. Earthly condition of two men was contrasting; the *rich man* 'who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day' and the *poor man*, Lazarus, who was 'covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table' (Luke 16:19-21). 210

Boice claims that there is nothing here or elsewhere in the parable that condemns the rich man for being rich or praises the poor man for being poor. 210.

It is true that the rich man's riches undoubtedly worked to his hurt, for he apparently lived for those and nothing else. It is also true that Lazarus' poverty worked to his spiritual good, for lacking earthly joys and comfort he undoubtedly turned his eyes to heaven and sought divine consolation. 210.

What Death Did?

Boice asserts that the true riches of Lazarus enhanced in the life to come, while the true poverty of the rich man intensified. The rich man had lived without God in this world so he died without God. On the contrary, he had suffering; 'in hell he was in torment.' Lazarus had lived with God here and had even more of Him in heaven. The *poor rich man grows poorer* and the *rich poor man growing richer*. Not only did the rich man, who had no share in God, lose God – forever. He lost even those fine things that he had. Lazarus not only had God forever, he found other blessings besides. 212
He missed opportunity – the opportunity for life with God in heaven.

Boice summarizes:

There has been a contrast between the earthly conditions of the rich man and the beggar. There has been a contrast between their true state, the rich man actually being poor and the poor man actually being rich. There is a contrast between their experience in death; the poor rich man grew poorer, the rich poor man richer. This is a contrast between the nature unfolding of the poor man's experience and the abrupt awakening of the rich man to spiritual realities. In those quickly passing moments after death the rich man saw heaven, prayed in vain, and despaired. But there is this final contrast: Between the *hopelessness* of the rich man's condition after death and the *hopefulness* of his condition before. After death there is no possibility of change. But in this life there is, and therefore we can rightly say 'where there's life, there's hope,' spiritually speaking. 215

In short the rich man had no home to go to when he died because he died with no God and became homeless in burning fire while the poor beggar Lazarus who had no home on earth had a permanent home to go to after this life.

Boice thinks that the rich man was a Jew. He was probably an outstanding member of his community, such people generally act religious. The rich man probably went to the synagogue and did what was expected of

him! He would have recited prayers. However, God-seeking prayer had never fallen from his lips. (Boice, 214-215)