

The Grand Finale: Game Day

Let's finish off the year with some fun, showing off what we've learned! Here are some game ideas to wrap up our Journey Through the Parables!

1. I Spy

Each player is given the chance to say, "I Spy with my mind's eye...", and then give a clue about something from one of the parables. For example, a child might say, "I spy with my mind's eye a small seed that grows to be really big." Others try to guess which parable the child is referencing (in this case, a mustard seed). Play continues until everyone who wants a turn has a turn.

2. Charades

Every player who wishes to participate has a turn acting out something from one of the parables. Other players try to guess which parable it was. If the group is large enough, divide in two teams, and teams try to guess their opponents' charades within a minute. If they guess correctly, the team gets a point. Play continues until everyone has had a turn, or a predetermined number of points is accumulated.

3. So, Here's My Question

Divide the group into two teams. Each member of each team crafts one question about one of the parables. One by one, players ask their question, inviting the other team to answer. They'll begin with, "So, here's my question..." and then ask their own question. If one of the other team members gets the answer correct, that team gets a point. If no one on the other team can answer the question, the player can ask their OWN team the question. If one of their teammates answers correctly, their team gets a point. The team with the most points after everyone has asked their question wins the game.

4. Memory Card Game

Make a set of playing cards by printing questions on one set of blank cards. Make a second set with answers. Use the cards to play memory. Mix all of the playing cards well, and turn them upside down so that all that can be seen is the back of the card. Lay the cards out in even rows. Take turns turning two cards face-up. If you find a pair, you keep it and go again. If not, turn the cards back upside down again, and play moves on to the next player.

5. Parable Dash Game

If you are meeting in person and have a large play space, play an active game that matches the names of the parables to a clue about each one named. Print the name of each parable (include a sketch for young children) that you are including in your game on a sheet of paper. Write a clue for each parable on smaller cards. In a large open area (perhaps outside?), scatter the parable-name papers around the playing area. One person is the “caller.” The caller holds the smaller cards and, one by one, reads the clue. As players recognize the parable whose clue is being read by the caller, the player runs to that parable’s name. Points can be awarded in two ways (decide before beginning play): a) Every person who goes to the correct word gets a point. b) The first person who gets to the correct word gets a point. (Or, to combine the two, everyone who goes to the correct word gets one point, and the first person there gets two points!) The person with the most points at the end of the caller’s stack of clues is the winner.

6. Quiz Show

Use the following questions (or add your own!) and play a Jeopardy-like Quiz Show. The teacher or parent can be the gameshow host, or one of the kids can do the honors! You can play as teams, you can play against other classes, or you can just casually throw out questions with no structure at all!

Quiz Show Questions for Every Parable

The Sower

In the parable of the Sower, seeds fall on different kinds of ground -- sometimes hard and rocky, and sometimes soft. Where do the seeds grow the best?

- *Seeds cannot burrow down into hard soil, and they can be choked out by weeds or eaten by birds. They grow best in good, fertile soil.*

What could you do to make your heart into good soil, so that when Jesus sows seeds of faith, they can grow in your heart?

- *God gives us many ways to soften our hearts including prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and the sacraments, such as confession and communion.*

The Wheat and the Tares

The farmer only planted wheat, but there are tares growing in the field too. Who planted those?

- *The Enemy (the devil) must have planted those!*

What is the danger to you, as God's wheat, about growing up with tares all around you? When will you be separated away from the tares?

- *The weeds or tares can choke out the wheat. The wheat and the tares will be separated after the harvest.*

The Mustard Seed

What is it about the mustard seed that makes it like unto the Kingdom of heaven?

- *The mustard seed seems very, very small, but it grows into a huge tree, just like the enormous Kingdom of heaven!*

When Jesus tells us that all sorts of birds will be able to live in the tree that grows from the mustard seed, what is He telling us about the people we will meet in heaven?

- *There will be all different kinds of people in heaven. Christians will come from all different nations, and will not all be the same.*

The Leaven

A lady put a little bit of leaven (also known as yeast) in a bushel of wheat. How does yeast change wheat?

- *Regular wheat will mix with water to make a baked cracker, but if you add leaven, the wheat is transformed and when you add water, it bubbles up and blows air, making big fluffy risen bread.*

How is the Kingdom of heaven like leaven?

- *The Kingdom of heaven is like something very small that we combine with our own work and efforts, and it grows and grows! The Kingdom completely transforms your work into something different and wonderful!*

The Treasure, the Pearl and the Dragnet

How is the Kingdom of heaven like 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?

- *The Kingdom of heaven is a treasure! If you just happen to walk by and find it, you must recognize that it's more important than anything else, and trade anything you can to gain the Kingdom.*

How is the Kingdom of heaven like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it?

- *The Kingdom of heaven is a pearl of great price, a thing of enormous beauty and value! When a person has been searching for the truth for a long time, when they find the Kingdom they sell anything they have to gain the Kingdom.*

How is the Kingdom of heaven 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?

- *Many people will join the Holy Church, but in the end, only the good ones will stay. 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.*

The Unmerciful Servant

Jesus tells us that there was a servant who owed the King a lot of money, and he couldn't pay it so he was about to be thrown into jail, and have all of his family and his stuff sold! What did the King do when the servant begged for more time to pay him back?

- *The King forgave the entire debt! Just as God forgives us all of our sins, this King had mercy and allowed the man to walk away free from debt.*

Though the servant was forgiven so much, he would not forgive another servant who owed him a much smaller amount of money. What did the King do about that?

- *Because the servant was unforgiving, he lost his forgiveness! We can only be forgiven when we have forgiving hearts.*

The Laborers and the Vineyard

One day, a man hired some people to work in his vineyard for one denarii. Later, he hired more people for one denarii, and then later he hired even more, then more, and even more. At the end of the day, why were the workers so upset?

- *People who worked all day were paid the same as people who only worked part of the day. The workers thought that the more they worked, the more money they should have been paid.*

How is this vineyard owner like God? What is He going to pay His workers?

- *God creates the earth and we work on it, and He promises all of us eternal life in the Kingdom in return. Everyone receives this same abundant life in the Kingdom, no matter whether they arrive early in history or later, or younger in their lifetime or older. We are all paid the same.*

The Marriage Feast of the King's Son

The King threw a beautiful banquet, but the people he first invited did not come, because they were too busy with their new land and livestock and wives. What did the King do?

- *He sent a servant out into the streets and lanes of the city, to bring in 'the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.' When there was still room, he sent the servant 'out into the highways and hedges' to find any people out there, and bring them to the banquet.*

What larger meaning does this banquet have? Who is this King meant to be, and where is he inviting people?

- *The King is God, and the banquet is heaven! God has created a place for us where we will have everything we could want, and where we are all together with Him. He invites us, and we may or may not choose to come. He will send His servants to call all of us to join Him!*

The Ten Virgins

There are ten virgins waiting for the bridegroom, but only five of them can go with him to the wedding. What is this wedding, who is this bridegroom, and why can't those five virgins go?

- *Five of the virgins are wise and keep awake, with lamps full of oil. The other five virgins are foolish and they go to sleep, and do not keep their lamps full of oil, so when he comes, they are not ready on time and they miss it. This wedding is heaven, and when Jesus the Bridegroom comes to get us, we must be ready!*

What are the lamps full of oil meant to be? How can you and I keep our lamps full of oil?

- *Your heart is like a lamp, and it is meant to burn brightly so that people can see the Light of God inside of you! We keep that lamp full of oil by always remembering God and praying, and by serving other people and doing good works.*

The Talents

A man gives his servants each a different number of talents, and then goes away. Two servants use the money to make more money, and one buries his money in the ground. What does the man say to his servants when he comes home?

- *He says "well done, good and faithful servant" to the ones who made more talents, but is very disappointed with the servant who did not.*

God gives each of us various talents and blessings -- maybe you're a great singer, or a good listener, or you were born wealthy or with a wonderful family. Everyone has some kind of blessing from God. What do we learn from this parable? What should we do with our talents?

- *God wants us to use our blessings to create even more blessings! A singer might bless the people around them with wonderful music, and a wealthy person might bless people by giving his money to the poor. Whatever your gifts, God wants you to take the good things He gives you and to invest them into this world, creating even more good things!*

The Vineyard (Wicked Husbandmen)

An owner leaves his tenants in charge of his wonderful vineyards, but when he sends his servants to collect the rent, part of the harvest, they beat up the servants! Then he sends his son and they kill him! What does the owner do about it?

- The owner kicks them out, and brings in new tenants!

This parable reveals something about God's chosen people, Israel, and the other people, the Gentiles. What is Jesus telling us?

- *God chose His people, and created a wonderful place for them, and they were to worship Him and follow Him in return. When He sent His servants, the Prophets, they didn't listen and they beat them, and then when He sends His Son, they will crucify Him. God will no longer have them as His chosen people, but anyone who follows Jesus will be able to come and live in the Kingdom.*

The Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin

When the Pharisees wonder why Jesus is so interested in tax collectors and sinners, He talks about how if a shepherd with 100 sheep loses one sheep, he will go save it, and he'll be so happy when it's home. What does that have to do with tax collectors and sinners?

- *Tax collectors and sinners are like the lost sheep. God still loves them even though they got lost, and He goes to find them and bring them back to Him.*

When that one lost sheep is home, and also when the lady who lost her coin finds it, how does everyone react?

- *The shepherd and the woman both want everyone to rejoice with them -- they are filled with joy, and so are their friends. Jesus says also that "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."*

The Tenacious Widow

There is an old widow who goes before an unjust judge, and he doesn't want to award her a win in her case, but eventually he does it anyway. Why?

- *The widow is very persistent and keeps trying, so the judge gets annoyed and lets her win just to make her stop bothering him!*

Jesus is telling us to be like this widow, but we are not arguing cases in front of an unjust judge. Who is our judge and what does Jesus want us to do?

- *Jesus is saying that God is our judge, and we're lucky because He's not unjust. He loves every single one of us, and wants us to be well. What's more, He knows our hearts and judges fairly. Because of this, we should be persistent like the widow, always praying to God and asking for His mercy and His care!*

The Unrighteous Steward

In *The Parable of the Unjust or Unrighteous Steward*, a steward is about to get fired so he does something dishonest. What does he do?

- *The steward called every one of his master's debtors to him, and helped them change the paperwork to make it look like they owed less than they did. This would save them money, and make them grateful so that they would invite him into their houses when he was out of work.*

Does Jesus want us to be dishonest? What does He want us to do?

- *Jesus is not telling us to lie to our bosses. He wants us to "make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home." Mammon is money, and He wants us to go to needy people and give them money, helping them so that someday when we die, we can live in our eternal home, in heaven.*

The Tower Builder and the King Who Would Go to War

Jesus tells us what the tower builder and the king who wanted to go to war do before they start their projects. What is it?

- *They plan ahead. The tower builder makes sure he has enough money to build the whole tower, and the king calculates whether his soldiers can win the war.*

What is Jesus telling us to do?

- *Jesus is saying that if we are to live a Christian life, we need to plan ahead and make sure we can finish the journey. In our spiritual lives, we may have what it takes to begin, to start following Jesus around and listening to His teachings, but we must make sure to be ready to do what it takes to truly dedicate our whole hearts to God. A Christian must be ready to give up everything for Christ. If we cannot pledge all of our hearts to God, then there is no point in beginning, because we won't be able to finish.*

The Rich Man and Lazarus

The Rich man ate wonderful sumptuous feasts and dressed in fine robes, living a luxurious lifestyle. God sent someone to save him so that he could go to heaven. Who did God send and why?

- *God placed Lazarus, covered in sores and very hungry, at the rich man's gate, so that the man would see Lazarus and help him out. If this rich man showed mercy and generosity, his heart would have softened so that he could enter into the Kingdom.*

When the rich man died, he did not go to heaven. What two questions did he ask Abraham, and what did Abraham answer?

- *The rich man wanted Abraham to make Lazarus go get him some water, but Abraham answered that in their lives, the rich man received good things and Lazarus got bad things, so now they were reversed, and Lazarus could not cross the gulf to get to him. Then he asked Abraham if Lazarus could go tell his brothers about all of this, but Abraham answered that they already had Moses and the Prophets, and they wouldn't believe even if one rose from the dead to tell them.*

The Rich Fool

The rich fool has an especially wonderful harvest, yielding much more food than he will need for years. What does he do with all of that grain?

- *He tears down his barns and builds larger barns, to keep the grain for himself for many years.*

The rich fool will die that night -- why did God send him such a wonderful harvest just before his death?

- *God wanted the rich fool to come to heaven, so He gave him a final chance to be generous! He made it easy for him, by giving him so much grain that it would be easy to share with the poor - filling up their bellies like a bank account in heaven!*

The Publican and the Pharisee

Two men went up to the temple to pray: the Pharisee thanked God that he was not like other men and listed all the good things he did, and the tax collector looked down, beating his breast and prayed, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’. Which man went home justified? Why?

- *God preferred the prayer of the tax collector, because he was humble!*

This parable is part of the “Triodion” and is read in church on a Sunday just a few weeks before Great Lent. During Lent, we’ll fast and give alms and pray -- what can this parable teach us about how to do those things in a way that is pleasing to God?

- *We should be humble about our Lenten fast! We should not feel proud of ourselves for doing a great job, but instead we should be humble, and approach God with real repentance and love.*

The Prodigal Son

The Prodigal Son behaved terribly: he took his inheritance early and then wasted it on sinful living. What did his father do when he came back home? What did his brother do?

- *His father ran to him and kissed him, and then threw a party for him! His brother was resentful, and would not come to the party.*

If we are the Prodigal Son and the father is God, what is the lesson in this story? What can we say about this feast God will throw?

- *No matter how awful we are, if we come back to Him, God will always forgive us! He will give us a big banquet, which is life in the Kingdom of heaven!*

The Last Judgement (The Sheep and the Goats)

When Jesus comes in glory to judge the living and the dead, He will divide them into sheep and goats. Who are the sheep and who are the goats?

- *The sheep are the ones who served Christ by serving others: “I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.” The goats did not do any of those things.*

In his homily (Homily 79) on this parable, does St. John Chrysostom say that it's easy or hard to be a sheep? Is Jesus asking for something very big?

- *St. John says that Jesus asks for easy things. He says if someone is hungry, give him a little food -- not throw him a huge banquet, or solve hunger forever. He says we are asked to visit someone in prison, not to find a way to set him free! While Jesus does set us free from death, and while He is the Bread of Life and the Living Water, He is not asking us to do miracles like He does. He just wants us to see people's needs and try to help a little bit.*

The Servants Waiting for their Lord

In this parable, we are servants and Jesus is the Master. The servants are protecting the house -- what is the house? There is a steward who takes care of the house and the servants. Who would that be?

- *Our Lord's house is the Church. The steward that God puts in charge is a Church leader. This includes the patriarchs, the bishops and the priests and even the Sunday School teachers!*

What message is Jesus giving to the bishops, priests and other church leaders?

- *They have been entrusted with God's precious people and His Holy Church, so it is very important that they protect the people and do not harm them! God will judge them very harshly if they harm His people.*

The Good Samaritan

When a man is robbed, beaten and left for dead on the road, the Good Samaritan stops to help. What does he do?

- *He bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day, as he was leaving, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.' He did everything he could do, and even helped him find more help.*

Jesus is telling us what a neighbor is. Why is it important that these three specific people pass by: a priest, a Levite and a Samaritan. What is He teaching us about being a neighbor?

- The priest and the Levite both belong to the same group (Israel) as this man, so it would make sense for them to take care of him. The Samaritan is from a different place and a different people, and the two groups don't like each other! But because he shows love for the man, he is more of a neighbor to him than the ones who come from his own neighborhood.

The Parable of the Two Sons

Jesus says that a man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, 'Son, go, work today in my vineyard.' He answered and said, 'I will not,' but afterward he regretted it and went. Then he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, 'I go, sir,' but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?

- *The first one. It is better that we recognize a bad decision, and then change our minds and do the right thing, instead of having a good thought but then deciding not to do it.*

Would God rather you talk a lot about faith, or that you actually do the work to live out your Christian faith?

- *God wants us to really show up and work!*

The Great Supper

In this parable and many others, a man throws a wonderful banquet. If that man is supposed to be God, what is the banquet supposed to be?

- *God has created heaven for us, and it is like this banquet: it a joyful place where we all gather together, and we have everything we need (all the most wonderful food and drink and love!)*

At the banquet, one of the guests is thrown out because he doesn't have a wedding garment. What does St. Irenaeus say the wedding garment symbolizes? How do we get one?

- *The garment is our works of righteousness. By doing good works, we invite the Holy Spirit, which clothes us like a wonderful garment or robe.*

The Good Shepherd

How can you tell the difference between Jesus, the Good Shepherd, and the bad one -- a thief or a hireling, both of whom seem like shepherds but are not the true shepherd?

- *The Good Shepherd knows His sheep, and they know His voice. He comes in through the gate, because the gatekeeper recognizes Him. The thief sneaks in through the window. When the sheep are attacked by a wolf, the Good Shepherd will lay down His life to protect them, but the others will run away.*

How will Jesus lay down His life for His sheep?

- *Death is the wolf, because it holds people captive in Hades, and Jesus will save us from death by allowing Himself to be crucified, so that He can enter into Hades and burst it wide open.*

The Two Debtors

A sinful woman comes to Jesus and cleans His feet with her tears and her hair, and kisses His feet, and pours expensive oil on Him. Why does this bother his host, Simon the Pharisee?

- *Simon knows the rules that God wants us to stay away from sin, and He is thinking that if Jesus is truly a prophet of God, He would not allow this sinful woman to touch Him.*

Jesus tells Simon a creditor had two debtors. One owed a lot, and the other owed a little, and the man freely forgave them both. Which of them will love him more and why? Who are the debtors supposed to represent?

- *The one who owed a lot would be more grateful, because they would have been much more worried about that bigger debt. The sinful woman is the one who has been forgiven a lot, and because Simon the Pharisee hasn't been forgiven as many big sins as she has, he doesn't love Jesus as much as she does.*

General Questions

Does God do all the work of salvation, or does He want humans to do some work too? How do you know?

- *He wants humans to make an effort, which is why we are so often workers in the parables.*

What do you have to do to be forgiven?

- *Repent, and forgive others.*

Will only God's chosen people, Israel, be in the Kingdom of heaven?

- *No, all sorts of people from all nations will be in the Kingdom.*

God gives us many blessings -- money, talent, and life. What does He want us to do with these things?

- *He wants us to spread them around, to use our blessings to create more blessings in the world!*

Why is a parable a good way to teach?

- *Stories unfold in our imagination, so that we are learning in our hearts as well as our minds. Stories are memorable, so the lessons stick with us!*