

How Jesus used stories

1 Context

Monday evenings (once a month) in April, May and June!

To help us in our thinking, as a church, about new ways to reach out to people we will be looking at three different ways in which Jesus did that:

1. How Jesus used scripture (30th April)
2. **How Jesus used stories (21st May)**
3. How Jesus used situations (25th June)

And reflecting on the example of Jesus we will think about how we can do similar things in our context today.

These sessions will be at Belgrave and will start at 7:30pm. For each session there will be some preparatory “homework” and then opportunities to share and discuss together on the evening itself. Please come and join us as we seek to learn together and apply what we have learned to our lives.

2 Preparatory Homework

Please read the three stories of Jesus below, reflect on what they are saying and think about the questions. And we’ll explore them together on 25th May.

2.1 Three stories of Jesus

The sower	The persistent widow	The fig tree
<i>While a large crowd was gathering and people were coming to Jesus from town after town, he told this parable: ‘A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds ate it up. Some fell on rocky ground, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown.’ When he said this, he called out, ‘Whoever has ears to</i>	<i>Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said: ‘In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, “Grant me justice against my adversary.” ‘For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, “Even though I don’t fear God or care what people think, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually come and attack me!’” ‘ And the Lord said, ‘Listen to what the unjust</i>	<i>Then he told this parable: ‘A man had a fig-tree growing in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it but did not find any. So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, “For three years now I’ve been coming to look for fruit on this fig-tree and haven’t found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?” ‘ “Sir,” the man replied, “leave it alone for one more year, and I’ll dig round it and fertilise it. If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.” ‘ (Luke 13:6–9)</i>

The sower	The persistent widow	The fig tree
<i>hear, let them hear.'</i> (Luke 8:4–8)	<i>judge says. And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?' (Luke 18:1–8)</i>	

2.2 Questions

- 1) What are some of the key characteristics of the stories Jesus told (either these or others you are familiar with)?
- 2) To which areas of life does Jesus apply stories?
- 3) What do these stories do and what don't they do?
- 4) Do they raise any questions or issues you struggle with?
- 5) How are we intended to engage with these stories – intellectually, emotionally, something else?
- 6) Why might stories be useful when trying to reach others with the good news about Jesus?

3 Exercise (to be done in small groups)

Take one of the stories of Jesus you are familiar with and try and retell it for the modern day. If you are struggling to think of an example, why not look at the story of the Good Samaritan and think about who the participants might be and how the story would unfold.

We'll spend some time on this in smaller groups and then share the results with each other.

4 Finally

Has what we have done this evening encouraged us to use stories more when seeking to reach others? If so, how might we develop this further, so we can use it more effectively?