

Touchstones of our time together

We will begin & end on time.

We will allow time for silences.

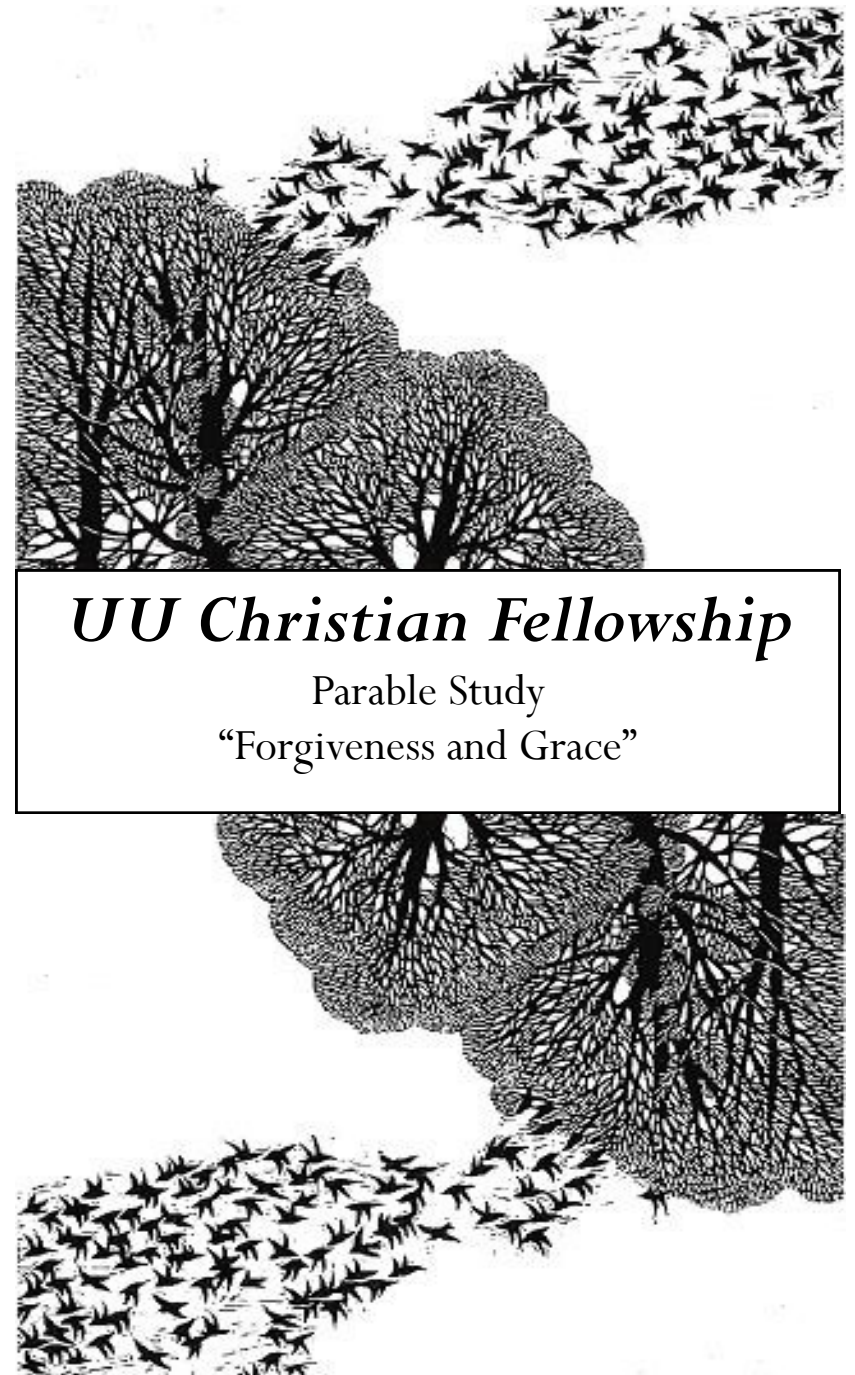
We will respect one another's opinions.

We will avoid rancour or debate.

*We recognize this as a thoughtful, time for spiritual discernment
through engagement with scripture.*

We recognize that this fellowship is not a discussion group.

*We will exhibit the Christian spirit of love, patience, charity and
compassion in all our interactions.*



UU Christian Fellowship

Parable Study

“Forgiveness and Grace”

ORDER OF SERVICE

Unitarian Universalist Christian Fellowship

Lighting of the Chalice

In the freedom of the truth
And in the spirit of Jesus
We unite for the worship of God
And the service of all—Charles Gordon Ames. (Ames Covenant)

Joys and Concerns i.e. “*How goes it with Thy Spirit?*”

Prayers of the People

Didactic on The Parables

Parable Study

1. **Read** the Parable out loud, sharing text if it is long.
2. **Reflect in silence** on the parable
3. **Respond** to the Parable, allowing space for silences, for more deliberative thinkers, for new insights
4. **Rest** with the Parable—which may be read a 2nd or even 3rd time.

Closing Words (unison)

Love is the Spirit of this Church and service its law.
This is our great covenant:
To dwell together in peace,
to seek the truth in love
and to help one another.—James Vila Blake (Blake Covenant)

The workers in the vineyard, Matthew 20: 1-6

Parable of the Vineyard Workers

“For the Kingdom of Heaven is like the landowner who went out early one morning to hire workers for his vineyard. ² He agreed to pay the normal daily wage^[a] and sent them out to work.

³ “At nine o’clock in the morning he was passing through the marketplace and saw some people standing around doing nothing. ⁴ So he hired them, telling them he would pay them whatever was right at the end of the day. ⁵ So they went to work in the vineyard. At noon and again at three o’clock he did the same thing.

⁶ “At five o’clock that afternoon he was in town again and saw some more people standing around. He asked them, ‘Why haven’t you been working today?’

⁷ “They replied, ‘Because no one hired us.’

“The landowner told them, ‘Then go out and join the others in my vineyard.’

⁸ “That evening he told the foreman to call the workers in and pay them, beginning with the last workers first. ⁹ When those hired at five o’clock were paid, each received a full day’s wage. ¹⁰ When those hired first came to get their pay, they assumed they would receive more. But they, too, were paid a day’s wage. ¹¹ When they received their pay, they protested to the owner, ¹² ‘Those people worked only one hour, and yet you’ve paid them just as much as you paid us who worked all day in the scorching heat.’

¹³ “He answered one of them, ‘Friend, I haven’t been unfair! Didn’t you agree to work all day for the usual wage? ¹⁴ Take your money and go. I wanted to pay this last worker the same as you. ¹⁵ Is it against the law for me to do what I want with my money? Should you be jealous because I am kind to others?’

¹⁶ “So those who are last now will be first then, and those who are first will be last.”

Reflection Questions

Lesson One

Topic: Forgiveness and Grace

The unforgiving slave, Matthew 18: 23-35

From "The Message" Translation

²³⁻²⁵"The kingdom of God is like a king who decided to square accounts with his servants. As he got under way, one servant was brought before him who had run up a debt of a hundred thousand dollars. He couldn't pay up, so the king ordered the man, along with his wife, children, and goods, to be auctioned off at the slave market.

²⁶⁻²⁷"The poor wretch threw himself at the king's feet and begged, 'Give me a chance and I'll pay it all back.' Touched by his plea, the king let him off, erasing the debt.

²⁸"The servant was no sooner out of the room when he came upon one of his fellow servants who owed him ten dollars. He seized him by the throat and demanded, 'Pay up. Now!'

²⁹⁻³¹"The poor wretch threw himself down and begged, 'Give me a chance and I'll pay it all back.' But he wouldn't do it. He had him arrested and put in jail until the debt was paid. When the other servants saw this going on, they were outraged and brought a detailed report to the king.

³²⁻³⁵"The king summoned the man and said, 'You evil servant! I forgave your entire debt when you begged me for mercy. Shouldn't you be compelled to be merciful to your fellow servant who asked for mercy?' The king was furious and put the screws to the man until he paid back his entire debt. And that's exactly what my Father in heaven is going to do to each one of you who doesn't forgive unconditionally anyone who asks for mercy."

Reflection Questions

THE PARABLES OF JESUS

(TWO PARABLES PER SESSION)

	Month
Forgiveness and Grace	October
The unforgiving slave, Matthew 18: 23-35	
The workers in the vineyard, Matthew 20: 1-6	
Love for the Lost and Hope for the Found	November
Lost sheep, Matthew 18: 12-14/Luke 15: 4-7	
Thomas 107; Gospel of Truth 31-32	
The Lost Coin, Luke 15: 8-10	
The Prodigal Son, Luke 15: 11-32	
Parables of Exemplary Behavior	December
The Good Samaritan, Luke 10: 25-37	
The Rich Fool, Luke 12: 16-21 Thomas 63	
The Rich Man and Lazarus, Luke 16: 19-31	
The Pharisee and the Tax Collector, Luke 18: 10-14	
Wisdom Parables	January
The Wise and Foolish Builders Matthew 7: 24-27/Luke 6: 47-49	
Building a Tower, Luke 14: 28-30	
The King Going to War, Luke 14: 31-33	
The Unjust Manager, Luke 16: 1-8	
The Faithful and Wise Slave, Matthew 24: 45-51/Luke 12: 42-46	
The Ten Maidens, Matthew 25: 1-13	
Parables of Life before God	February
The Sower and its interpretation: Mark 4: 3-8, 13-20	
Matthew 13: 3-8, 18-23//Luke 8:5-8, 11-15, Thomas 9	
Children in the Marketplace Matthew 11: 16-19/Luke 7:31-35	
The Two Debtors, Luke 7: 41-43	
The Two Sons, Matthew 21: 28-32	
The Friend at Midnight, Luke 11:5-8	
The Father's Good Gifts, Matthew 7: 9-11/Luke 11:11-13	
The Barren Fig Tree, Luke 13: 6-9	
The Slave at Duty, Luke 17: 7-10	
The unjust Judge, Luke 18: 2-8	
The Waiting Slaves, Mark 13: 34-37/Luke 12: 35-38	
The Talents, Matthew 25: 14-30	
The Pounds, Luke 19: 12-27	

THE PARABLES OF JESUS

DIDACTIC

Parables of Final Judgment

March

The weeds in the wheat and its interpretation

Matthew 13: 24-30, 37-43, Thomas 57

The Dragnet and its interpretation, Matthew 13: 47

The Final Judgment, Matthew 25: 31-46

Allegorical Parables

The Great Banquet, Luke 14: 16-24, Thomas 64

April

The Wedding Feast, Matthew 22: 1-14

The Wicked Tenants, Mark 12: 1-12//Matthew 21: 33-46/
Luke 20: 9-19; Thomas 65-66

Parables of the Kingdom

May

The seed growing secretly, Mark 4: 26-29; Thomas 57

The Mustard Seed, Mark 4: 30-32//Matthew 13: 31-32

Luke 13: 18-19; Thomas 20

The Leaven, Matthew 13: 33//Luke 13: 20-21; Thomas 96

The Treasure in the Field, Matthew 13: 44; Thomas 109

The Pearl of Great Price, Matthew 13: 45-46; Thomas 76

WHAT IS A PARABLE?

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER READING

- David B. Gowler, *What Are They Saying About the Parables?*
- Bernard Brendan Scott, *Re-Imagine the World: An Introduction to the Parables of Jesus*
- Brad H. Young, *The Parables: Jewish Tradition and Christian Interpretation*
- John Dominic Crossan, *In Parables: The Challenge of the Historical Jesus*
- Arland J. Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus: A Commentary*
- *The New Oxford Annotated Bible, NRSV*
- **Recommended:** *Gospel Parallels*, ed. B. Throckmorton
- *The Historical Jesus in Context*, Ed. by Amy-Jill Levine, Dale Allison, John Dominic Crossan
- *Links to Numerous Web Resources* are included in the syllabus below. Among the most useful are:
- [New Testament Gateway](#), by Dr. Mark Goodacre, University of Birmingham, England
- [The Five Gospels Parallels](#) - Website at University of Toronto
- [Unbound Bible](#), Biola University