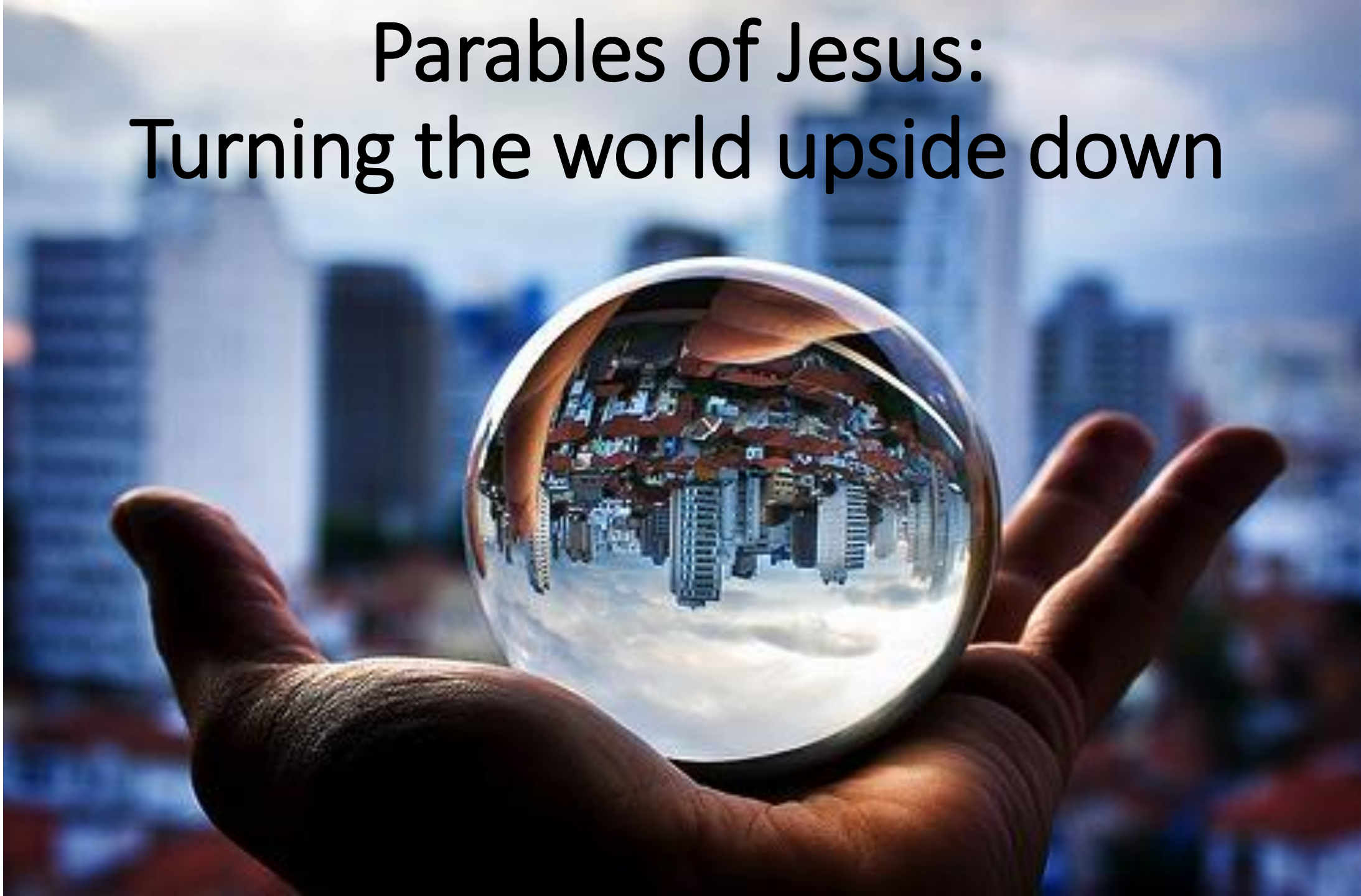


Parables of Jesus: Turning the world upside down



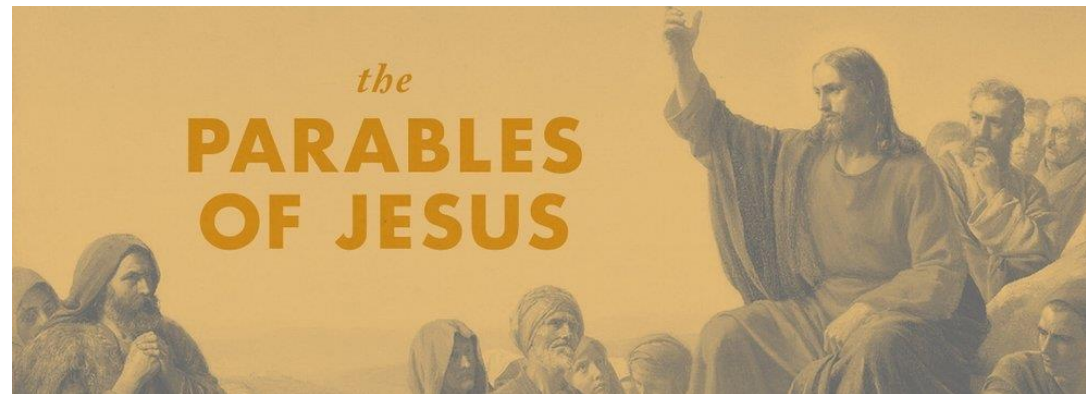
Aims for this session

1. Consider the parables in Luke's Gospel from a new perspective.
2. Invite you to begin to think of some creative ways to preach on the parables that reflect their original challenge.



Why are the parables among the most loved teachings of Jesus?

- We love stories!
- The parables are easy to remember and are about common every day things.
- They are at the very heart of Jesus teachings – “He did not speak to them except in parables...” Mark 4:34a
- The parables are among the first teachings of Jesus we learned.



Sunday School



Sunday School



What is a parable?

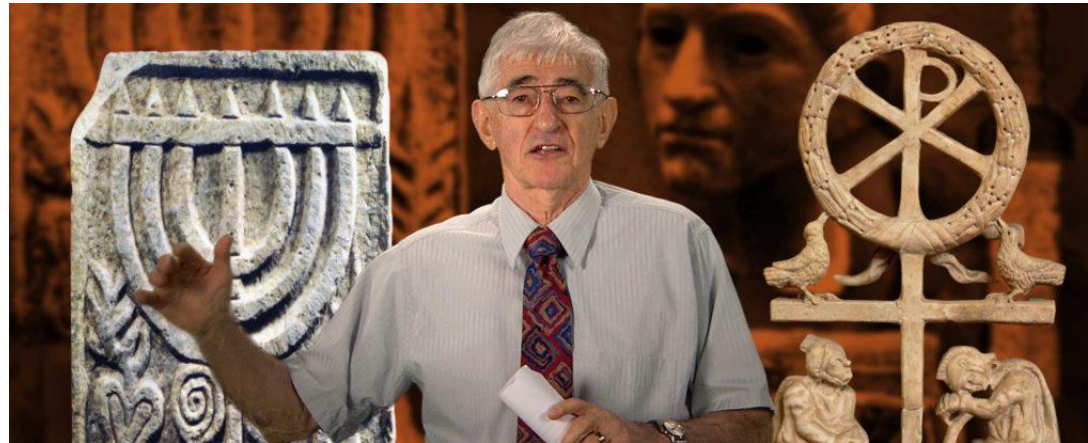
- The word parable refers to a short saying or story that makes a particular point in a memorable fashion.
- Parables often rely on symbolism, metaphor, irony, or some sort of double meaning to make their point.
- Sometimes they simply illustrate a truth that might be widely accepted.
- More often, they provoke reflection in a way that runs counter to conventional wisdom.



A different perspective

“A parable is always a somewhat unnerving experience. You can usually recognise a parable because your immediate reaction will be self contradictory: ‘I don’t know what you mean by that story but I’m certain I don’t like it’.”

“On the lips of the historical Jesus the parable demands that the hearer respond by saying the contradictory, the impossible, the unspeakable.”



John Dominic Crossan (1934-)

“In Jesus’ parables the Kingdom is that which in shaking man’s world at its foundations establishes the dominion of God over and against all such worlds.”

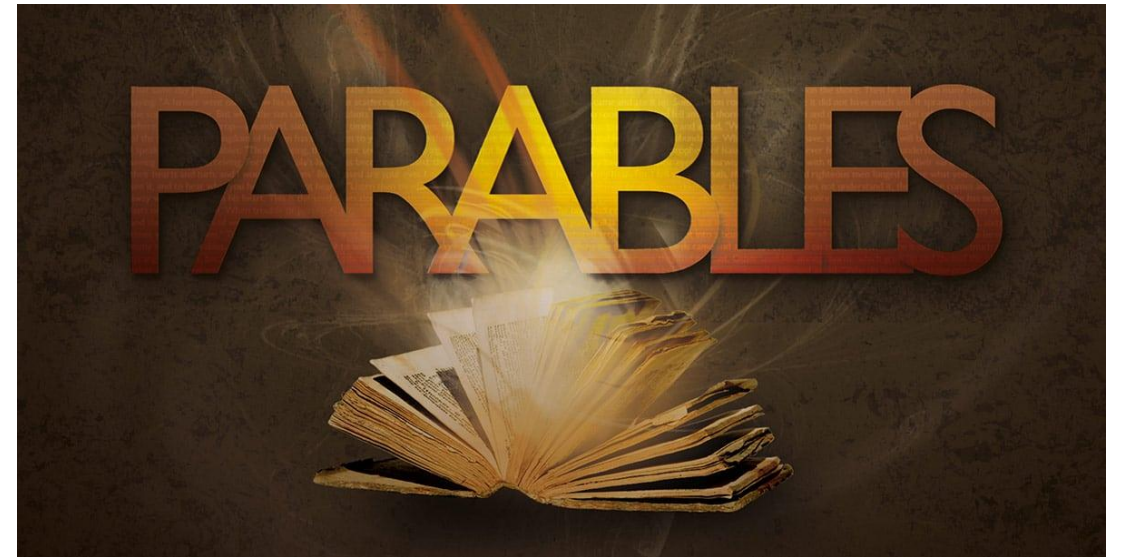
“The surface function of parable is to create contradiction within a given situation of complacent security.”

“Parables are supposed to overturn one’s structure of expectation and therein are thereby to threaten the security of one’s man-made world.”



Looking at parables in Luke that...

- overturn our structure of expectation
- threaten the security of our world
- create an unnerving experience
- shake our world at its foundations
- create contradiction
- require us to say the contradictory, the impossible, the unspeakable



Luke 15:3-10 [CEV]

Then Jesus told them this story:

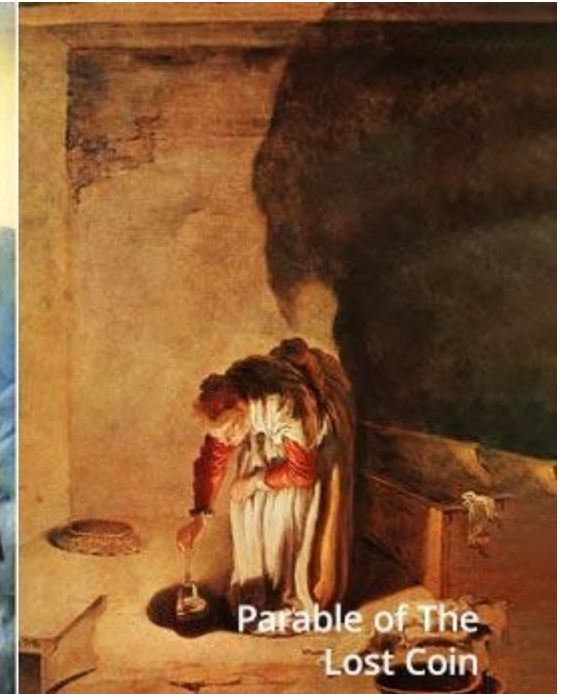
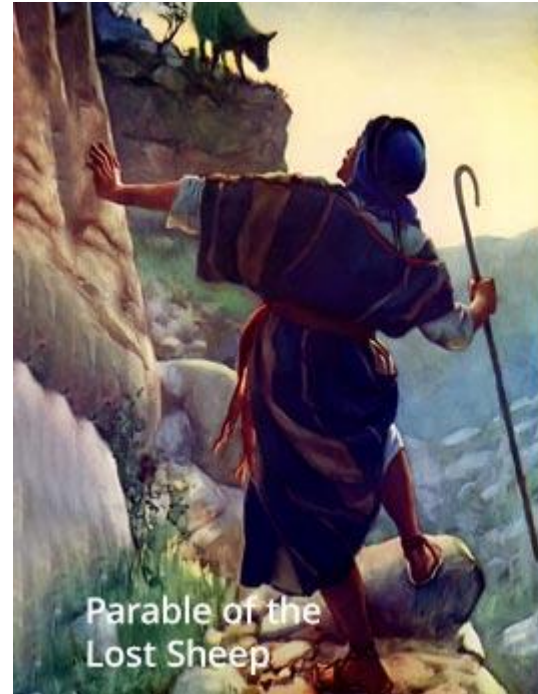
If any of you has a hundred sheep, and one of them gets lost, what will you do? Won't you leave the ninety-nine in the field and go look for the lost sheep until you find it? And when you find it, you will be so glad that you will put it on your shoulder and carry it home. Then you will call in your friends and neighbors and say, "Let's celebrate! I've found my lost sheep."

Jesus said, "In the same way there is more happiness in heaven because of one sinner who turns to God than over ninety-nine good people who don't need to."

Jesus told the people another story:

What will a woman do if she has ten silver coins and loses one of them? Won't she light a lamp, sweep the floor, and look carefully until she finds it? Then she will call in her friends and neighbours and say, "Let's celebrate! I've found the coin I lost."

Jesus said, "In the same way God's angels are happy when even one person turns to him."



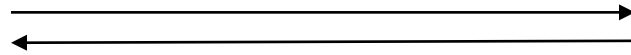
Two familiar parables from Luke

- Breakout Group 1 – Luke 10:29-37 – The good Samaritan
- Breakout Group 2 – Luke 15:11-32 – The prodigal son/loving father



Crossan – Parables of Reversal

GOOD



Bad

1. Priest & Levite
2. Dutiful Son
3. Rich Man
4. Pharisee
5. First-seated
6. Invited Guest

Samaritan
Prodigal Son
Lazarus
Publican
Last-seated
Uninvited Guest



Questions to consider?

1. What would have been surprising and challenging to those who first heard this parable?
2. What shocks you in this parable and turns your understanding of the world upside down?
3. What does this parable have to say to us about the Kingdom and/or the nature of God?
4. How might you creatively present this parable in a sermon in order to 'shake the foundations' of a congregation?

Be prepared to report back from your group.



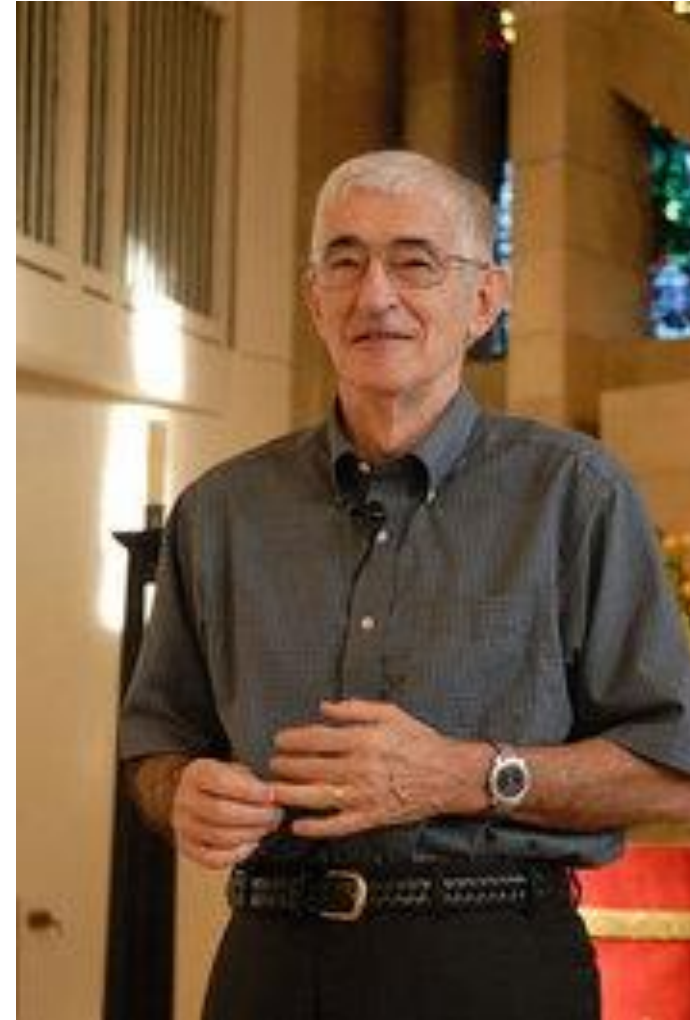
Reporting from your breakout group



A concluding thought from Crossan...

“Parables give God room...The parables are stories which shatter the deep structure of our accepted world and thereby render clear and evident to us the relativity of story itself. They remove our defences and make us vulnerable to God. It is only in such experiences that God can touch us, and only in such moments does the kingdom of God arrive.”

- What do you think?



Discussion and Questions



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