

Jesus as story teller

Jesus used parables as a way of teaching people about God, about right and wrong, about healthy relationships and fairness or justice.

The parables are simple, memorable stories, often about very ordinary people and things but with depth of meaning that can be understood by thinking about the story and reflecting on it. Sometimes people would only get to know the story and not work out its full meaning.

Sometimes, as with the parable of the Sower, we know that Jesus spent time with his disciples explaining the parables he had told. In Matthew 13.10-17 Jesus comments on this:

The disciples came to him and asked, "Why do you speak to the people in parables?" He replied,

"The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. This is why I speak to them in parables:

Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand."

Parables in the roundels on the North side of the nave in the parish church of Frome St John the Baptist:

Starting by the tower at the East end of the Nave:

Dives and Lazarus: Luke 16 v19-31

The lost sheep: Luke 15.1-7

The wise and foolish young women: Matthew 25.1-13

The prodigal son: Luke 15.11-32

The good Samaritan: Luke 10.25-37

The Pharisee and the publican: Luke 18.9-14

The unmerciful servant: Matthew 18.23-35

The sower and the seed: Mark 4.1-20

The parable of the talents: Matthew 25.14-30

In the story of Dives and Lazarus, Jesus tells of a rich man who feasted every day, and of the poor man Lazarus who went hungry outside his gate.

The story goes on to challenge the rich man's behaviour.





In this roundel image we see a sort of split-screen contrasting the luxury within Dives' house and his being waited upon with the poor man, Lazarus, begging at his gate with dogs licking his wounds.





In this parable Jesus tells of the shepherd who leaves the 99 sheep who are safe to go and find the one who is lost.

People had been criticising Jesus because he eat and drank with people whose lives were in a mess, and he answered by telling a story that showed that he believed that they were the people in real need and with whom he needed to be to help them find their way in life.

In the story of the wise and foolish young women, or bridesmaids, Jesus tells of how some had come unprepared for the late arrival of the bridegroom and ended up with no oil for their lamps.



Tilework by the font showing the foolish young women who slept and ran out of oil for their lamps.





In the parable of the Prodigal Son, Jesus tells of a son who runs away from home, enjoys life for while but then when things go wrong finds his way home unsure about the welcome he will receive. Jesus tells of a father who rejoices at his son's return and welcomes him home to make a fresh start in life.

In the story of the Good Samaritan, Jesus tells of someone who is attacked and hurt and of people who pass by on the other side and fail to help when they were the very people that might have been expected to be kind because of what they said and the roles they had.

Instead, an outsider, the good Samaritan steps in to help and is kind and generous.

The story reminds us not to be prejudiced or judge by appearances, race, or creed.





In the parable of the Pharisee and the publican (or tax collector) Jesus tells of two people going to pray, one of whom thought he was so much better than the other.

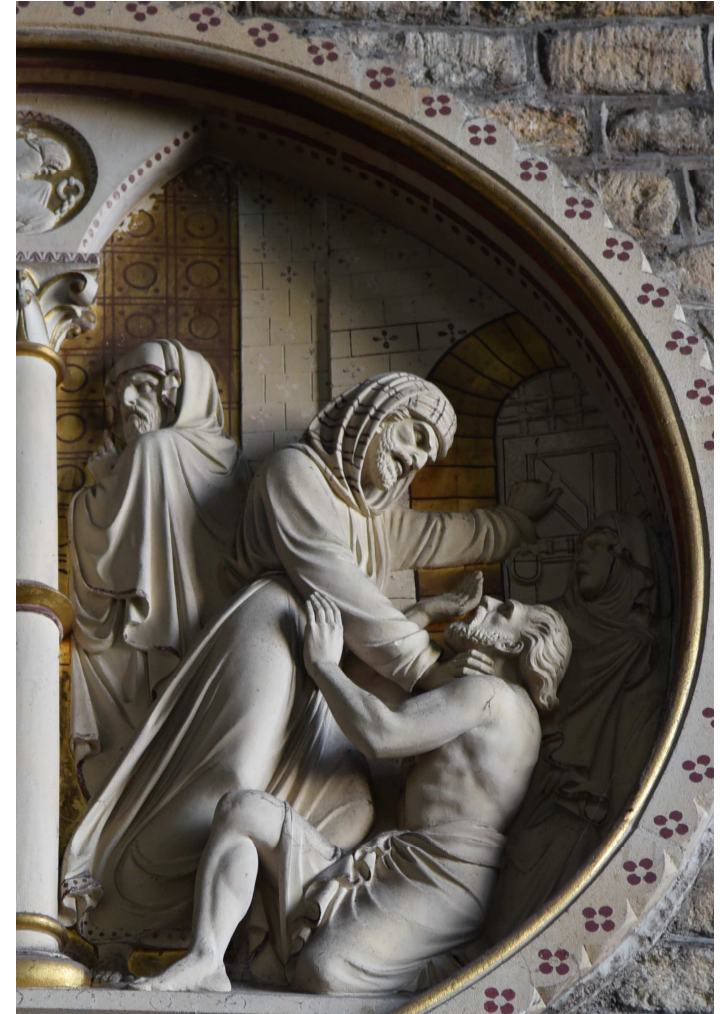
Jesus challenges this and teaches that we should not think our selves better than others.

In the parable of the unjust servant Jesus challenges hypocrisy – saying one thing and doing another, expecting things for ourselves that we deny others.





The split-screen effect in this roundel emphasises the contrast between the mercy and kindness shown to the servant who is forgiven a huge debt (on the left), and the cruelty that he then shows to another over a very small matter (on the right).





In the story of the Sower, Jesus uses an image that would have been very familiar to his hearers.

After telling the story he then takes time to explain it in detail to his disciples. It is clear that he did not expect everyone to understand the story immediately.

In the parable of the talents Jesus tells of a group of people who are given various large sums of money to look after for their master.

Most made good use of the money and were rewarded , but one of the people was so afraid that he did nothing useful with the money at all.

*A talent was a very large sum of money, not an ability in the sense that we now often use the word talent.

