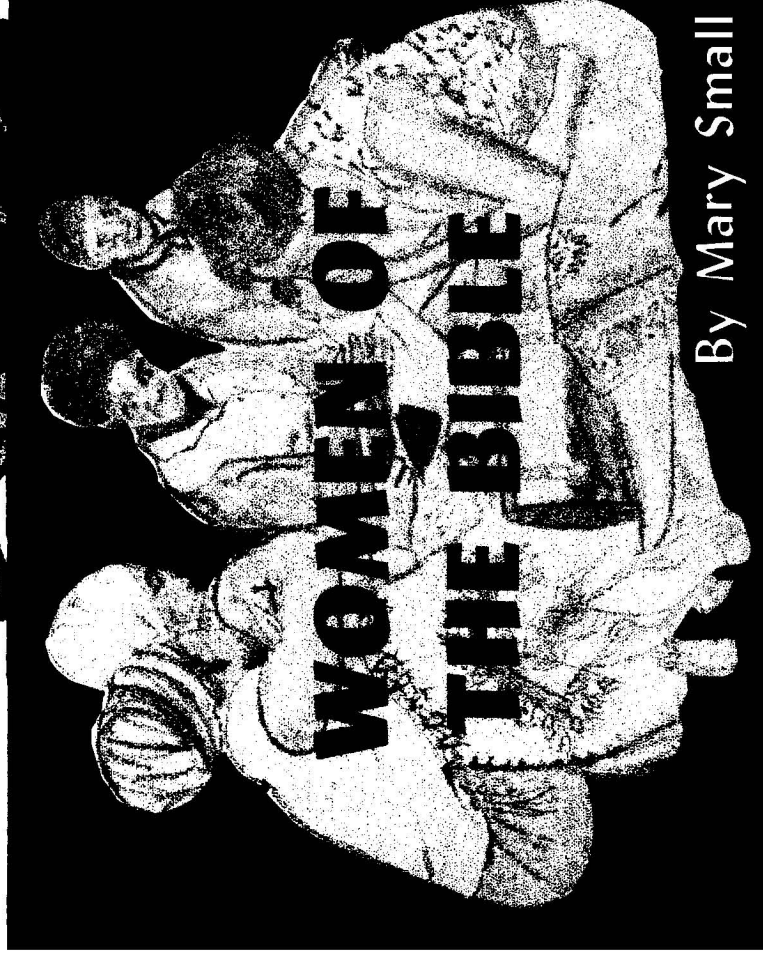


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PARABLES OF JESUS



By Mary Small

PARABLES OF JESUS/WOMEN OF THE BIBLE
PUBLISHED BY THE BAPTIST PUBLISHING HOUSE
P. O. BOX 1995, LUSAKA, ZAMBIA

PARABLES OF JESUS/WOMEN OF THE BIBLE

**FIRST PUBLISHED
1 OCT. 1979**

**BY THE
BAPTIST PUBLISHING HOUSE
P. O. BOX 1995
LUSAKA, ZAMBIA**

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PARABLES OF JESUS/WOMEN OF THE BIBLE

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PROGRAMME LEADER:

Let us pray and ask God to help us take time to be with him every day. Thank him for the lessons we have learned during these past weeks.

PRAYER

PROGRAMME 1

THEME FOR THE UNIT: THE PARABLES OF JESUS

THEME FOR TODAY: THE LOST SHEEP

SCRIPTURE FOR A DEVOTIONAL: Luke 15:1-7

or

MEMORY VERSE: *"All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned everyone to his own
way; and the Lord has laid on him
the iniquity of us all."
Isaiah 53:6*

PROGRAMME LEADER:

Today we begin a study of some of the parables of Jesus. What is a parable? A parable is a story about something on earth to teach a truth about God. It is a picture to help us understand well the truth of God. It teaches this truth in such a way that all people can understand it. Many times Jesus used parables to teach the things of God. He talked about things that the people knew very well. He talked about seeds and the one who plants the seeds. He talked about the shepherd and a lost sheep. He talked about the very rich but foolish farmer. We shall study these parables and others during the coming weeks.

PART ONE:

This lesson today is about the lost sheep. One day many people had gathered together to listen to the words of Jesus. Many of these people were tax collectors and

sinners. In the days of Jesus the tax collectors were hated by the other people. They were hated because they often cheated the people by charging more taxes than they should charge. They did this in order to make themselves rich. The Pharisees and scribes were the religious leaders. They began to complain. They said, "This man (meaning Jesus) receives sinners and eats with them" (Luke 15:2). To them, this was something Jesus should never do. But Jesus loves all people. He loved those tax collectors and sinners, too.

PART TWO:

In order to help the Pharisees and scribes understand why he was associating with sinful people, Jesus told the people a story. He began to talk about a man who had one hundred sheep. One of the sheep got lost. Jesus asked the question, "What does the person do?" Of course, he leaves all the other sheep and searches for the one that is lost. He searches and searches until he finds the lost sheep.

When he finds it, he carries it back home. He is very happy because he has found the lost sheep. When you lose something, what do you do? Are you happy when you find it?

PART THREE:

Then Jesus spoke some very wonderful words. He said, "Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner

I think Mary and Martha were surprised when they saw their brother alive again. Perhaps they did not think Jesus would raise Lazarus from the dead at that time. Then they were very happy.

PART FOUR:

Now let us think of some thing we can learn from Mary and Martha. First, think about this question: "How much time do you spend with Jesus every day?"

Perhaps you are thinking, "Well, if Jesus were in my village today as he was in Bethany long ago, I would sit at his feet and listen to his teachings." Would you be like Mary, listening to Jesus? Or would you be like Martha, always busy preparing food and serving? It is easy to answer, "I would be like Mary."

But how is it in your life now? The words of our memory verse are the words of Jesus: "You are my friends if you do what I command you" (John 15:14). We must take time each day to learn about God. When we read the Bible, God speaks to us. When we pray, we talk together with God. It is a good thing to take some minutes each day to read God's word and pray.

When we put Jesus first in our lives, like Mary, God will give us strength for our work. He will give wisdom for our problems. He will give us a peace in our hearts, even when troubles surround us.

the life of this family. Find John, chapter 11, in your Bible.

Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary, was sick. Jesus was some miles away from Bethany. However, Martha and Mary sent word to Jesus concerning Lazarus. The Bible tells us, "So when he heard that he (Lazarus) was ill, he (Jesus) stayed two days longer in the place where he was" (John 11:6). Then Jesus suggested that they go to Bethany.

At first the disciples thought Lazarus was still sick. But Jesus finally said, "Lazarus is dead, and for our sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe, But let us go to him" (John 11:14b-15).

When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him. She said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died" (John 11:21). Jesus told her that her brother would rise again. She agreed that he would rise again in the resurrection at the end of time. But this was not what Jesus was talking about.

Soon Mary came to meet Jesus. She spoke the same words Martha had spoken. Jesus saw the sadness of his friends. He was sad, too. He even wept. Then Jesus went to the grave of Lazarus. Do not forget that Lazarus had been dead four days. After telling the people there to take away the stone which closed the grave, Jesus said, "Lazarus, come out" (John 11:43b).

who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance" (Luke 15:7).

PART FOUR:

In Isaiah 53:6 we read these words: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all."

People who know about sheep and take care of them tell us that they are very helpless. The sheep depend on the shepherd to lead them to good food, water and to take care of them. If one gets lost, it cannot find its own way back to the other sheep. The shepherd must go and search for it.

The verse we have just read from Isaiah tells us that we are like sheep. We have gone astray we need the Good Shepherd to lead us. God had made a way for us to be saved. He sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to bear the punishment for our sins. He shows us the way of salvation. This is the good news that we must share with all people everywhere.

PROGRAMME LEADER:

Today we have learned about the wonderful love of God. We have also learned that all people everywhere are like the lost sheep. Romans 3:23 tells us, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Everyone needs to be saved. Jesus wants every Christian to help the lost people know about him. Let us pray and ask God to help us tell someone about him this week.

PRAYER

PROGRAMME 2

THEME FOR THE UNIT: THE PARABLES OF JESUS

THEME FOR TODAY: THE SOWER

SCRIPTURE FOR A DEVOTIONAL: Matthew 13:3-8,
18-23

or

MEMORY VERSE: *"And as for that in the good soil,
they are those who, hearing the
word, hold it fast in an honest and
good heart, and bring forth fruit
with patience."*

Luke 8:15

PROGRAMME LEADER:

We remember that Jesus used parables to teach many lessons to his followers. He talked about things that the people knew very well. Today our lesson is about the sower and the seeds. All of us know about planting seeds in our gardens. So we, too, know about these things that Jesus used in the stories he told long ago. The parable we are studying today is found in three books of the New Testament. It is found in Matthew, Chapter 13, Mark, Chapter 4; and Luke, chapter 8. We will read some of these different verses.

PART ONE:

First, let us open our Bibles to Matthew, chapter 13. Again, we see that Jesus was talking about something the people knew very well. (Read Matthew 13:3.) We can see the sower gathering the seeds and going out to sow them. As he sowed the seeds, they fell on

I think these are some of the reasons why Jesus went to the home of Martha, Mary and Lazarus.

PART TWO:

Open your Bible to Luke 10:38-41. Read these verses. As we have read these verses certain pictures come to our minds. We see Martha as she is very busy preparing food for Jesus. Mary is sitting quietly at the feet of Jesus. She is listening to his teachings.

Suddenly Martha enters the room and begins to complain to Jesus about her sisters. She says, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her to come and help me" (Luke 10:40b).

What was the answer Jesus gave? (Read Luke 10:41-42.) Martha loved Jesus. She believed in him. She wanted to prepare things for him. However, she did not take time to listen to his teachings and learn about the things of God. Jesus told her she needed something else. She, too, needed what Mary had chosen.

Jesus knew that he would not be on earth very much longer. He knew the truths that Mary and others were learning would stay with them after he had gone back to heaven.

PART THREE:

Now, let us think about another time in

believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25-26).

Just a few days before the crucifixion of Jesus, Mary anointed the feet of Jesus with a very expensive oil. Some people complained about this. But Jesus said, "Let her alone, let her keep it for the day of my burial" (John 12:7). In Matthew and Mark Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her" (Matthew 26:13 and Mark 14:9). And so it is being told in memory of Mary, even today.

But let us go back and learn more about this family and why they were good friends of Jesus. Mary, Martha and Lazarus lived in Bethany. Bethany was a little village near Jerusalem. The Bible does not tell us when or how Jesus became friends with this family. It does tell us that as Jesus and his disciples were travelling they entered the village and were received into the home of Martha and Mary.

When you are travelling and arrive in a town where a friend of yours lives, what do you do? Of course, you go to his house. Why? You go because you want to greet your friend. You go because you know you can find food there, if you are hungry. You can find friendship and love. You enjoy being with friends.

different kinds of soil. Some of the seeds fell on the path. The birds came and ate those seeds. Some of the seeds fell on the soil on top of rocks. When these seeds began to grow, they could not put their roots into the soil because it was not deep enough. Some of the seeds even fell where the thorns were growing. As the plants began to grow, the thorns choked them. And some of the seeds fell on good soil. These seeds produced a good harvest.

We know about all of these kinds of soil today. We can understand well what happens when seeds fall on these different kinds of soil. Also we know that when mealie seeds are planted in good soil, we can expect a good harvest.

After speaking this parable to his disciples, Jesus said, "He who has ears, let him hear" (Matthew 13:9).

PART TWO:

The disciples asked Jesus, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" (Matthew 13:10). Jesus gave two reasons why he spoke in parables. One reason was that these picture stories would help those who were his followers to remember more easily the things he wanted to teach them. The other reason was that those people who were his enemies would not be able to understand the meaning of his teachings.

PART THREE:

After explaining why he spoke in parables, Jesus told his disciples the meaning of this parable. He said the seed which the sower sows is the Word of God. (Read Luke 8:11.) People who hear the Word of God receive it in different ways. So the people are like the different kinds of soil. Jesus said the path is like some people who hear the Word of God. But Satan comes and takes those words from their hearts that they might not believe and be saved.

PART FOUR:

The soil on top of the stones is like those people who hear the Word of God and receive it gladly. But the Word of God does not go deep into their lives. When troubles come because of the Word of God, they turn away. The thorns is a picture of the people who hear the Word of God, but worries about this life and love of riches choke out the Word of God. It does not bear fruit in their lives. The good ground is like those people who hear the Word of God and keep it in a good and obedient heart. In this kind of life the Word of God can bear much fruit.

PROGRAMME LEADER:

This parable is a warning to all of us who hear the Word of God. We need to be careful about the way we hear the message of God. It is also an encouragement to all people who tell the Good News of Jesus Christ

PROGRAMME 11

THEME FOR THE UNIT: WOMEN OF THE BIBLE

THEME FOR TODAY: MARY AND MARTHA

SCRIPTURE FOR A DEVOTIONAL: Luke 10:38-42

or

MEMORY VERSE: *"You are my friends if you do what I command you."*

John 15:14

PROGRAMME LEADER:

Today we are studying the last lesson about women of the Bible. We are studying about two women who were sisters. Their names were Mary and Martha. Martha was always busy with work around the house. Mary was quiet and liked to listen to the teachings of Jesus when he came to visit in their home.

Martha and Mary had a brother whose name was Lazarus. Jesus enjoyed visiting in their home very much. Jesus loved this family. They loved Jesus and enjoyed doing things for him.

There are some lessons we can learn from Mary and Martha.

PART ONE:

Martha and Mary are among the famous women of the Bible.

It was to Martha that Jesus first said "I am the resurrection and the life - he who

sucked" (Luke 11:27). Jesus, answered, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it" (Luke 11:28). Those words are for us today. He was saying that if we hear his words and do them today, we are more blessed than Mary, his own mother.

Let us pray and ask God to help us understand his word. Ask him to help us do the things his word tells us to do.

PRAYER

to other people. It tells us that not every person will want to hear the message of Jesus. Not everyone who receives the Word of God will be faithful to the things of God. However, it encourages us to believe that, if we are faithful in our witnessing for Christ, the Word of God will produce fruit in the lives of many to whom we witness.

Let us pray and ask God to help us be faithful in receiving his Word and in telling others about Him.

PRAYER:

PROGRAMME 3

THEME FOR THE UNIT: THE PARABLES OF JESUS

THEME FOR TODAY: THE TALENTS

SCRIPTURE FOR A DEVOTIONAL: Matthew 25:14-30

or

MEMORY VERSE: *"His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master!'"*

Matthew 25:21

PROGRAMME LEADER:

Jesus was the greatest teacher we have ever known. He used different ways of teaching the truths of God. Teaching in parables was one way that Jesus used many times. Those who heard the parables could remember more easily the truths Jesus wanted them to learn. These days, when we hear a story that teaches a truth we are able to remember it better. The parable of the talents has some lessons for all of us now just as it had a message for the people in the days of Jesus.

PART ONE:

Open your Bibles to Matthew, chapter 25. We shall read some verses from this chapter as we study our lesson today. Verses 14 and 15 tell us that a man was going on a journey to another country. Before leaving, he called three of his servants to him and gave them

Her sorrow was changed to joy when Jesus was raised from the dead. Perhaps by this time she had begun to understand all the things that had been happening to her son. Several times, after something happened, we read "Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart" (Luke 2:19,51b). She had many things to think about.

After Jesus ascended into heaven, his followers went back to Jerusalem. "They all joined together in a group to pray frequently, together with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers" (Acts 1:14).

We are told nothing further about Mary. We do not even know when or how she died.

PROGRAMME LEADER:

We can believe that Mary was a good young girl. She was clean and pure in her early life. She believed in God. She wanted to do the will of God in all her life.

God is looking for girls and women today to do his will in their lives, to win the lost people, and to help his church grow. God needs people who are humble. He needs people who have faith in him. He needs people who want to do his will no matter what happens. We must, as Mary, give ourselves to God to do his will in all things.

One day as Jesus was teaching, a woman in the crowd spoke out and said, "Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts you

took Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem when he was twelve years old? All went well, until they began the journey home. At the end of the first day's journey Mary and Joseph could not find Jesus among the crowd of people.

Has your child ever been lost from home? A mother can think about all kinds of things that could happen to her child. They looked for Jesus for three days before finding him. He was in the Temple. When Jesus learned that they had been looking for him, he said to them, "How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (Luke 2:49). Mary and Joseph did not understand what Jesus was saying. However, Jesus returned to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. "His mother kept all these things in her heart" (Luke 2:51).

Joseph himself was a carpenter. Surely Jesus learned that work, too. The Bible tells us, "And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:52). The ways in which our children grow today are surely the ways in which Jesus grew also. I am sure Mary had much influence in the life of Jesus.

PART FOUR:

Mary was present when Jesus did his first miracle (John 2:1-11). She was there at the cross when Jesus was crucified (John 19:25-27). None of the Gospel writers tell us how Mary felt when she saw Jesus crucified.

some "talents." What is a "talent?" In the days of Jesus it was not a coin like our ngwees. It was a certain weight of money. The value or worth of the talent depended on whether it was copper, gold or silver. Very likely it was made of silver. One talent was worth about K500.00. Today we think of "talents" in many ways. Talents are the abilities which God gives to each of us. God has given each of us something that we can do well as we serve him. Some people can sing. Others can teach. Others can preach the Word of God. Some people can work with children and teach them the things of God. What "talent" has God given to you? Find that "talent" and use it for the glory of God.

PART TWO:

In our Bible lesson for today we read that the man gave some "talents" to his three servants. To one he gave five talents; to another he gave two talents; and to the third one he gave one talent. These talents were given according to the abilities of the servants. Then the man went on his journey.

Now let us see what the servants did. The one who received five talents traded with them and earned five more talents. The one who received two talents soon earned two more talents. But the one who received one talent dug a hole in the ground and hid his talent.

After a long time, the master returned and called his servants. The servants had to give a report of what they had done with the talents their master had left with them.

PART THREE:

We read about the first two servants in Matthew 25:20 and 22. The one who received five talents had earned five more talents. So he brought ten talents to his master. The one who had received two talents had earned two more. So he brought four talents to his master. To each of these men the master said, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master" (Matthew 25:21 and 23).

But the story was very different when the third servant came before his master. Before coming, he went out and found the place where he had hidden the talent in the ground. He dug it up and brought it to the master. He began to complain. He said, "I knew you to be a hard man... I was afraid... I hid your talent in the ground... Here is what is yours" (Matthew 25:24-25).

The master was very unhappy. Read his answer to this servant in Matthew 25:26-27. Then the master said, "Take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents" (Matthew 25:28).

PART FOUR:

There are many lessons we can learn from this parable. It tells us that God gives people different gifts. In this story one man received five talents, one received two talents, and one received only one talent. It did not matter about how many talents each

Can you imagine the things people must have said about Mary as the time passed? (To understand how Joseph felt about these things that were happening to Mary, read Matthew 1:18-21.)

Joseph, her husband-to-be, even thought of refusing to marry her. However, the angel assured him that "that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 1:20b). Joseph and Mary were married. They did not live together as man and wife until after Jesus was born (Matthew 1:25).

As the time for the birth of Jesus came near, it was necessary for Mary and Joseph to travel to Bethlehem. They went there in order to register. While there, Jesus was born in a stable, a place where the animals were kept. Do you think Mary was happy? I am sure Joseph and Mary were very happy. Other people were happy, too. We are told of the shepherds and the wise men who went to visit and worship Jesus soon after his birth.

PART THREE:

Mary and Joseph took good care of Jesus. Soon after the birth of Jesus, King Herod ordered that all male children under two years of age should be killed. God told Joseph in a dream to take Mary and Jesus to Egypt to live. They remained in Egypt until it was safe for the family to return to Nazareth.

Do you remember the time Mary and Joseph

Can you just imagine how Mary must have felt the day the angel Gabriel appeared to her? Listen to his first words: "Hail, O favoured one, the Lord is with you" (Luke 1:28b). She must have been afraid because the angel said, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus" (Luke 1:30-31).

Mary's reply was a question. She asked the angel, "How can this be, since I have no husband?" (Luke 1:34). The angel told her that it would be by the power of the Holy Spirit that she would become the mother of Jesus. Mary's answer showed her faith in God and her willingness to obey him. "And Mary said, 'Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord, let it be to me according to your word'" (Luke 1:38).

We find it very difficult to understand the conception and birth of Jesus, knowing that he did not have an earthly father. Luke 1:37 says, "For with God nothing is impossible." Even the miracle of Jesus' birth was possible with God.

PART TWO:

Following the visit of the angel to her, Mary went on a long journey to visit her relative, Elizabeth. God had done another miracle in the life of Elizabeth. She was an old woman who was also going to have a son. Mary remained with Elizabeth for three months.

one received. The thing that was important was that each man did with his talents. The same is true today. God gives each one of us different abilities and gifts to be used in serving him. The important thing is what we do with the abilities and gifts.

This parable also tells us that the reward for work well done is more work to do. Look at two of the servants. They had done their work well. They were faithful. Did the master say, "You have done well. Go and rest." No, he did not. He said, "You have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much" (Matthew 25:21b and 23b). In other words, the master was saying, "I will give you more work to do." The master also took the one talent from the third servant and gave it to the man who had ten talents.

Another lesson we learn is this. When a person fails to use his talents he will lose them. If a person knows how to carve wood but refuses to do it, after many years he will no longer be able to carve well. However, the more carvings he makes, the better carver he will become.

The same is true in the Christian life. The only way to keep the gifts God gives us is to use those gifts in the work of God and in service to our fellow-men.

PROGRAMME LEADER:

We have learned many wonderful things in the parable of the Talents. Let us remember that it is not important about the number

of talents which God gives to us. The important thing is the way we use those talents or gifts. Each one must be used in ways that please God. We must not dig a hole and hide our talents. We must use them if we want to keep them.

Let us pray and ask God to help us be faithful in our work for him day by day.

PRAYER

PROGRAMME 4

THEME FOR THE UNIT: THE PARABLES OF JESUS

THEME FOR TODAY: THE WIDOW AND THE JUDGE

SCRIPTURE FOR A DEVOTIONAL: Luke 18:1-8

or

MEMORY VERSE: *"If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him."*

Matthew 7:11

PROGRAMME LEADER:

Do you ever pray and then feel that God is not answering your prayers? Do you become discouraged and ask, "Why should I continue to pray if God does not give me what I want?" Perhaps our lesson for today will help you answer some questions about prayer.

PROGRAMME 10

THEME FOR THE UNIT: WOMEN OF THE BIBLE

THEME FOR TODAY: MARY, THE MOTHER OF JESUS

SCRIPTURE FOR A DEVOTIONAL: Luke 1:26-31,
34-35, 37-38

or

MEMORY VERSE: *"She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."*

Matthew 1:21

PROGRAMME LEADER:

For many years the Jewish people had been looking for the coming of the Messiah. The prophets had spoken of his coming. Isaiah even said, "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, a young woman shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14).

Today we shall study about Mary, the mother of Jesus.

PART ONE:

When God looked for a girl to be the mother of His Son, what kind of girl did he choose? We know she was a young girl, perhaps around twenty years old. She was engaged to a man named Joseph. She lived in the town of Nazareth. I believe that she worshipped God and wanted to do his will in her life.

It was a time of rejoicing for the Jewish people. Because of Esther's courage they had been saved.

PART FIVE:

What are some lessons we learn from the life of Esther? While Esther was a small child her cousin taught her to pray to God. She remembered that training in the king's house. The training our children receive in our homes is very important. We must be faithful in teaching them the things of God.

Esther was willing to risk her life in order to save her people. You and I may be asked to risk our life in order to save someone. But God does expect us to witness to lost people around us. This takes courage and faith, too. He wants us to pray daily for the lost people, for the leaders of our country, for our church and for our children. Can you do these things? Our memory verse tells us that God is with us wherever we go. He will give us strength and courage to serve him.

PROGRAMME LEADER:

Let us ask God to help us as we train our children, that we may do our very best. Ask God to give us courage to witness to others. Ask him to help us to be faithful wherever we are and whatever we do.

PRAYER

PART ONE:

The Parable of the Widow and the Judge is found only in the Gospel of Luke. Before Luke tells the story which Jesus told, he explains why Jesus spoke this parable to his disciples. Jesus always has a reason for teaching in parables. Luke said, "He told them a parable, to the effect that they ought always to pray, and not lose heart" (Luke 18:1). The purpose of this parable will help us to see that we should not become discouraged when we pray. We should continue to seek God's will and his way for our lives.

PART TWO:

Let us look at this parable in the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 18. Open your Bible and find verses 1-8. This parable tells us about a judge and a widow. Read verse 2. What does it tell us about the judge? It says "he neither feared God nor regarded man" (Luke 18:2b). This is a picture of a very unrighteous or wicked person.

Then we see the widow. She was weak and poor. She had no one to take care of her. She was having some problems with someone else. We do not know what the trouble was. However, the Bible tells us that she kept coming to the judge and asking him to help her. For a time he refused. After a while he said, "Because this widow bothers me I will vindicate her, or she will wear me out by her continued coming" (Luke 18:5). So he granted her request. Then Jesus asked a question: "Will not God vindicate his elect, who cry to

him day and night? Will he delay long over them?" (Luke 18:6).

PART THREE:

What does this parable tell us? Does it say that God is like the wicked judge? No, never. It tells us that the unrighteous judge heard the widow and granted her request because she continued to ask.

God loves his children. He wants to give good things to them. He even knows what we need before we ask him. However, he wants us to talk to him about all things in our lives. Those of us who are parents know the things our children need. We like it when they talk to us about the things they want and need. So it is with God.

This parable does not tell us that God will always give us what we want because we keep on asking. It tells us to keep asking because we know God will hear and answer our prayers according to his own love and wisdom. God always answers our prayers. But he does not always say, "Yes." Indeed, sometimes the answer is, "Yes." Sometimes it is, "No." Sometimes the answer is, "Wait awhile." Many times it is good that God does not give us what we ask for as soon as we ask. We do not always know what is good for us. But God does know.

PART FOUR:

In the last part of Luke, chapter 17, Jesus told his disciples about his coming

also learned that nothing had been done to reward Mordecai. It happened that Haman was just coming to ask the king to have Mordecai hanged.

PART FOUR:

Then the king asked Haman what should be done for someone whom the king wanted to honour. Haman thought he himself was that man! So he suggested that the man should wear the king's clothes. He should have the king's crown on his head. He should ride through the streets on the king's horse. Someone should go with him and say, "Thus it shall be done to the man whom the king delights to honour" (Esther 6:9, last part of verse).

The king commanded Haman to do all those things for Mordecai. Can you imagine how angry Haman must have been? After doing those things for Mordecai, Haman went to the dinner with the king and Esther. At the dinner, Esther told the king about the plot to kill all the Jews. The king wanted to know who had done such a thing. When she replied, "Haman," the king was very angry. He left the table and walked into the garden. When he came back, Haman had fallen on the queen's couch. Thinking that Haman was planning to harm the queen, he ordered Haman to be hanged.

Then the king told Mordecai to write another letter. The Jews were allowed to defend themselves against the people who would try to kill them on the appointed day.

was very sad when he heard the news. Esther, the new queen, was sad too. Remember that she was a Jew, but she had not told anyone about this

PART THREE:

Mordecai sent a message to Esther, asking her to go to the king and beg him to save their people. Esther reminded Mordecai that she could not go to the king unless he called her to come. The penalty for such an act was death. Mordecai warned her that, although she was the queen, she would be killed, too. (Read Esther 4:13-14.)

Esther sent word back to Mordecai that he should call together all the Jewish people who lived in the city. They should go without food and water for three days. They should pray for Esther during that time. Esther and her maids would do the same thing. Then Esther promised that she would go before the king. Listen to her words of courage, "If I perish, I perish" (Esther 4:16, last part of verse).

At the end of the third day, Esther went before the king. He allowed her to come to him. He wanted to know what her request was. She invited the king and Haman to a dinner she had prepared. They went. Then she invited them to a dinner the following day.

During the night the king could not sleep. So he sent for the book of history. He read how Mordecai had saved his life. He

death on the cross. He also talked about the sinful conditions in the world. He told them that people would be more concerned for the things of the world than for the things of God. It is during times like these that Christians can become discouraged.

Look around us today. We find many people who laugh at the things of God. We see people who are not Christians. Yet they seem to be very happy. They appear to be doing well in life. Many Christians become discouraged when they see the success of those who are not Christians. These are the times when we need to remember this parable and its teachings.

PROGRAMME LEADER:

We asked two questions at the beginning of our lesson. Let us think about those questions again. Do you ever pray and pray and then feel that God is not answering your prayers? Do you become discouraged and ask, "Why should I continue to pray if God does not give me what I want?" (Stop for just a minute and let each person think about these questions. Give them time to discuss how they feel about these questions.)

There are times in the life of every Christian when he will answer, "Yes," to both questions. This is only human. Our lesson today has told us that God always answers our prayers according to his love and wisdom. Just remember that he does not always say, "Yes." He does not always answer as soon as we pray.

Let us ask God to give us wisdom to pray
the kind of prayers that will please him.

PRAYER

PROGRAMME 5

THEME FOR THE UNIT: THE PARABLES OF JESUS

THEME FOR TODAY: THE VINEYARD AND THE WICKED
TENANTS

SCRIPTURE FOR A DEVOTIONAL: Luke 20:9-19

or

MEMORY VERSE: *"For we must all appear before the
judgment seat of Christ, so that
each one may receive good or evil,
according to what he has done in the
body."*

2 Corinthians 5:10

PROGRAMME LEADER:

Jesus spoke many parables while he was
living on earth. The parables helped his
disciples remember better the truths about
God. We have already studied four parables
and learned many wonderful things about God
and his love for all people. Today we want to
think about our response to God's love and
blessings.

PART ONE:

When Jesus was on earth, the land in
which he lived sometimes had absentee landlords.

the cousin of Esther, encouraged Esther to go
to the palace. Esther was told that she
must not tell anyone she was a Jew.

We are told that Esther "found favour in
the eyes of all who saw her" (Esther 2:15b).
When her time came to go before King
Ahasuerus, we read that "The king loved
Esther more than all the women, and she found
grace and favour in his sight more than all
the virgins, so that he set the royal crown
on her head and made her queen instead of
Vashti" (Esther 2:17).

PART TWO:

One day as Mordecai was sitting at the
gate of the king's house, he learned of a
plan to overthrow the king. He told this to
Esther, who warned the king. After an
investigation, the men were punished for their
evil plan. All of this was written in a book,
including the name of Mordecai. Haman was
a man who worked in the king's court. One
day the king gave Haman a promotion. His
promotion made him very proud. He demanded
that everyone should bow down to him.
Mordecai refused to bow down to Haman because
the Jews bowed down to God only. This made
Haman very angry. He determined in his heart
to kill Mordecai and all the Jewish people.
So he persuaded the king to agree to his
plan.

Haman wrote a letter and signed it with
the king's seal. It said that on a certain
day all the Jews were to be killed. Mordecai

When sin entered the world through Eve's disobedience to God, God promised that he would send the Saviour. After a long time had passed, God chose Abraham to be the father of his people. He promised that all the nations of the earth would be blessed through Abraham. Jesus was to be born from descendants of Abraham.

As time passed, the descendants of Abraham became a very big nation. They were called the children of Israel or the Jewish people. After many troubles and trials, God led them to a land he had promised them. As the years passed, the Jewish people sinned against God more and more. Finally God allowed enemy nations to conquer them. They were scattered over many parts of the world. It was during this time that the story of Esther took place.

PART ONE:

Esther and many other Jewish people were living in the land of Persia. Ahasuerus was the king of this big land.

It happened that the King was giving a big feast for many people. He sent for his wife, Queen Vashti. The queen refused to go before the king. This made him very angry. The king declared that Vashti was no longer the queen. He decided to choose another queen.

All of the beautiful girls were called to come to the palace of the king. In time, one would be chosen to be the new queen. Mordecai,

These people left their farms for other people to take care of. Often the rent was paid with a certain amount of the farm's produce, no matter whether there was a good crop or not. Sometimes a certain portion of the crop was paid, such as a third or half of whatever was harvested.

Those who heard this parable understood very well the things Jesus said when he spoke about the vineyard and the wicked tenants. Do you remember, in the second lesson, we learned one reason why Jesus spoke in parables? The reason was that those people who were his enemies would not be able to understand the meaning of his teachings. Even the enemies of Jesus understood this parable. (Read Luke 20:19.)

PART TWO:

Open your Bible to Luke 20:9-19. (It would be a good thing to read these verses now.)

The story that Jesus told was this. A man planted a vineyard. He agreed with some people to take care of it for him. Then he went to another country and stayed a long time. He knew when the harvest would come. At that time he sent servants to collect his part of the harvest. The tenants did not give the servant anything. In fact, the tenants treated the servants badly. This happened many times.

Finally the owner decided to send his own son to the tenants, thinking they would treat him differently. They killed the son

of the owner. Then Jesus asked, "What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and destroy those tenants, and give the vineyard to others" (Luke 20:15b-16).

PART THREE;

The meaning of this parable is very clear. The owner of the vineyard represents God himself. The vineyard was the nation of Israel. The tenants were the rulers of Israel to whom that nation had been entrusted. The servants who were sent to the tenants were the prophets who were persecuted and killed. The son of the owner was Jesus himself. The death of the heir was Jesus' death on the cross, which was very near. The punishment of the wicked tenants was the fact that the Jewish people would lose their place as God's chosen people. That place would be given to others.

Now look at verse 19. It tells us that the chief priests and scribes knew that Jesus was talking about them.

PART FOUR:

This parable had a definite message for the people of Jesus' day. What does it say to us today? In this story we learned that the vineyard was prepared by the owner and left for the tenants to take care of. God has prepared this world in which we live. He has given us life, health, strength and many wonderful blessings. He has given us his Son, Jesus Christ. We know the message of salvation in Jesus Christ. What are we doing

us to be a blessing in the lives of other people. Remember the words of our memory verse: "I can do all things in him who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).

Let us thank God for the story of Ruth. Let us pray and ask God to give us strength to be faithful in all things.

PRAYER

PROGRAMME 9

THEME FOR THE UNIT: WOMEN OF THE BIBLE

THEME FOR TODAY: ESTHER

SCRIPTURE FOR A DEVOTIONAL: Esther 4:14

or

MEMORY VERSE: "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; be not frightened, neither be dismayed; for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."
Joshua 1:9

PROGRAMME LEADER:

We have the beautiful story of Esther for our lesson today. You can read the book of Esther at home. Remember that there are are two books in our Bible which have the names of women. They are Ruth and Esther. Both of these books are in the Old Testament.

worshipped the true and living God. They went to live among the Moabite people. Those people worshipped idols. Naomi's sons married Moabite women. We can believe that it was through the influence of Naomi and her family that Ruth became a follower of the true and living God.

When Naomi returned to her homeland, Ruth chose to leave her home and go with her mother-in-law. Listen to the words of love which were spoken by Ruth. (Read Ruth 1:16-17.) She chose to be faithful to God. God expects each Christian to be faithful to him in these days, too. It may seem like a hard decision. But God will give the strength if we really want to be faithful.

Ruth's life and faithfulness to God were a good witness to Boaz. He heard about Ruth and her kindnesses to Naomi. So he was kind to Ruth. God blessed Ruth in so many wonderful ways. Today when we are faithful to God and seek to do his will, God gives us many blessings.

PROGRAMME LEADER:

God may not call you to leave your family and your homeland in order to follow him. But he expects each Christian to be faithful. We can be faithful to God in our homes. We can be faithful in teaching our children the things of God. We can be faithful in our relationship with our husband. We can do well all the work God gives us to do. When we do these things, God will bless us and help

with all these blessings? What are we doing with Jesus?

The tenants sinned against the owner of the vineyard. They refused to give the owner that which belonged to him. They refused the messengers of the owner. They even killed his son.

A person can sin against God in these ways today. He can refuse to give God first place in his heart and life. He can say, "No," to Jesus as Saviour and Lord. When a person says, "No," to God in order to do his own will, that is sin.

In this parable, the time came when the tenants had to give account of what they had done. So it is with us today. We shall be called to give an account before God and what we have done with the blessings he has given us.

PROGRAMME LEADER:

It is our responsibility as Christians to be faithful to God in all things. We must give God first place in our hearts and lives. We must recognize that God is the owner of all things. He has given us many blessings: the blessings of life, health, strength, wisdom, and many more. In everything we do we should try to please God. In this way we will be good tenants of the things God has entrusted to us.

Let us ask God to give us wisdom that we might be good stewards of all he has given to us.
PRAYER

PROGRAMME 6

THEME FOR THE UNIT: THE PARABLES OF JESUS

THEME FOR TODAY: THE RICH FOOL

SCRIPTURE FOR A DEVOTIONAL: Matthew 6:19-21

or

MEMORY VERSE: *"For where your treasure is, there
will your heart be also."*

Matthew 6:21

PROGRAMME LEADER:

What is it that makes a person successful? Is it much land, good crops, a big house, a good education, much food, or much wealth? Some people think that when a person has these things he is very lucky. They think the owner of these things has a good life. Our lesson today will tell us what Jesus said makes a good life.

PART ONE:

Open your Bible to Luke 12:13-21. At the beginning of chapter 12 we learn that many people had gathered to hear the teachings of Jesus. Jesus had warned the disciples of troubles which would come to them because of their faith in Jesus.

Suddenly a man in the crowd spoke out. He was worrying about possessions. He said, "Teacher, bid my brother divide the inheritance with me" (Luke 12:13b). Jesus refused to be the judge between this man and his brother. Then Jesus said something very interesting. He said, "A man's life does not consist in

(Ruth 2:11-12).

When she returned home that evening, Ruth had much grain. Naomi was very happy that Ruth had worked in the field of Boaz. Then Naomi told Ruth that Boaz was a relative of theirs. After some time had passed, Naomi felt Ruth should have a home of her own. Following the custom of that day, Naomi advised Ruth to go to Boaz and ask him to perform the duty of the relative.

Ruth did as Naomi suggested. Boaz told her he would be very happy to do this thing, but there was someone who was a nearer relative than himself. He promised he would contact that man and ask if he wanted to marry Ruth.

PART FOUR:

The next day Boaz found the kinsman and told him about Ruth. The man replied that he was not able to perform the duty of the nearest relative to Ruth. This left Boaz free to marry Ruth. (Read Ruth 4:9-10.)

So Ruth and Boaz were married. In time, God gave them a son. They named him Obed. Once again Naomi was very happy. Obed became the grandfather of King David. The ancestors of our Lord Jesus are listed in Matthew, chapter 1. We find the names of Ruth and Boaz in this chapter. (Read Matthew 1:5.)

What are some lessons we can learn from the life of Ruth? Naomi and her family

Have you ever been far away from your home and family? How did you feel? Ruth loved her mother-in-law very much. Ruth wanted to take care of her. Ruth asked Naomi if she could go into the fields and gather some grain for them to eat. Naomi gave her permission to go.

It was the custom in those days that the workers would leave a bit of grain in the corners of the fields and at the end of rows. The poor people would come and gather the grain that had fallen and been left. This was the way many of them got food to eat.

PART THREE:

As Ruth went to gather the grain in the fields, it happened that she went to the field which belonged to Boaz. Boaz saw her. He asked who the stranger was. He was informed that she was the Moabite who came home with Naomi.

Boaz was very kind to Ruth that day. He invited her to stay and glean in his fields. He also gave her permission to drink water from the water jars belonging to his workers. When Ruth asked why he was being so kind to her he replied, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of her husband has been fully told me, and how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before. The Lord recompense you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge"

the abundance of his possessions" (Luke 12:15b).

Jesus used a parable to show the people the meaning of these words. There was a certain rich man whose fields produced a very big harvest. He began to think about what he should do. His barns were already full. They were not big enough to store the fruits of the harvest. Finally, he decided he would tear down his old barns and build bigger ones. He said, "I will say to my soul, soul, you have ample goods laid up for for many years; take your ease, eat drink, be merry" (Luke 12:19). He felt that it would not be necessary to work again for a long time. So he would rest and enjoy life.

He was thinking only of himself. He forgot to give God the praise for all the good things he had. He also forgot the needy people around him. He could have given some of his possessions to help them. God said to him, "Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?" (Luke 12:20).

The obvious answer to that question was the fact that the man could not take his wealth with him when he died. Someone else would inherit it. The things he had prepared for himself would be enjoyed by someone else

PART TWO:

We would think, "That rich man had so much wealth he did not have to worry about a

thing." God did not think this man was wealthy. In fact, God said he was very foolish.

Was his sin that of having too much wealth? No. His sin was what he failed to do with his wealth. He thought of himself only. He did not think of God or other people. He never thought of sharing his wealth with those who were in need.

Today, this is a big temptation for all people. We think if a person has many things, he is wealthy. Many Christians are thinking of earning more money or getting more possessions. Very few are thinking of giving a part of their money to the work of God. If every Christian took seriously the teachings of Jesus concerning their possessions, this would be a different place in which to live.

PART THREE:

What does Jesus teach about true wealth? Turn in your Bible to Matthew 6:19-21. Jesus told his disciples that it was foolish to gather treasures or wealth here on earth. This kind of treasure will pass away quickly. Also it can take a person's thoughts and heart away from God.

I know some people who did not have very much. They came to church and seemed to be faithful Christians. Then they began to earn much money. Before long they stopped coming to church. More and more of their time was given to earning more money. Do you know anyone like this? The desire to earn

read it at home sometime this week. By reading the book of Ruth you can understand better the things we will learn today.

Ruth was not an Israelite. She lived in the land of Moab.

There was a great famine in the land of Israel. A certain man whose name was Elimelech was living in Bethlehem. There was food in the land of Moab. So Elimelech, his wife Naomi, and their two sons went to live in the land of Moab. Soon after arriving, Elimelech died. The sons married girls from the land of Moab. Their names were Ruth and Orpah. About ten years passed and Naomi's sons died. Neither Orpah nor Ruth had any children.

Naomi began to want to return to her home. When she decided to go, Ruth and Orpah accompanied her part of the way. Then Naomi begged her two daughters-in-law to return to their mothers' homes. At first both refused. She continued pleading. Finally Orpah returned to her mother. Still Ruth refused. (Read what Ruth said to her mother-in-law in Ruth 1:16-17.) So they continued the long journey together, until they reached Bethlehem.

PART TWO:

Naomi had gone to Moab with a husband and two sons. Now she was returning with a daughter-in-law only. She was very sad and lonely.

Ruth was a stranger in another land.

PROGRAMME EIGHT

THEME FOR THE UNIT: WOMEN OF THE BIBLE

THEME FOR TODAY: RUTH

SCRIPTURE FOR A DEVOTIONAL: Ruth 1:16-18

or

MEMORY VERSE: *"I can do all things in him who strengthens me."*

Philippians 4:13

PROGRAMME LEADER:

Today we begin a study of four women of the Bible. Two women lived during the time of the Old Testament. The other two women lived during the days of Jesus.

During Bible times women had a very low position in life. The wife was thought of as the possession of her husband. The widow could not claim any of the inheritance. This was the privilege of the sons. Long long ago in Israel, if a man died without having children, it was the duty of his nearest of kin to marry the widow.

It was during the time when these things were the custom in Israel that the story of Ruth happened. We can learn some lessons from the life of Ruth.

PART ONE:

The book of Ruth is found in the Old Testament. It is a little book, with only four chapters. It would be a good thing to

more wealth had come between those people and God.

Jesus warns us against laying up treasures here on earth. But when our treasures are stored in heaven, they are safe. Does this mean we are not to work and try to have food, clothes, a good education, and such things? No, this is not what Jesus is teaching.

He does say, "Do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?" (Matthew 6:25). God knows that we need all of these things. Jesus promised that when we put God and his will first in our lives, God will supply the things we need. (Read Matthew 6:33.)

PART FOUR:

Then what makes a person successful in the eyes of God? God says, "Man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Luke 12:15b). A man can have many things and be very poor in the eyes of God. A person who puts God and the things of God above all other things in his life is the one who is successful in the sight of God.

There are many people in our world today who are very wealthy. They use their money for the glory of God. They give much money to help the work of God all over the world. They help many people with the things God had

given them. There are also many people who have very little wealth. Yet they do many things to help the work of God all over the world, too. So a person's success is not determined by how much he has. It is shown by the place God has in his life. It is also shown by what he does with his possessions.

We must use our possessions in ways which will please God. In this way we will lay up treasures in heaven. We will be rich in the things of God.

PROGRAMME LEADER:

Our memory verse for today says, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:21). Where is your heart today? Is it on the things of God? Or is it on the things of the earth? Let us pray that God will give us wisdom to seek the things of God above all other things. Also pray that God will show us how we can use our possessions for him.

PRAYER

God. God does answer our prayers according to his love and wisdom. Next, we learned that God gives us many blessings. He expects us to be good tenants of these blessings.

In our lessons last week we learned that a Christian must put God first in his life. This is the way to be successful in the eyes of God.

Today we have learned that Jesus is coming again. We must prepare now for that second coming. When we come to time of death, it will be too late to prepare.

Let us pray and thank God for all these lessons we have learned. Let us ask him to help us live according to his will. Ask God to give us courage and strength to share this message with lost people.

PRAYER

PART FOUR:

There is another lesson that this parable teaches us. The foolish maidens could not borrow oil from the wise maidens. A person cannot borrow a right relationship with the Lord from someone else. Sometimes when we ask a person, "Are you a Christian?" He will answer, "Oh, yes. My parents are Christians. Therefore I am a Christian." This parable teaches us that each person must prepare himself to meet the Lord Jesus. No one else can prepare for us. We cannot borrow this preparation from someone else.

PROGRAMME LEADER:

Today we have finished our study of the parables of Jesus. Jesus spoke many parables. We have studied only seven of them.

We have learned many things that will help us in our Christian life. First of all, we learned that every person is lost without Jesus Christ. Then we learned that we need to be careful about the way we hear the message of God. It needs to be received in our hearts like the seed that fell on good ground.

Next we learned that God has given each of us certain talents. The way in which we use these talents is very important. God expects us to use them in our work for him.

The parable of the widow and the judge encourages us to be faithful in praying to

PROGRAMME 7

THEME FOR THE UNIT: THE PARABLES OF JESUS

THEME FOR TODAY: THE TEN VIRGINS

SCRIPTURE FOR A DEVOTIONAL: Matthew 25:1-11

or

MEMORY VERSE: *"For this reason, then, you also must be always ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you are not expecting him."*
Matthew 24:44

PROGRAMME LEADER:

We are reminded again that Jesus taught many things in parables. These parables helped the people to remember the truths about God. Jesus was coming near to the time of his death and resurrection. In chapters 24 of Matthew, Jesus taught many things about his second coming. The disciples wanted to know when this time would be. Jesus taught that it is not so important that we know the time of his return. It will be sudden and no one except God himself knows when it will be. (Read Matthew 24:36.) The important thing is that each person should be ready for the return of the Lord. (Read Matthew 24:44.)

PART ONE:

To help the people understand the importance of being ready for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, Jesus told them a parable. Open your Bible to Matthew 25:1-13.

In these verses Jesus was talking about something that happened quite often in village life during his time. We are told that it still happens today in the land of Palestine. There were young maidens who took their lamps and went out to wait for the arrival of the bridegroom. Five of the maidens were foolish because they failed to take oil for the lamps with them.

They waited and waited for the bridegroom. He delayed in coming. After awhile the maidens went to sleep. In the middle of the night the cry was heard, "Behold the bridegroom! Come and meet him" (Matthew 26:6b).

All the maidens woke up and began to prepare their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise ones, "Give us some of your oil for our lamps are going out" (Matthew 25:8). The wise maidens refused because they had enough oil for their lamps only. The foolish maidens tried to find oil for their lamps. While they were looking for oil, the bridegroom came. All those who were ready for his coming went in to the celebrations with him. Then the door was shut. No one else was allowed to enter the house. When the five foolish maidens returned, they were not able to enter. The door was shut. They missed the wedding.

PART TWO:

God's Word teaches us that Jesus Christ is coming again. It also teaches us that no man knows the day or the time when he will come again. "For you yourselves know well that the day of the Lord will come like a

thief in the night" (1 Thessalonians 5:2). It is important that each person be ready to meet the Lord when he returns.

How does a person prepare for the return of Jesus Christ? First, a person must repent of his sins and receive Jesus as his saviour. Jesus died so that men's sins could be forgiven through their faith in him. (Read Romans 3:25a.)

After becoming a Christian, a person must live in a way that is pleasing to God. He must seek God's will for his life. He must live for Jesus. God's Word tells us how to live the Christian life. So, by reading the Bible and praying we can know how to live for Jesus. These are ways we prepare for the return of Jesus Christ.

PART THREE:

What are some lessons we learn from this parable? When the bridegroom came was there time for the foolish maidens to prepare their lamps? No, there was no time. They had plenty of time before he came. This parable teaches us that upon the Lord's return there will be no opportunity for preparation.

When should we prepare? The Bible says, "Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation," (2 Corinthians 6:2b). We never know when death will come. But when it does come, it will be too late to prepare to meet God. So each one of us should be sure about our salvation NOW.