

Differences in the Gospels Similarities and Differences

by William MacDonald

William MacDonald explores the unique presentations and teachings of Jesus across the four Gospels, emphasizing the significance of their differences.

Duration: 36:55

Scripture: Matthew 7:22, Matthew 18:12-13, Luke 13:25-27, Luke 15:4-7

Topics: "Gospel"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the topic of liberality and giving to the work of the Lord. He emphasizes that when we give to the Lord, we will receive in abundance, as the Lord's shovel is bigger than ours. The preacher also highlights the different aspects in which the four Gospels present Jesus - Matthew as the king of the Jews, Mark as the perfect servant, Luke as the son of man, and John as the son of God. The sermon concludes with a discussion on the concept of 'with what measure ye meet, it shall be measured to you again,' highlighting the importance of our judgmental attitude towards others and the appropriation of spiritual truth.

Transcript

Last week we were talking about the four Gospels. We mentioned that each Gospel is designed to present the Lord Jesus in a different aspect. Matthew as the king of the Jews, Mark as the perfect servant, Luke as the son of man, and John as the son of God.

And the Holy Spirit of God picks incidents and weaves them together into a vignette in order to present the Lord Jesus in these ways. But there are some very beautiful exceptions, too. For instance, you have the story of the Lord Jesus girding himself with the towel of a slave and getting down and washing the disciples' feet.

Which Gospel would you expect that to be in? One you'd expect it to be in Mark that presents him as the perfect servant, the bond slave. But it isn't in Mark, it's in John. It's in John that presents him as the holy son of God, and that's all the more remarkable, isn't it? That God the Son would come down from heaven and one day scoop down and wash his disciples' feet.

This morning I'd like to talk to you about the differences in the Gospels. I mentioned last week that the Holy Spirit seldom repeats himself. There are passages in the Gospels that seem to be the same.

You read it in Matthew, and you read it in Luke, and you say, oh yes, I read that in Matthew, the same thing. Watch out, it probably isn't the same. The Holy Spirit seldom repeats himself.

If he says what seems to be the same, he has a different purpose in mind. There's a different meaning to it altogether. A lot of men have written what they call harmonies of the Gospels.

Some of you in the back of your Bible have a harmony of the Gospels. Here it is in Matthew, here it is in Mark, here it is in Luke, here it is in John. Put those all on the same level.

I don't think the Gospels were ever intended to be harmonized. I think what the Spirit of God wants us to do is to go and see the differences in places that seem to be the same. Now, we're going to do a lot of turning in our Bibles this morning, and we'll be turning to two passages generally, so hold your finger in one and then we'll turn to the other, but hold the first place.

Luke chapter 6 verse 40. Luke chapter 6 verse 40 says, the disciple is not above his master, but everyone that is perfected shall be as his master. Okay, just tuck that away in your mind, and then turn to Matthew.

Hold your finger there too. Matthew chapter 10 verse 24. Matthew 10 24 says, the disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his Lord.

It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his Lord. I always say, I read that already in Luke. No, you didn't.

It's quite different. Let me explain to you why it's different. In Matthew, the Lord Jesus is the master, and you and I, believers, are the disciples.

And he's saying, look, they persecuted me. You can expect to be persecuted too. The disciple can't expect any better treatment than the master gets.

Verse 25, the latter part of the verse says, they have called the master of the house Beelzebub. How much more shall they call them of his household? Fear them not, therefore, for there's nothing covered beside them. He's talking about persecution.

He's talking about the ill treatment that he, the master, received, and he says, you disciples can expect to be treated that way. But that isn't the meaning in Luke chapter 6 verse 40 at all. In Luke chapter 6, he's speaking to his disciples.

They are the master in this case, and the disciple is somebody that they're trying to lead on in the things of God. And in Luke chapter 6, he's saying to them, remember this, disciples, you can't lead your students above what you are yourself. And that's true.

You know, I've been thinking this morning, that's true of Christian parents. Christian parents training children. You can't treat them in areas that you haven't learned yourself.

You can't teach what you don't know. You can't lead where you don't go. That's quite different, isn't it? Not a question of persecution at all in Luke's gospel.

The master, I say again, you, believer, are the master in Luke's gospel, and the disciple, anybody that you're trying to nurture along in the Christian faith, anyone with whom you are doing a one-on-one on a weekly basis. Just remember, if this is your spiritual level, you can lead him up to that spiritual level, but you can't lead him beyond it. What you are determines the limit to which you can help somebody else.

Okay, so don't harmonize those two passages, will you? When you write a harmony of the gospels, remember those two are quite different. Okay, Matthew chapter 7, verse 22. Matthew 7, 22.

It says, Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name done many my wonderful work. Then I will profess unto them, I never knew you. Depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Okay, hold your finger in that passage, and turn over to Luke chapter 13. Luke chapter 13, and verses 25 through 27. It says, When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us, he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not, whence ye are.

Then shall he begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, thou hast taught in our streets. He shall say, I tell you, I know you not, whence you are. Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.

Now, when you read that in Luke, you're tempted to say, Oh yes, I just read that in Matthew the other day, in my quiet time. No, you didn't. It's quite different.

A casual study of the gospel, it's a casual reading of the gospel, would make you think you've read the same thing twice, but you haven't. In Matthew's gospel, it's talking about professed service for the king. Professed service for the king.

Haven't we done these mighty works in your name? We've cast out demons in your name. We've done this and that in your name. He says, I never knew you.

Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity. But in Luke's gospel, there's no word about performing miracles in his name, casting out demons in his name. There is a question of fellowship with the Son of Man.

Fellowship with the Son of Man. We have eaten and drunk in thy presence. Different thoughts all together.

They're all professors. In neither case are the people really born again. There are those today who profess to be servants of the Lord, and he doesn't know them.

There are those who profess to have fellowship with the Lord, and he doesn't know them. He's never known them. But just remember that in the first case, it's service for the king.

In the second case, it's fellowship with the Master. Back to Matthew again for another illustration. Matthew chapter 5, verse 3. The Beatitudes.

Matthew chapter 5, verse 3. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth, and so forth.

You're familiar with the Beatitudes. Luke chapter 6, verse 20. And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples and said, Blessed be ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

Blessed are ye that hunger now, for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now, for ye shall laugh, and so forth. Oh, same as in Matthew.

Not the same at all. I would say not only is it not the same, it's a different discourse altogether, and it was delivered on a different occasion, and it's delivered in a different place. Let me prove it to you.

Matthew chapter 5, verse 1. Seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain, into a mountain, and when he was said his disciples came to him, he opened his mouth and sat and said, we call that the Sermon on the Mount. Turn back to Luke chapter 6, verse 17. And he came down with them and stood in the plain, that is, stood on a level place, and a great company of his disciples and a great multitude of people out of all Judea and Jerusalem, and so forth.

One was delivered on the mountain, the other was delivered on the level place, on a plain. Got it? Yes, but the words of the saint, no, they're not. In Matthew, it says, blessed are the poor in spirit.

In Luke, it says, blessed are the poor. Different. Okay, but it means, no, it doesn't.

In Luke, it says, well, to you that are rich. What does that mean? Rich in spirit? No, it's not that. Matthew is giving the character of the ideal person in the kingdom of God.

It's all about his character. Luke is describing the lifestyle of those who are going to go out representing the Lord Jesus. The difference between character and lifestyle.

Another difference. In Matthew, there are no woes at all. No woes pronounced at all.

In Luke, there are four woes. Count them. Verse 24.

But woe unto you that are rich, for ye have received your consolation. Woe unto you that are full, for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep.

Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets. You don't find that in Nancy's gospel, those four woes. But, it's a different discourse, delivered at a different occasion, delivered in a different location, and the words are quite different.

I don't know any harmony of the gospel that wouldn't put those two incidents together as being the same. They're not the same. Quite different.

This is one of the beauties of the Word of God. You know, the Word of God is an inexhaustible book. The glory of God is to conceal a matter.

The honor of princes is to search it out. And that's what God wants us to do. He wants us to go to the Word of God and study the Word of God and see the marvelous details that are there, and the marvelous weaving of the pattern.

Luke, chapter 15. Please hold your finger here now. Luke, chapter 15, verses 4 through 7. I think this is beautiful.

I hope you enjoy Bible study as much as I do. What man of you, Luke 15, for what man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost until he find it. When he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing.

When he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repented more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance. Remember that.

Hold your finger there. Matthew 18, verses 12 and 13. Matthew 18, verses 12 and 13.

How think ye, if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, Rejoiceth more of that one sheep than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. It sounds familiar to me. I'm pretty sure I read that in Luke's gospel.

Well, you read very similar words, but the Lord Jesus used a similar parable to teach a different truth. Turn back to Luke. In Luke, he's speaking to the Pharisees.

The Pharisees. Proud Pharisees. They didn't need any repentance, did they? We are the people.

Wisdom will die with us. God could never send a Pharisee to hell, you know. They didn't need any repentance.

So, the Lord tells them this parable. He gives joy over one sheep that is gone astray, over one guilty sinner that comes and says, God be merciful to me, a sinner. Then, he does over ninety and nine self-righteous Pharisees who don't think they have any need of forgiveness.

That's what it's saying in Luke's gospel. It's not what it's saying in Matthew's gospel. See, I haven't been quite fair to you.

I didn't read the verses around the parable. If I had read that, it would have made a difference. Matthew, chapter 18, verses 12 and 13.

Let me go back to verse 10. Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones, for I say of you that in heaven there are angels who always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven. For the Son of Man has come to save that which is lost.

How think ye if a man have a hundred sheep and so forth? Verse 14. Even so, it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish. That's beautiful.

In Luke's gospel, that parable is aimed right at the Pharisees. It hits them right between the eyes. In Matthew's gospel, the parable is used to show God's care for little ones, for children, or for those who are young in the faith.

I would think like a babe in Christ, or just for boys and girls. It's whichever way you want to look at it. No word about the Pharisees here in Matthew.

Not the context at all. Not the subject at all. Sounds the same.

Watch out. Isn't the same. Different meaning in each case.

And when I read that verse 11 in Matthew 18, it says in the King James, maybe it's not in some of your modern versions, but in the King James, the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost. Hold your finger there and turn to Luke 19 verse 10. Luke 19 verse 10.

It says, For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost. Get the difference? In Matthew, it says the Son of Man has come to save that which is lost. In Luke, it says he's come to seek and to save that which is lost.

Well, you see, not a big difference. I think it is. I think every difference in the scripture is significant.

In Matthew's gospel, he's talking about boys and girls. In Luke's gospel, he's talking about adults. He has to seek the adults.

He doesn't have to seek the boys and girls. He says, Suffer the little children that come unto me, and forbid them not for as such is the kingdom of heaven. We believe that boys and girls who die before the age of accountability are safe through the blood of Jesus.

He came to save that which is lost. But, I tell you, we get to be adults, and he has to seek them. Children don't have to become adults to be saved, but adults have to become like little children to be saved.

Except he be converted and become as little children, he shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of God. So, even a little difference like that in the gospels, I think it's significant. He's come to save that which is lost.

What's the context? Boys and girls. Not your father's will, but one of these little ones should perish. But, as I say, when it talks about adults, grown-ups seeking to save.

Now, there's an interesting expression in all four gospels. I'm not going to take the time to read them all, but let me read John 1.33, and the expression is, He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire. John chapter 1.33, however, John the Baptist is speaking.

It says in John 1.33, And I, that is, John the Baptist, knew him not, but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizes with the Holy Spirit, the Holy Ghost. And in Mark's gospel, that's what it says, Mark 1 and 8, that he will baptize you with the Holy Ghost, the Holy Spirit. But, if you turn to Matthew chapter 3 and verse 11, Matthew 3, verse 11, says, I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear.

He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire. Let me just quickly say, it's in John and in Mark, it says he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit. In Matthew and Luke, it says he shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit with fire.

What's the difference? I want to tell you, read those passages, they all sound alike to the careless reader, but there's a difference. When there were unbelievers present, Jesus said he will baptize you, when it's a mixed multitude, when there were saved and unsaved presence, Jesus said, or John said, he shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. Two different baptisms.

Believers would be baptized with the Holy Spirit, unbelievers would be baptized with fire. What is fire in Scripture? It's judgment. Notice Matthew 3, the end of verse 11 says, he shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire, whose fan is in his hand and he will truly purge his floor and gather his wheat into the garner, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

On the other hand, in John and Mark, when he said he shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit, there's no mention of unbelievers being present. It doesn't even mention the Pharisees as being there. As far as the scriptural record is concerned, just believers said he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.

Don't ever pray as some of our dear Pentecostal friends pray, that God will baptize you with fire. God forbid. I don't want to be baptized with fire.

He'll burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. It's right in that context. We don't want the baptism with fire.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit took place in the day of Pentecost, and the minute you trust Christ as your Savior, you come into the good of that baptism that took place then. The difference between the talents and the pounds. Matthew 25 14.

Matthew 25 14. It says, For the kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling into a far country who called his own servants and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to every man according to his several ability, and straightway took his journey.

Then he that received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made other five talents. Likewise, he that received two gained also two. He that had received one went and digged in the earth and hid his Lord's money.

After a long time the Lord of those servants cometh and reckoneth with them. So he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliverest unto me five talents. Lo, I have gained beside them five talents more, as the Lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant.

Thou hast been faithful over a few things. I will make thee ruler over many things. Enter thou into the joy of the Lord.

Also he that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliverest unto me two talents. Behold, I have gained two other talents. His Lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant.

Thou hast been faithful over a few things. I will make thee ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of the Lord, and so forth.

Luke, chapter 19. Luke, chapter 19, verses 12, beginning at verse 12 at least. As they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, verse 11, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, because they thought that the should appear immediately.

He said, Therefore, a certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return he called his ten servants and delivered unto him ten pounds, said unto them, Occupy till I come. But his servants hated him, sent a message after him, saying, and so forth. Verse 15.

It came to pass that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, he commanded those servants to be called unto him to whom he had given the money that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, and said, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. He said, Well done, thou good servant, because thou hast been faithful in a very little have thou authority over ten cities.

Second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. He said likewise unto him, Be thou also over five cities. Now, I think you can see that these are not the same parable.

In the one case, they received different talents. He gave unto one five talents, to another two, to another one. In the other case, they all received one pound.

Isn't that a parable of life? There are certain things that we all have in common. In some senses, God has given us all one pound. You say, What do you mean? Well, we all have 24 hours in the day to serve him, don't we? You don't have less, I don't have more.

We all have life. We all have the ability to worship and praise him. There are a lot of things that all believers have in common, and they'll be judged according to that.

But, there are a lot of other ways in which we differ. I wasn't standing in line the day mechanical abilities were passed out. I just didn't get anything at all.

Everybody has his own proper gift of God, and we'll be judged on that basis as well. Faithfulness with what has been given to us. And, incidentally, in the case of Matthew, in the case of the talent, those who reproduced 100 percent, they got the same reward.

In the case of the pounds, the rewards were different. I think it's very, very profitable to see these differences in the Gospels. Matthew chapter 7 verse 2, and these are expressions you're so familiar with.

Matthew chapter 7 verse 2. It says, well, I'll go back to verse 1. It says, Judge not that ye be not judged, for with what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged, and with what measure ye meet it shall be measured to you again. Get it? Hold that in your mind. With what measure ye meet it shall be measured to you again.

Mark chapter 4. Mark chapter 4 verse 24. And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear, with what measure ye meet it shall be measured to you, and unto you that hear shall more be given. For he that hath to him shall be given, and he that hath not from him shall be taken away even that which he hath.

Luke chapter 6 and verse 38. You get that constant refrain, with what measure ye meet it shall be measured to you again. Well, I suppose a careless harmonizing of the scriptures would lead a person to think that they were all the same.

Luke chapter 6 and verse 38. Given it shall be given unto you, good measure pressed down and shaken together and running over shall men give unto your bosom, for with the same measure that ye meet withal it shall be measured to you again. Same? No, different in each case.

The context is different in each case. In Matthew chapter 7 verses 1 and 2, it says, Watch out that you don't have a judgmental attitude toward others, because your chickens will come home to hatch if you do. With the same attitude of censoriousness and judgment that you might have toward others, you'll get it back in kind.

That's what it's saying. It has to do with our judgmental attitude toward others. Mark chapter 4 and verse 24.

He said nothing about judgment here. In Mark chapter 4 verse 24, he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear, with what measure ye meet it shall be measured to you again. This is the appropriation of spiritual truth.

What does that mean? Well, it means I go to the word of God, I see the thing written there, I appropriate, I make it my own. I just don't hear it with my ear, but I hear it and receive it. I hear it and accept it, and I hear

it and obey it.

And that verse of Scripture is saying the more you do that, the more it will be given to you. That's true. True.

As far as the appropriation of the word of God is concerned, with what measure ye meet it shall be measured to you again. The more you obey the Scriptures, the more the light of the Scriptures will open to you. Obedience is the organ of spiritual knowledge.

In Luke, it's a different subject altogether. It says, Give, and it shall be given unto you, good measure pressed down, taken together, and running over. For with what measure ye meet shall be measured to you again.

Here the subject is liberality, isn't it? It's our giving to the work of the Lord. And it's saying, remember friends, you kind of give the Lord, and with the same measure that you shovel it out, the Lord will shovel it in, and his shovel is bigger than yours. And so these are marvelous differences in the gospel, and there are a lot more.

And my purpose this morning, for those of you who are believers, is to whet your appetite to go and become serious students of the word of God. And when you mine for gold, it must be a great thrill, mining for gold and finding a great nugget of gold. But I tell you, it's no greater thrill than to go to the word of God and see the nuggets that the Holy Spirit has hidden there.

So much for the gospel. I want to say a word about the gospel. At the end of John's gospel, he says, of all the things that Jesus had written were contained in books, the world itself would not be able to contain the books.

These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, that believing ye might have life through his name. The purpose of the gospel is so that men and women might have life through faith in the Lord Jesus. But you know, the gospel isn't for everybody.

It's only for those who are willing to confess that they're guilty sinners and that they need a savior. I think that's a wonderful thing about the gospel of the grace of God, that it's your unworthiness, your constant unworthiness, that makes you eligible for salvation. The church is the only society on earth where it's your unworthiness that makes you eligible.

You don't try to make yourself fit for salvation. You acknowledge that you're not fit for it, and you cast yourself on the love, mercy, grace of God. All the fitness that God requires is to feel your need of him.

That's wonderful, isn't it? So, if you could come this morning and say, Lord Jesus, I'm a guilty sinner, there's hope for you. In fact, if you could say today from the depths of your heart, Lord, I'm too good for hell, too bad for hell, that is. I'm too bad for hell, there's real hope for you.

That's the kind of people God loves to save. He saves the ungodly. If you can prove yourself to be ungodly, God will save you.

It's amazing, isn't it? You must abandon any hope of earning salvation or deserving salvation, contrary to what you hear in many circles today. My Bible says, to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is founded unto him for righteousness. That's the person who gets saved,

the one who doesn't work for his salvation, him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted unto him for righteousness.

You must receive salvation as a free gift through faith. I like to emphasize that Jesus Christ is the way of salvation, and if you have Christ, you're as saved as God can make you. If you don't have Christ, you're as lost as you can be.

You might be a church member, you might live what people think a decent, respectable, honest life, but if you don't have Christ, you're lost. How do you receive Christ? We say, receive Christ by faith. How do you receive him? It's as simple as this.

From the depths of your heart, you say, Lord Jesus, I am a guilty sinner, but I believe you died for sinners on the cross of Calvary, and I here and now accept you as my Lord and Savior, and I want to tell you, you can't do that in sincerity without being saved. You can't come to Christ that way and ever be turned away. That's wonderful, isn't it? I wonder if there's someone here today, and God is speaking to you, and you're still laboring under a burden of sin more than anything else in the world.

You want that sin to be washed away. It can be. The fountain is flowing for sin and uncleanness today.

The door is open. All you have to do is step over the line. Shall we pray? If there is anyone here today and you'd like to talk more about this, feel free to stay behind afterwards.

I'd be very happy to talk to you and to show you how you could know before you go out the door this morning that you have passed from death to life. Father, we just thank you for your sacred word. We thank you for the glories that are contained in it.

We thank you for the Savior of whom it speaks, and we thank you for all here today who have placed their hand, as it were, on the sacrificial Lamb of God, on the head of the sacrificial Lamb of God, identified themselves with him, believing that he died for them. We pray for any who are still in their sins today, perhaps professing Christians. Perhaps they're saying we've eaten and drunk in your presence.

Perhaps they're saying we've done mighty miracles in your name. Lord, we pray that nobody might stand before you in that day and hear you say, depart from me, workers of iniquity, I never knew you. Speak to our hearts today, we pray in Jesus' most worthy name.

Amen.

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