



A MINISTRY OF LOUISA CHRISTIAN CHURCH  
A VIRGINIA CHRISTIAN CHURCH DISCIPLES OF CHRIST CONGREGATION

# The Disciple

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## Parabolic Living

By Tim Nichols

Parables are weird. I'm not talking about the specifics of particular parables — although those are often weird too. I'm talking about the entire genre. The very existence of parables is a really odd phenomenon. The premise of the parable is that small stories of mundane events, sometimes just a few sentences long, can somehow contain



View of the Sea of Galilee, Tiberias, Israel

life-altering challenges.

Have you ever thought about how odd that is? It's one thing to see big ideas at work in major world events, say, the fall of Rome, the world at war, countless changes of power and redrawing of borders. It's quite another to see big ideas at work in the tale of a nameless sower at work in a generic field. Why does it work? What sort of world do we live in, that such a thing is possible?

In the beginning was the Triune God, and the Word spoke all things into existence. The world we live in is the ultimate spoken-word performance piece, and like all works of art, it reflects the nature of the Artist. Within that overall spoken mixed-media portrait, we as human beings are meant to reflect the likeness of God in a special way. "Let us make man in Our image, after Our likeness," God said, and "in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." This is reflected to some extent in the parables. Have you ever noticed how virtually all the parables center around *human* activity — sowing and reaping, buying and selling, making bread, fishing, investing?

Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable. So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet:

"I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world."

Matthew 13: 34 - 35



Within these simple stories, each parable presents its own challenges to us. The Good Samaritan: will I be a neighbor to *anyone* I meet? The Wheat and Tares: am I willing to leave final judgment to God for the sake of protecting vulnerable saints? The Leaven: will I be patient with the slow and hidden coming of the Kingdom, or will I try to gin up something flashy and quick, something I can take credit for?

If simple fictional tales set in mundane circumstances can contain such life-altering challenges, might the mundane moments of our own lives not contain those same challenges? Might it be possible to see those challenges, and live in such a way that our choices make parabolic lives?

Of course it is. There are famous examples, like when the Pope forgave his would-be assassin. But that's pushing it up onto the grand scale again, and that's not where parables happen. When a mother loves her teenage daughter, even though the girl has just screamed "I hate you!" and slammed her bedroom door — a parable is taking place. When a husband and wife stop in the middle of a stupid fight, forgive each other, and try to make date night work after all — a parable is happening. When an infertile couple conceives, then goes ahead with the planned adoption anyway, because that child needs a home — a parable appears before our eyes.

So, what will it be in your life? The Kingdom of Heaven is like a person who...[your life here.]

This is the promise of the parables: that your life, rightly ordered by God and lived in the power of His Spirit for the glory of Messiah's Kingdom, *your life*, can be a succession of parables for the world to read.

Of course, as Jesus once explained to the disciples, parables have a dual purpose: to conceal from some, and reveal to others. Some people will look right at your God-glorifying, poetically lived, parabolic life and see nothing of consequence...or worse still, entirely misunderstand. Some people won't have eyes to see. They just won't get it. But some will — and for those that do, you can be a lamp set up on a lampstand, that gives light to the whole house. What will they see in your light?

Originally published in August 2013 for the blog, [fullcontactchristianity.com](http://fullcontactchristianity.com). Tim Nichols is a minister, martial arts instructor, massage therapist, and Trauma Touch therapist. He leads a small congregation in Englewood, California.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Bible Studies

All Bible studies are held in person as well as continuing on the Zoom platform.

Wednesday  
10:30am

Thursday  
7:00pm

Contact Pastor Vincent to get the Zoom information.

### Men's Fellowship Group

Men of the community are invited to join this group for outings, work days, and fellowship. This group meets occasionally and on no specific schedule. Please contact Pastor Vincent to get added to the list for notification of activities and events.

In addition, this group is not exclusively men. Anyone with interest in the activity planned may join the group for the activity, but it is planned by men with the hope of having a time of fellowship.

# THE PARABLES OF JESUS

## (AND WHERE TO FIND THEM)

1. New cloth on an old coat (Matthew 9:16; Mark 2:21; Luke 5:36)
2. New wine in old wineskins (Matthew 9:17; Mark 2:22; Luke 5:37-38)
3. Lamp on a stand (also see #6) (Matthew 5:14-15)
4. Wise and foolish builders (Matthew 7:24-27; Luke 6:47-49)
5. Moneylender forgives unequal debts (Luke 7:41-43)
6. Lamp on a stand (2nd time, see #3) (Mark 4:21-22; Luke 8:16, 11:33)
7. Rich man foolishly builds bigger barns (Luke 12:16-21)
8. Servants must remain watchful (also see #44) (Luke 12:35-40)
9. Wise and foolish servants (also see #42) (Luke 12:42-48)
10. Unfruitful fig tree (Luke 13:6-9)
11. Sower and four types of soil (Matthew 13:3-8, 18-23; Mark 4:3-8, 14-20; Luke 8:5-8, 11-15)
12. Weeds among good plants (Kingdom of Heaven) (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43)
13. Growing seed (Kingdom of Heaven) (Mark 4:26-29)
14. Mustard seed (Kingdom of Heaven) (Matthew 13:31-32; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18-19)
15. Yeast (Kingdom of Heaven) (Matt 13:33; Luke 13:20-21)
16. Hidden treasure (Kingdom of Heaven) (Matthew 13:44)
17. Valuable pearl (Kingdom of Heaven) (Matthew 13:45-46)
18. Fishing net (Kingdom of Heaven) (Matthew 13:47-50)
19. Owner of a house (Kingdom of Heaven) (Matthew 13:52)
20. Lost sheep (sheep as children, also see #29) (Matthew 18:12-14)
21. The sheep, gate, and shepherd (John 10:1-5, 7-18)
22. Master and his servant (Luke 17:7-10)
23. Unmerciful servant (Kingdom of Heaven) (Matthew 18:23-34)
24. Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37)
25. Friend in need (Luke 11:5-8)
26. Lowest seat at the feast (Luke 14:7-14)
27. Invitation to a great banquet (Luke 14:16-24)
28. Cost of discipleship (Luke 14:28-33)
29. Lost sheep (sheep as sinners, also see #20) (Luke 15:4-7)
30. Lost coin (Luke 15:8-10)
31. Lost (prodigal) son (Luke 15:11-32)
32. Shrewd manager (Luke 16:1-8)
33. Rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31)
34. Workers in the vineyard, early and late (Matthew 20:1-16)
35. Persistent widow and crooked judge (Luke 18:2-8)
36. Pharisee and tax collector (Luke 18:10-14)
37. King's ten servants given minas (also see #45) (Luke 19:12-27)
38. Two sons, one obeys one does not (Matthew 21:28-32)
39. Wicked tenants (Matt 21:33-44; Mark 12:1-11; Luke 20:9-18)
40. Invitation to a wedding banquet (Matthew 22:2-14)
41. Signs of the future from a fig tree (Matthew 24:32-35; Mark 13:28-29; Luke 21:29-31)
42. Wise and foolish servants (2nd time, see #9) (Matthew 24:45-51)
43. Wise and foolish virgins (Matthew 25:1-13)
44. Servants must remain watchful (2nd time, see #8) (Mark 13:35-37)
45. Three servants given talents (also see #37) (Matthew 25:14-30)
46. Sheep and goats will be separated (Matthew 25:31-46)



*HAPPY*  
*BIRTHDAY!*

Meagan R	July 4
Rachel S	July 7
Aleta S	July 11
Becky D	July 13
Abby S	July 15
Greg M	July 17
Sharon D	July 21
Ava P	July 23
Lisa P	July 26
David C	July 28
Mary M	July 28
Dorothy S	July 30



Apprehend God in all things,  
for God is in all things.

Every single creature is full of God,  
and is a book about God.

Every creature is a word of God.

If I spent enough time with the tiniest creature,  
even a caterpillar, I would never have to prepare a sermon.

So full of God is every creature.



Meister Eckhart

## God is on the Bathroom Floor

Excerpts from a blog by Nightbirde (Jane Marczewski)\*

*\*Editor's Note: This was just too beautiful and meaningful to pass up this month. If you watch America's Got Talent you may already be familiar with the singer, Nightbirde, and her story. It is heartbreaking and soul-lifting at the same time (you can find it on YouTube and you absolutely should). In March, she wrote a blogpost titled as above. I've given parts of it here. Is this a modern-day parable ~ an ordinary story that God uses to show us a living truth?*

"I have had cancer three times now, and I have barely passed thirty. There are times when I wonder what I must have done to deserve such a story. I fear sometimes that when I die and meet with God, that He will say I disappointed Him, or offended Him, or failed Him. Maybe He'll say I just never learned the lesson, or that I wasn't grateful enough. But one thing I know for sure is this: *He can never say that He did not know me.*

I am God's downstairs neighbor, banging on the ceiling with a broomstick. I show up at His door every day. Sometimes with songs, sometimes with curses. Sometimes apologies, gifts, questions, demands. Sometimes I use my key under the mat to let myself in. Other times, I sulk outside until He opens the door to me Himself.

If an explanation would help, He would write me one—I know it. But maybe an explanation would only start an argument between us—and I don't want to argue with God.

I remind myself that I'm praying to the God who let the Israelites stay lost for decades. They begged to arrive in the Promised Land, but instead He let them wander, answering prayers they didn't pray. For forty years, their shoes didn't wear out. Fire lit their path each night. Every morning, He sent them mercy-bread from heaven.

I look hard for the answers to the prayers that I didn't pray. I look for the mercy-bread that He promised to bake fresh for me each morning. The Israelites called it *manna*, which means "what is it?"

**That's the same question I'm asking—again, and again. There's mercy here somewhere—but what is it? What is it? What is it?**

I see mercy in the dusty sunlight that outlines the trees, in my mother's crooked hands, in the blanket my friend left for me, in the harmony of the wind chimes. It's not the mercy that I asked for, but it *is* mercy nonetheless. And I learn a new prayer: *thank you*. It's a prayer I don't mean yet, but will repeat until I do.

Call me cursed, call me lost, call me scorned. But that's not all. Call me chosen, blessed, sought-after. Call me the one who God whispers his secrets to. I am the one whose belly is filled with loaves of mercy that were hidden for me.

I know it sounds crazy, and I can't really explain it, but God is in there—even now. I have heard it said that some people can't see God because they won't look low enough, and it's true.

If you can't see him, look lower. God is on the bathroom floor."



# ON THE PARABLES OF THE MUSTARD SEED

Denise Levertov

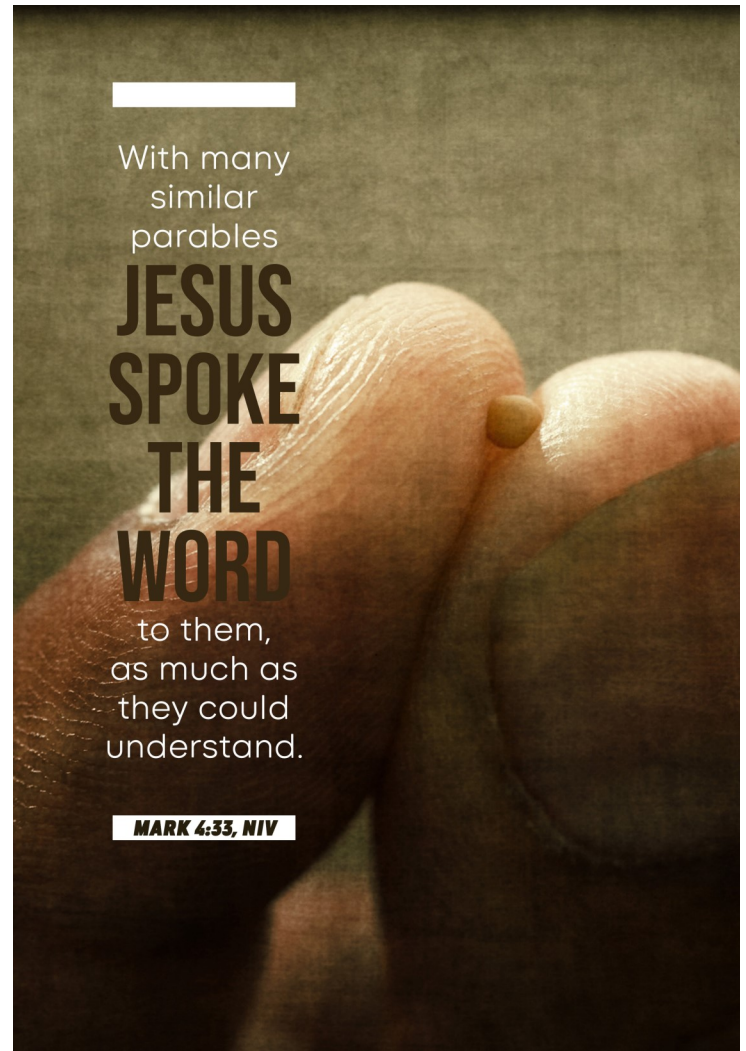
Who ever saw the mustard-plant,  
wayside weed or tended crop,  
grow tall as a shrub, let alone a tree, a treeful  
of shade and nests and songs?  
Acres of yellow,  
not a bird of the air in sight.

No, He who knew  
the west wind brings  
the rain, the south wind  
thunder, who walked the field-paths  
running His hand along wheatstems to glean  
those intimate milky kernels, good  
to break on the tongue,

was talking of miracle, the seed  
within us, so small  
we take it for worthless, a mustard-seed, dust,  
nothing.  
Glib generations mistake  
the metaphor, not looking at fields and trees,  
not noticing paradox. Mountains  
remain unmoved.

Faith is rare, He must have been saying,  
prodigious, unique —  
one infinitesimal grain divided  
like loaves and fishes,

*as if* from a mustard-seed  
a great shade-tree grew. That rare,  
that strange: the kingdom  
a tree. The soul  
a bird. A great concourse of birds  
at home there, wings among yellow flowers.  
The waiting  
kingdom of faith, the seed  
waiting to be sown.





Outdoor  
Worship  
Service

Continuing  
Sundays in July\*  
9AM  
Outside of Louisa  
Christian Church  
\*Bad weather will cancel  
the service

## Nursery Volunteers Needed



If you have completed your background check, please take some time to sign up to volunteer in the nursery. The sign up sheet can be found in the church sanctuary. Child care is available at the 11AM Sunday Service.



Sunday Flowers  
Needed

Remember an occasion or honor an individual by providing flowers for the alter on Sunday. Contact Sharon Duke (louisalandlady@gmail.com) or sign up on the sign up sheet in the church foyer.



## Men's Fellowship First Outing

The Men's Fellowship group had their first meeting on June 13th at Lake Louisa in Blue Ridge Shores. The group enjoyed fishing and fellowship together that afternoon. The men were happy to welcome a few women who wanted to join them at the event. "Men's Group" activities are open to anyone who wishes to join them for any outing or activity. These fellowship opportunities are organized by a group of men within Louisa Christian Church but are welcoming to anyone who wishes to attend.

If you are looking for fellowship within a church community, we invite you to contact Pastor Vincent (lccpastorv@gmail.com) to be included on the list for information on the activities of this group.