

Parables Holy Tales with a Twist
All the stories that Jesus told in a single narrative!
Retold for today by Roger Price

Everyone is invited to the party!!

Parables was originally performed in a series of performances presented at: Earlsdon Methodist Church, Coventry Friday February 23rd. 2007 The Cube, Nuneaton Saturday 3rd. March 2007 when the cast, in order of speaking, was Steve Fox, Andrew Lawn, Nick Winch, James Lawn, Paul McAinsh and Wendy Winch.

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How the Show Came About

For some years I led a team of people who have presented the Civic celebrations in Coventry of Saint George's Day. This a street theatre presentation of the legend in the main shopping street in the city centre. Before the performance in 2006 I wanted to create another piece that said more about truth than legend. In conversation afterwards, my business partner told me of a church that she had heard who commissioned a story telling circus troop to present the Parable of the Prodigal Son as an entertainment. It was so good for everyone - audience, performers and the commissioning churches - that when the performers asked if there were any more stories like that one a retelling of the Good Samaritan was proposed. The circus group bolted the two together. On his way home the Prodigal Son got mugged and was helped by a Good Samaritan. It didn't take Helen and I long to add in the Lost Coin and the project that became this script was born. We're still finding extra parables Jesus told so this script is changing as they get added in. Please feel free to do the same. If you are planning you own production there are some notes at the end of this script that explain some of the jokes and other things that might not otherwise be clear. As for the truth this show contains, I'll leave you to find it for yourself.

Roger Price

Prologue: Introduction

Vicar: Dearly beloved. We are gathered here today to explore the wisdom imparted to us by our Lord through his use of parables. For as he, himself, did say, quoting the great prophet Isaiah: "By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."

Narrator 1: What are you going on about?

Vicar: Parables.

Narrator 1: I thought parables were stories with a moral that were easy to understand.

Vicar: That's right.

Narrator 1: Well, I didn't understand one word of what you said.

Vicar: If you can do any better why don't you?

Narrator 1: Alright. I will ...

Act One: The Prodigal Good Samaritan

Narrator 1: ... Once upon a time there was a farmer:

Father: How do.

Narrator 1: He had two sons.

Sons: How do.

Narrator 1: The elder son worked hard. He got up with the sun:

Eldest: Ho hum. The sun's up and so must I be.

Narrator 1: He went out into the fields and didn't come home until sunset. He didn't even stop for lunch!

Father: Eldest! Time for lunch!

Eldest: No time, father. I've got another 20 or 30 fields to plough before nightfall.

Narrator 1: The younger son was different. He didn't get up very early and enjoyed a late breakfast before having elevenses. Then he did an hour's work before he stopped for lunch.

Father: Youngest! Time for lunch!

Youngest: Thank you, father. That's enough for one day.

Narrator 1: After lunch he had a nap before his afternoon's work - which also lasted an hour. Then he stayed sat down at the table and waited for his brother to return home so that they could eat dinner.

Father: Evening, eldest.

Eldest: Evening father.

Narrator 1: Despite the differences between these two sons, their father loved them both ...

Father: I love you both!

Eldest: And I love you father!

Youngest: Get off ... (*Narrator coughs*) ... O.K. Likewise man.

Narrator 1: So it was a sad day when the younger son came to his father and said:

Youngest: Father, I'm fed up with all the long hours I have to work ...

Eldest: Long hours? Work??

Youngest: ... so I'd like you to give me my share of the farm now, in cash, so that I can go and make my fortune elsewhere.

Father: But son, are you sure? Life is very different in the cruel world out there. It's nothing like as easy as life on the farm.

Youngest: Easy? Easy? You think lying about in bed until 11 in the morning is easy? There's all the noise of the people working out there to distract me.

Father: That's true.

Youngest: And I have to hang around all afternoon after lunch waiting for you to finish what ever it is that you do in the fields before I can eat my evening meal.

Eldest: (*Sarcastically*): Well, pardon me. I'll just have to work faster.

Youngest: Well, see that you do - and be a little bit quieter in the morning as well!

Eldest: Why you ...

Father: Boys! Stop it! ... Son, you know I love you and I don't want to lose either of you. Please stay

here with us on the family farm.

Youngest: If you love me, you'll do what I ask. Give me my share of the inheritance now and let me make my own way in the wide world.

Narrator 1: And so it was that nothing the father could say would dissuade his youngest son. The father loved him and, in the end, gave in to his request - even though he knew that no good would come of it.

Father: Mark my words - no good will come of it!

Narrator 1: So the younger son took his money and set off for the city, leaving his older brother to toil in the fields from dawn to dusk and the father to pine for his lost son.

Eldest: I'd better get back to the ploughing, sowing, reaping and mowing.

Father: I'll better get on with the pining for your younger brother. Pine! Pine! Pine! Pine!

Narrator 1: So it came to pass the young man went to the nearby large town and immediately started having lots of fun. Because he had lots of money all sorts of people attached themselves to him - to help him have a good time - and to spend his money.

Girl: Hallo big boy, do you want to see what I can do with my ruby red lips and my lily white hands?

Youngest: What did you say?

Girl: I said do you want to see what I can do with my ruby Red lips and my lily white hands?

Man: Do you want to buy some good stuff? Really make you feel better?

Youngest: I'd rather see what she can do with her ruby red lips and her lily white hands.

Girl: It'll cost you.

Youngest hands over some money.

Girl: (flicking lips with fingers) Blub, blubber, blubber, blub.

Youngest: (to Man): What you've got must be better than that.

Youngest hands over some money. Man hands a small white packet. Youngest sniffs the powder from the packet and sneezes.

Youngest: Hey. This is pepper!

Man: So what? Really got you going hasn't it?

Narrator 1: And so it came to pass that one of these was a confidence trickster and he decided that he would speed up the separation of the money from the farmer's son:

Con Man: Pst! Come over here where no one can hear me.

Youngest: How will I know what you're talking about if that's the case?

Con Man: Come here. Now, listen carefully. I know of this field for sale. But this is not just any old field. In the middle of this field, there is hidden a treasure of great worth.

Youngest: That's very nice. Thank you for the information but what's it got to do with me?

Con Man: If you were to buy the field, then what would you have?

Youngest: A field.

Con Man: And the treasure of great worth.

Youngest: Wow! I'd be rich! .. Wait a minute, why don't you buy the field for yourself? Then you'd have the treasure.

Con Man: I don't have the money.

Youngest: Fair enough. How much is the field?

Con Man: How much have you got left?

Youngest: (*counts money*): 127 sheckles.

Con Man: Why, there's a coincidence. That's exactly the cost of the field!

Narrator 1: So the deal was done and the field was purchased and the young man began to look for the treasure. No matter where he dug, there was not a thing to be found - except dirt. Slowly reality began to dawn on our hero:

Youngest: I've been had! I'm going looking for the man who arranged all this! I want my money back!

Narrator 1: And that's just what he did. Imagine his surprise when he found the confidence trickster drinking with the previous owner of the field as if they had been friends forever. The young man realised that he had been tricked by both of them and hauled the con man off to appear before the local judge.

Youngest: (*dragging in the Con Man*): Judge! Judge! I want my money back! I've been tricked!

Judge: Silence in court! I'm dealing with this other matter! Sit down and wait your turn! ... Now,

good woman, you have been here day after day for many days now trying to get me to attend to your case.

Widow: Give me my rights!

Judge: Yes, yes, I've heard all that, but as I was about to say ...

Widow: Give me my rights!

Judge: But you've not provided me with the proper incentives ...

Youngest: What's he on about? Incentives?

Narrator 1: Bribes.

Youngest: Oh.

Judge: Silence in court! I will have no further interruptions in my court! ... Now, where was I? Ah Yes. Now, my good woman ...

Widow: Give me my rights!

Judge: As I was about to say ...

Widow: Give me my rights!

Judge: If you'll just give me a moment ...

Widow: I won't. Give me my rights – now!

Judge: (*Losing it*): Listen to me. If you let me finish a sentence I'll deal with this matter.

Widow: Give me my ...

Judge: Ah. ... (*Widow goes to speak*) ... Ah. ... As I was saying. While you may not have provided me with the proper incentives, I have decided that in order to overcome your persistence and to enable me to get on with more profitable - I mean - important cases, I will rule on this matter.

Widow: Give me my rights!

Judge: You shall have your widow's rights. Your constant badgering me has won the day for you. Next case.

Narrator 1: (*To youngest*): That's you.

Youngest: If it please your honour ...

Judge: You don't appear to have presented the proper incentives for me to hear your case.

Youngest: That's because he stole it all off me. I promise I'll pay you afterwards.

Judge: Very well. Give me the facts of the case.

Narrator 1: And so our hero told the corrupt judge how the "business man" with him had conned him out of his money.

Youngest: so despite what he said wherever I dug in that field I could find no treasure whatsoever!

Judge: I have listened patiently to your story and this is my judgement. I've heard it all before. There was this merchant who had been promised a jewel of great worth who had sold everything to possess it. He said he'd been conned as well. *(Con Man looks guilty)* My judgement in that case was: "This affair has given you something that is of value beyond the cost of a jewel of great worth, or even a field with a hidden treasure. This matter has taught you very valuable lessons - you can't get something for nothing, trust no-one and keep your hands on your purse strings. This is valuable knowledge and life experience. So the people who worked this confidence trick upon you deserve what you paid them as a suitable fee. There is no case to answer." Talking about fees, mine is 5 gold coins.

Narrator 1: Now some of you out there might think is not a very fair outcome for the youngest son - and that we might just be learning the wrong lesson from all this. But bear with us - the story is not yet over and we'll be coming back to the field with the hidden treasure before the end of it. But for now, back to the courtroom:

Judge: I said, that will be five gold coins please.

Youngest: But I have no money.

Judge: Well, I'll have that coat and those shoes instead! *(Youngest hands over the items)* Now, get out of my court before I fine you your shirt for wasting more of my time.

Youngest leaves.

Con Man: *(Handing over some coins)* Thank you for your unbiased opinion, your honour.

Judge: Any time, old friend. Any time.

Narrator 1: When they saw that the young man had nothing left, all his new friends deserted him. He was alone and destitute - a stranger in a strange land. He looked around for something to do - in the vain hope of getting a few coins with which to buy a little food:

Youngest: Excuse me sir? Can I have a job as a street sweeper?

Boss: Of course you can. 2 sheckles a week. You can start today.

Youngest: Where do I get my brush?

Boss: You want me to supply a brush? What do you think this is? A public service?

Youngest: No sir. No one would ever think that. Keeping the streets clean will never be part of the council's job. ... I know. I'll sell my shirt to buy a brush!

Narrator 1: And he did just that. But then, on the first day on the job, disaster happened:

Youngest: Oh no! My brush is broken! What am I going to do now?

Boss: No brush - no job.

Narrator 1: And so our hero found a new position in a subway:

Youngest: Can you spare a little change, please?

Narrator 1: But no-one would. With starvation stared him in the face, he had an idea:

Youngest: I am a fool. Even the animals on my father's farm are fed more than I've got - and they're fed each day. While kitchen slops and acorns are not the best of fodder, it's more than I'm getting at the moment. I will go home and hide out amongst my father's flocks. At least that way I won't be hungry any more.

Narrator 1: And so he left the big bad town and started to make his way home. On the way back he met some bandits. ... (*Bandits attack Youngest*) ... They set upon him. He was beaten and broken and robbed of his last possessions. They even made off with his jeans. He was left for dead in the dust! Not long after the incident a Do-Gooder came along:

Do Gooder: Oh you poor boy! I must help you. I must do some good! I know, I'll organise a sale of work! Roll up! Roll up! Come and buy! All to benefit the poor and needy!

TV Crew: Hi! We're from Good News TV. We heard you were doing good and wanted to cover the story. What are you doing?

Do Gooder: I'm helping this poor young man here who has fallen foul of these troubled and violent times.

TV Crew: What's in it for you?

Do Gooder: Absolutely nothing. All profits go straight to the poor and needy. I'm just taking a mere 97% to cover "Administration".

TV Crew: Well, first we've got to get emotion filled footage that'll melt the hardest heart. ... (*action to make Youngest look even more pathetic*) ... Why don't we make it a TV appeal? If you

come with us we'll broadcast the news of what you're doing and ask people to send us money as well. We'll only take 3% for our trouble.

Narrator 1: Which is what they did - leaving nothing for our hero lying in the dust. Next to come along was a No Win, No Fee lawyer who knew a dead cert of a case when he saw one:

Lawyer: I've got to find the bandits who attacked this young man! ... Excuse me, sir, are you one of them?

Bandit: What if I am?

Lawyer: Well, I see a clear cut case.

Bandit: We didn't do anything wrong. And all we got was some jeans. You're getting nothing out of us.

Lawyer: No. You've got the wrong idea. I'm not talking about getting anything off you - I'm talking about getting something for you.

Bandit: What do you mean?

Lawyer: Well, there's compensation for the damage to your clubs and cudgels - not to mention the emotional damage from coming away from the scene of the crime with only a pair of jeans to show for it!

Bandit: That sounds great! Where do we sign?

Narrator 1: And so off they went to court to, claim off the public purse. And still our hero lay in the dust, bleeding, battered and bruised. Then the worst possible thing that could happen to him came to pass. The next person down the road was the worst possible person to choose this time to turn up. This was a member of the most hated and despised group for miles around. Yes, it was an Aston Villa supporter!

Villa Fan: Here I go, here I go, here I go! ... What do I have here, then? Is it my hated enemy - a Coventry City fan, all helpless at my feet? Shall I put the boot in while he's down? No. That wouldn't be fair. And, after all, we are bound together by the love of football! I'll help him get better so we can have a fair fight in the future!

Narrator 1: And that's what he did. He helped the young man to his feet, gave him his spare jeans and placed him on the back of his own donkey ...

Cast: Donkey?

Narrator 1: That's what it says .. donkey.

Villa Fan: But I haven't got a donkey.

Narrator 1: Well, you have to improvise, won't you? Just be thankful it not all that stuff about camels and the eye of a needle!

Action

Narrator 1: As I was saying: He helped the young man to his feet, gave him his spare jeans, placed him on the back of his own donkey and took him to the nearby inn where he bought him refreshments.

Villa Fan: Innkeeper! I want you to take good care of this poor victim of crime which is the hallmark of our modern day society. Offer him the best hospitality this fine establishment can provide so that his wounds may be healed and his injuries mend.

Inn Keeper: Are you sure? You're an Aston Villa fan and they are not known for their kindness to men such as this one.

Villa Fan: Yes. I am sure even though he is my hated enemy. Let him stay here until he is fully recovered and, when I pass this way again after the fight ... I mean, the match ... I will settle your bill.

Inn Keeper: How do I know I can trust you. After all, you are an Aston Villa fan.

Villa Fan: You've still got your front windows, haven't you?

Inn Keeper: Well, if you put it that way ... Come here, my good man. Sit here while I get you something to eat and drink.

Youngest: Thank you. Thank you. That's very kind of you.

Inn Keeper: Anything to keep my windows!

Narrator 1: So there the young man sat, regaining his strength before continuing on his way home.

Inn Keeper's Wife: Out of my way. Out of my way. Come on. Get up. I want to look where you're sitting.

Inn Keeper's Wife is madly searching for something

Youngest: What's going on?

Inn Keeper: She's lost it.

Youngest: I can tell. Is she always like this? Bet it's hard on your regular customers.

Inn Keeper: No. No. She's lost IT.

Youngest: Oh. Lost what?

Inn Keeper: Well, she started the day with 10 silver coins and a few minutes ago, when she came to count them, there were only 9. Now she's looking for the lost coin.

Inn Keeper's Wife: Woe, woe and thrice woe. I must find it. Every one is so precious! It must be here somewhere.

Inn Keeper: She'll be sweeping the floor next!

Inn Keeper's Wife starts sweeping the floor

Inn Keeper: Told you.

Inn Keeper winks at youngest, takes a coin out of his pocket and places it on the floor

Inn Keeper: Darling. Is this it?

Inn Keeper's Wife: Yes. Oh, thank you, thank you. Praise the Lord - that which was lost has been found! Drinks on the house and let's all have a party!

Wife exits, overjoyed

Inn Keeper: My fault really. I borrowed the coin in order to pay the milk man this morning and had forgotten to put it back.

Inn Keeper's Wife: *(off)*: Darling! Do you want to come and join the party?

Narrator 1: Not wanting to intrude on this private celebration, the young man continued on his way home.

Youngest: I don't know why I'm bothering. My father will have forgotten all about me.

Narrator 1: Let's see shall we?

Father: Pine! Pine! Pine!

Narrator 1: Nope. Seems safe to say that he's still missing you. Either that or he's gone into the telegraph pole business.

Father: Pine! Pine! Pine! I miss my youngest son. I do hope that he is well. Nearly every day I come and stand here, looking for him coming down the road. ... But wait! What is that I see coming in the distance?

Narrator 1: Where?

Father: There.

Narrator 1: I can't see anything.

Father: It's my youngest son. I'm sure it is.

Narrator 1: Actually he's coming from over there.

Father: Oh. ... Yes, there he is! My son!! (*Runs towards him*)

Youngest: Wait a minute Dad.

Father: No. No. I've missed you. I must embrace you.

Youngest: Oh no you don't. ... You've got to listen to me.

Father: Then let me at least look at you. ... What are you wearing?

Youngest: Jeans.

Father: But they're so ... so ... big ... and dirty.

Youngest: They're all I've got.

Father: (*Shouting off*): Can I have a set of new clothes for my youngest son please!

Clothes arrive.

Youngest: But I'm not worthy of these clothes.

Father: Nonsense! Now let me embrace you. ... But wait! How thin you are looking.

Youngest: That's because I've not had a lot to eat recently.

Father: (*Shouting off*): Start cooking my youngest son's favourite meal! Peanut butter chillie with
rice!

Youngest: Chips.

Father: (*Shouting off*): Make that peanut butter chillie with chips!

Youngest: But I'm not worthy of such cooking.

Father: Nonsense! Now let me embrace you!

Youngest: Oh, alright then.

Father: My son! (*embraces - notices smell, shout off*): Run a bath for my youngest son!

Youngest: But father, much as I need a bath - and food - and clothes - I'm not worthy of all these

gifts. I took my inheritance and wasted it. Let me be the lowest of your servants. Forget that I was ever your son.

Father: Nonsense!. You are my son. Nothing can ever take that away. You were lost and now you are found again. And I want to welcome you back! Let's have a party!

Father and Youngest exit arm in arm

Narrator 1: Now, as fate and the story teller's craft would have it, it was round about now that the older brother came back from the fields.

Eldest: I'm fed up!

Narrator 1: He was not a happy bunny.

Eldest: All day long I've been searching over the hills looking for the one missing sheep out of the 100 that make up the flock that is the farm's main source of income.

Narrator 1: He was definitely not happy.

Eldest: I've walked over hill and through valley. I have pushed through bushes that have scratched me. I've waded streams that have soaked me. I've stumbled over rocks that bruised me.

Narrator 1: In fact, he was very unhappy.

Eldest: But I found the missing sheep!

Narrator 1: Unhappy but triumphant!

Eldest: And then all the way home, with the sheep wrapped round my shoulders, the ungrateful beast ss...

Narrator 1: Careful now!

Eldest: ... sweated all over me and my best working clothes!

Narrator 1: He's upset. Ah! He's more upset than that! Ah!

Eldest: But wait! Who is this I see before me, wearing my father's finest clothes, feasting on my father's finest food and smelling of my father's finest bath oils? It is my youngest brother! But he left home, taking his share of his inheritance with him. How come he's been given all this as well?

Youngest: Hi, bro.

Eldest: Hi yourself. Why have you got all this lot then? Didn't you have enough when you went off with your share of the farm?

Youngest: True. But I lost all that. Father gave me this lot as well because I had nothing.

Eldest: That's not fair! I've been traipsing all over the place all day looking for the one missing sheep because each and every one is important and I come home to this! Father!

Father: Yes, my eldest son? What is it? Have you come to share my joy at your brother's return?

Eldest: No I haven't. He had his share and he tells me that he's spent it all. Now you go and give him even more! It's not fair!

Father: You may be right that it's not fair, but I love you both. I'd do the same for you. Can't you see that your brother was lost and is now found again? Surely we can embrace him in love?

Eldest: It's not fair.

Narrator 1: But the father wouldn't let it go at that:

Father: Look, my son, love isn't just about doing what's fair. Sometimes it's about doing things that should and must be done - even when it doesn't seem fair. Forget the money and look at your brother. Do you love him?

Eldest: I suppose so.

Father: That's why you put up with him lying in bed all morning.

Eldest: *(reluctantly)*: Probably.

Father: And only working an hour or so each day.

Eldest: *(cautiously)*: Yes

Father: And you've missed him too, haven't you?

Eldest: *(pause)*: Remember the day when he helped me separate the sheep from the goats?

Father: When you were thirsty he gave you a drink.

Eldest: When I was hungry he gave me some food. I never did thank him for it.

Father: No time like the present, then. Come on!

Narrator 1: Finally they embraced and all went in and had a party. From that day forward happiness replaced the sadness that had filled the farm. They all prospered from this sharing of love for one another. ... But that was not the end of the tale. Remember the field that the younger brother sold everything he had to buy because it contained a treasure of great worth? Remember how he dug all over it looking for the treasure - and couldn't find

it? Well, just as the party got into full swing, who should come along but an executive from an oil company:

Oil Man: Mac. I'm in oil.

Narrator 1: So are sardines!

Oil Man: I've got some news for you, Mac.

Youngest: My name's not Mac but what's your news?

Oil Man: You bought a field a while back. We've been investigating it. Deep under the field there were untold reserves of oil. Enough to make the you and your whole family rich.

Narrator 1: And that's the moral of this tale. When you find something that is beyond price, you have to risk everything to obtain it, and you have to be ready to go on digging deeper until you find it. But never give up. Because there is always someone ready to love you with a father's love, and there are always those to bring you to the party - even if one of them is an Aston Villa supporter!

Link 1: All this talk about farming reminds me of another story.

Link 2: Why don't you tell that one then?

Act Two: To Be A Farmer's Boy:

Narrator 2: O.K., I will. There was once a nobleman of high estate:

Roderick: Sir Woderick Wobertson of Wupert Hall.

Narrator 2: That's Sir Roderick Robertson. One day he was called away from his lands:

Herald: Sir Roderick Robertson?

Roderick: That's me.

Herald: I am commanded by my master and yours to ask you to come with me to the capital so that a great honour might be conferred upon you.

Roderick: That is wonderful. But as I'm going to be away for some time let me make arrangements so that my estates may continue to prosper while I am away.

Herald: Very well.

Roderick: Servants! I am going to be away for some time in the capital. While I'm away I wish that my estates continue to prosper. So, I'm going to give you, my most trusted servants, some cash. Use it wisely and I will reward you according to your actions upon my return.

Servants: Thank you master.

Roderick: Thomas!

Thomas: Yes master?

Roderick: Here are 10 gold coins. Use them wisely.

Thomas: Yes master. I will.

Roderick: Richard!

Richard: Yes master?

Roderick: Here are 5 gold coins. Use them wisely.

Richard: I will try, master.

Roderick: Harold!

Harold: Yes my lord?

Roderick: All I have left are these 2 gold coins but I'm sure that you'll do well with these.

Harold: I'll do my best, my lord. No-one can expect any more than that.

Roderick: We'll see what I think when I get back, won't we?

Harold: Yes master.

Roderick: And so, my faithful servants, I take my leave of you. Work hard and show a healthy profit.

Servants: We will master. Farewell!

Roderick: Farewell!

Narrator 2: And so the servants thought what they should do with their money:

Thomas: I don't want to get my hands dirty. I've got quite a bit of ready cash here. I'll make some investments and make the money work for me instead!

Investment 1: Here's a pretty thing.

Thomas: What is it?

Investment 1: It's a necklace for your favourite daughter.

Thomas: But I don't have a favourite daughter - and it doesn't sound like a very fair swap in any case.

Investment 2: You don't want to put your money into that. This is much more of a money making opportunity. Sunshades for asses.

Investment 3: You want what I've got to offer. It's bound to turn a profit. Foot wipes.

Investment 2: Don't listen to him. No-one needs foot wipes. But everyone with a ass needs a sun shade in this climate. Just think of the extra work you can get out of a shaded ass.

Investment 1: Just imagine her walking into a room and all the heads turning to see how fine her neck looks!

Investment 3: No more need for towels and bowls of water. Welcome your guests with a quick wipe of one of these.

Investment 1: And the secret is that the look is everything.

Investment 2: Made from the finest scrap glass especially smoked for me by Jacob the kipper maker ...

Investment 1: Rock crystals hewn from the quarry ...

Investment 3: Papyrus fragments discarded as second rate and reformed to give the perfect product ...

Investment 2: To protect the eyes ...

Investment 1: To grace the neck of a fair maiden ...

Investment 3: To wipe the feet of nobleman and beggar alike ...

Thomas: Stop it. You don't have to compete for my money. I've got enough to support all of your ventures.

Investments: Oh!?

Thomas: Yes. But before I give you the cash, I want a clear understanding between us. I work for a very hard master who always expects his debts to be paid. I'm going to adopt the same policy. From these contracts that my clever lawyer has drawn up you'll see that whatever happens you have to treat my money as a loan. Make a profit or lose everything I'll still expect to be repaid.

Investments: Oh.

Thomas: Right. How much do you want me to risk?

Investment 1: I'll take 4 gold coins.

Thomas hands over 4 coins

Investment 2: Just 3 gold for me.

Thomas hands over 3 coins

Investment 3: All I need is 2 coins for the initial stock.

Thomas: And that leaves me 1 gold coin for me to put into buying a wine press. Don't forget! We'll share any profits but I want my investment back whatever happens.

Narrator 2: What do you want with a wine press? Surely you're not going to get your hands dirty actually making wine?

Thomas: Of course not. Every year there are lots of grapes and not enough wine presses. I'll let others use my press as long as they give me some of their wine - which I'll sell at a profit! They'll do all the work, and I'll get the cash.

Narrator 2: And so Thomas sat back and counted his profits and losses while waiting until the master returned. ... Meanwhile Richard, being a more practical man, decided to put his money into agriculture. After all, that's how his master made his money!

Richard: I'm going to grow corn, just like the master!

Thomas: So what's first then?

Richard: I guess I'd better go and buy some seed.

Narrator 2: So, off he went to the shop to buy some seed:

Shop Keeper: Good day, kind sir. How may I help you?

Richard: I'd like some seed.

Shop Keeper: Well, we've got all sorts. We've got pansies, daisies, dahlias, delphiniums, nasturtiums, hollyhocks, sunflowers, cornflowers ...

Richard: No. I don't want flower seeds.

Shop Keeper: Oh, it'll be vegetables you'll be after then. We've got beans, peas, carrots, lettuce, radishes, onions, parsnips, cress, mustard, celery, tomatoes, marrow

Richard: Not vegetables either! ... I want some something to grow in fields - you know, just like Sir

Roderick uses.

Shop Keeper: Corn.

Richard: No it's not. It's the truth.

Shop Keeper: No. What you want is corn.

Richard: Oh, I see.

Shop Keeper: Right. How much do you want?

Richard: I don't know ... I've got 5 gold coins.

Shop Keeper takes coins and gives seed - a lot of seed

Narrator 2: And so he took the seed into the fields and threw it about with wild abandon. He had no idea what he was doing and didn't care where it fell. Some of it fell on the path that ran through the middle of the field.

Richard: That bit's easy.

Narrator 2: Some of it fell on the path that ran through the middle of the field. Some of it fell in amongst the nettles that grew in a patch...

Thomas: You're doing the parable of the sower, aren't?

Narrator 2: What if I am?

Thomas: Well, there's no need to. Everybody knows that one.

Narrator 2: I bet they don't. Thomas: I bet they do. You do, don't you?

Audience response

Thomas (or Narrator 2 if appropriate): You see. I told you.

Narrator 2: No-one knows it that well.

Thomas: I do!

Narrator 2: O.K. then, what comes next?

Thomas: You've just done the nettles bit?

Narrator 2: Yes. That's the ones that look a little prickly and likely to sting to you.

Thomas: There's some of those out there. But it's the stony ground next.

Narrator 2: Very good. And where did most of the seed land?

Thomas: Most of it fell in the good soil that made up the greater part of the field. There's some of that out there too!

Narrator 2: I hope so - else we're wasting our time tonight!

Thomas: That's true.

Narrator 2: So. After the seed was sown, what happened next?

Thomas: Birds swooped down and destroyed the seed on the path.

Narrator 2: Bit tricky to do birds in here. Can you think of any other ruthless and destructive force of nature?

Thomas: Boy scouts?

Narrator 2: They'll do. They could stamp all over the path!

Scouts: Here we go a wandering, along this wide firm path.

Narrator 2: The rest will just have to wait for the right conditions and then?

Thomas: The shoots in the nettles get strangled.

Narrator 2: Which ones out there did you say were prickly?

Thomas: In a minute because those shoots in the stony ground get frizzled and I've got to get my sun block on.

Narrator 2: That's all very well for you but I've got a parable to finish. What am I going to use for the crops that grow from the seeds in the good ground?

Thomas: That lot?

Narrator 2: Good idea! Everybody stand up - you're the crops growing. O.K.? ... But most of the seed had landed in the good soil. There it sprouted and grew and flourished. ... Come on now, all you good ground, wave in the wind. ... So much so that when Richard came back a week or so later he was amazed to find his field full of waving green shoots.

Richard: Why are they all waving at me?

Narrator 2: It's your field full of corn almost ready to harvest.

Richard: I did well didn't I?

Narrator 2: He felt very pleased and patted himself on the back.

Richard: Well, well, well, that's a job well done. There's no trick to this farming business. But one thing puzzles me. How on earth did those little seeds turn into this lot?

Narrator 2: I don't think anything on earth had anything to do with it.

Richard: What do you mean?

Narrator 2: Think about it. ... Oh, all right. You lot can sit down now - and stop waving! ... And while he thinks about that, let's see how Thomas is getting on with his wine press:

Thomas: (*Accepting bottles of wine*): Thank you ... Thank you ... That'll do nicely, thank you.

Narrator 2: Meanwhile, back at the corn field:

Neighbour: Howdy.

Richard: Howdy.

Neighbour: Nice field of corn.

Richard: Yes. And I've got no idea where it came from. ... Your field doesn't look so hot.

Neighbour: Yeah. ... I got sold a bad batch of seed - full of weeds.

Richard: That's tough. ... Well, there's not much more that I can do here. It seems to be growing alright by itself. Soon it'll be time to harvest it and I'll make a lot of money! See you later.

Neighbour: Yeah. See you later. .. (*Richard exits*) .. Make a lot of money will you? While I'm left with a field full of weeds. It's not fair! It's not fair!! I know. I'll get some of the seeds from the weeds and sow them amongst his "nice field of corn". That'll teach him!

Narrator 2: And he did just that. He stood downwind of Richard's field and shook the weeds he'd gathered from the field. Their seeds all came out and blown by the wind fell everywhere on the growing crop. It didn't take long for the weed seed to germinate and grow up amongst the corn. When Richard came back he was horrified!

Richard: Oh no! What on earth has happened? Where did all this lot come from?

Neighbour: I haven't got the faintest idea!

Old Man: How do.

Neighbour/Richard: How do.

Old Man: Got a problem?

Richard: I don't know much about farming but I had this field of corn. It was lovely. It was going along fine, each day the shoots were getting taller. Then, all of a sudden, out of nowhere, I came today and the field's full of weeds!

Old Man: Hmm. Weeds don't just come out of nowhere. My guess is that someone has sabotaged your field.

Richard: I can't think of anyone who would do that!

Neighbour: I'll be off then. See you later.

Richard: What do I do now? How do I get rid of these weeds?

Old Man: Think of the field as the sea. Think of the crop as fish that you can eat and the weeds as the nasty stuff no-one can eat. When you harvest the sea, you keep the good stuff and throw the bad stuff back.

Richard: What?

Old Man: I said: Think of the field as the sea

Richard: Yes, yes, I know what you said. I'm just trying to make sense out of it. Does that mean I should just pull the weeds up and throw them away?

Old Man: No. You'll just pull up the crop with the weeds and have nothing. Leave it until the harvest. Then you can sort the good from the bad, keeping one and burning the other.

Richard: Oh. Got it. But, while you're here, can I have some advice about this fig tree?

Old Man: What about it? Richard: It's very old and not produced any fruit in years.

Old Man: I can see that.

Richard: Should I pull it up and burn it?

Old Man: Not everything that is old and worn out should be discarded as useless. You should fertilize it, water it well, and give it one more chance. If it doesn't produce figs, then you should tear it up and throw it on the fire.

Richard: (*Laughing*): If only my master was like that, giving those who let him down another chance! And at least the birds will have somewhere to build their nests.

Old Man: If you're worried about the birds, you should plant one of these.

Richard: One of what?

Old Man: These. It's a mustard seed.

Richard: It's very small.

Old Man: I know. It's one of the smallest seeds known.

Richard: And it will grow into a huge tree?

Old Man: Yes. Watch.

Plants seed ... Pantomime beanstalk

Richard: Wow! That's a surprise! ... *(nest added)* ... And the birds like it too!

Old Man: You know little things can make a big difference. Like a tiny bit of yeast can make a lot of beer or a tiny light on top of a hill can be seen for miles around and guide all to a safe harbour.

Richard: I see what you mean. Come on, let's go and get a drink while we wait for harvest!

Narrator 2: And they did just that. ... Meanwhile, back at the wine press:

Thomas: *(Accepting bottles of wine)*: Thank you ... Thank you ... That'll do nicely, thank you.

Narrator 2: But time passed and Richard's crops continued to grow. The ears ripened and the harvest time came.

Worker 1: That's a nice field of ripe corn.

Richard: Yes.

Worker 1: Just right for harvest.

Richard: Is it?

Worker 1: Yes. You ought to gather it in.

Richard: Right. ... But I don't know what to do.

Worker 1: I do.

Richard: Oh. I don't suppose you'll help me get it in will you?

Worker 1: I don't suppose you'll agree to pay me to do so will you?

Richard: Would 5 silver coins be enough?

Worker 1: That's a deal!!

Narrator 2: And so the worker began to gather the harvest in. But soon it became clear that there were not enough workers. So he called to his eldest son:

Richard: Son!

Eldest Son: Yes, father?

Richard: Will you go to the market place and recruit some more help?

Eldest Son: Yes father, I shall.

Narrator 2: Halfway back to town the eldest son realised he was hot and thirsty.

Eldest Son: Blow this for a game of soldiers. I'm not going into town and hiring more workers. I'm off to Thomas's wine press.

Thomas: Hiya. How's things?

Eldest Son: Too hot. Got any cool wine?

Thomas: Of course.

Eldest Son: Cheers!

Narrator 2: And there he settled down with several long, cool drinks. Meanwhile back at the fields, Richard was equally hot and bothered.

Richard: I'm getting all hot and bothered. I don't think my eldest son is going to come back with any workers. Number 2 son!

Number 2 Son: Yes father?

Richard: I asked your brother to go to the market place to hire some more workers and he hasn't come back. I think something must have happened to him.

Number 2 Son: Knowing him as I do my bet that he's over at Thomas's with a cool bottle of wine.

Richard: Well, will you go to the market place and hire some more workers for me?

Number 2 Son: No way. What's good enough for my brother, is good enough for me. I'm off to Thomas's!

Narrator 2: On the way, though, he thought about everything that his father had done for him and

realised he was not being fair.

Number 2 Son: I'm not being fair. My father has looked after me all these years and asked for nothing in return. I will go to the market and hire some more workers! ... Excuse me, do you know anything about harvesting corn?

Worker 2: A little.

Number 2 Son: Well, will you come and help my father harvest a field full?

Worker 2: How much?

Number 2 Son: I've just told you - a field full.

Worker 2: No. How much for me?

Number 2 Son: Oh. How about 5 silver coins?

Worker 2: That'll do nicely!

Narrator 2: And so it came to pass that the two brothers arrived back at the harvest at the same time:

Eldest Son: (*drunkenly*) I'm sorry father, I didn't make it to the market place and couldn't find any workers.

Number 2 Son: I'm sorry father, I just had to do it, even though I said I wouldn't. I've got you this worker.

Richard: I don't which one of you to praise and which one to curse.

Eldest Son: Well, I said I would go.

Number 2 Son: And I actually went.

Speechless Richard waves them both back to work in the fields, along with the extra worker

Narrator 2: The day was drawing to a close when Richard could see that he was going to need even more help if the job was going to be finished before sunset.

Richard: Keep at it lads. I'm going to get some more help! ... Excuse me, sir, do you know anything about harvesting corn?

Worker 3: Yes, sir. I'm an expert field hand.

Richard: Would you come and help me get my harvest in today for 5 silver coins?

Worker 3: Cash?

Richard: Cash in hand as long as the work is finished tonight.

Worker 3: Done.

Narrator 2: And with all this help the work was completed on time. The workers line up to paid.

Richard: There's 5 silver coins for you. ... And 5 silver coins for you ... And five silver coins for you What's the matter?

Worker 1: You given them the same as me.

Worker 2: Yeah, I've done more work them him (*Worker 3*) but you've paid us the same.

Worker 3: I'm quite happy, thank you.

Worker 1: Well, I'm not. All day long I've slaved in the hot sun getting this crop in. You've just turned up at the last minute once the heat of the day is past - and you've got the same as me for nothing like the work!

Worker 2: Yeah. I did a full half day's work for these 5 coins, not just an hour or so like you.

Worker 1: Half a day? I did the full day. I want what I deserve.

Richard: O.K. O.K. How much were you promised?

Worker 1: 5 silver coins.

Richard: And you?

Worker 2: 5 silver coins.

Richard: And you?

Worker 3: The same - 5 silver coins and I'm quite happy thank you very much.

Richard: And how much have I give you?

Workers 1+2: (*mumbling*): 5 silver coins.

Richard: I'm sorry, I didn't quite catch that.

Workers 1+2: (*reluctantly*): 5 silver coins.

Worker 3: And I've got 5 silver coins as well - and I'm quite happy.

Richard: Well, I kept the bargain I made with you. I have delivered what I promised you. I offered the same reward no matter how long the service. All of you accepted the offer and that's an end to it.

Worker 1: Well, at least we've got 5 silver coins more than when we started.

Worker 2: I suppose so. Come on, let's go to Thomas's and celebrate.

Worker 1: Good idea.

Workers 1 and 2 leave

Worker 3: *(To Richard)*: I just want you to know I'm quite happy. *(To Narrator)*: I'm quite happy you know.

Narrator 2: Thank you. Meanwhile back at the wine press:

Thomas: *(Accepting bottles of wine)*: Thank you ... Thank you ... That'll do nicely, thank you.

Narrator 2: And all this leaves us with Harold. He also decided to go into farming with his master's money. But, instead of doing it himself, he hired some others to do it for him:

Harold: Excuse me?

Farmer: How do.

Harold: Are you a farmer?

Farmer: Now, what makes you think that?

Harold: I don't know. Just something about what you're wearing and the piece of straw sticking out of your mouth.

Farmer: Now, if you're going to get personal ...

Harold: No, no. I didn't mean any offence.

Farmer: That's alright then. ... What can I do for you?

Harold: If I gave you these 2 gold coins, would you grow a field of wheat for me, harvest it, take it to market and give me all the money you get for it?

Farmer: *(after a pause)*: Of course I will!

Narrator 2: Oh no you won't!

Farmer: Oh yes I will!

Narrator 2: On no you won't.

Farmer: Oh yes I will - and I'm going to get on with it because this is meant to be a parable not a pantomime.

Money is exchanged

Narrator 2: Having done the deal this meant that Harold could have more time doing what he was best at - doing absolutely nothing. When harvest time came round, he was still lazing around. He decided that it was time for him to collect his profits and sent one of the lesser servants to collect them. Unfortunately he had chosen bad business partners and there was no way they were going to share the profits with him:

Servant: Good day, my man.

Farmer: How do.

Servant: My associate Harold - you know the one who gave you the 2 gold coins to grow this crop for him - has sent me to collect what is due to him.

Farmer: Well, I ain't going to give it him.

Servant: Why not?

Farmer: Because I'm a thief. I'm going to keep it all myself.

Servant: Well, I'm just going to have to go back and tell him that.

Farmer: Oh no you don't.

Servant: Oh yes I will.

Narrator 2: Don't start that again. Get on with it.

Farmer: Right! This is for you!

Farmer kills body and hides it

Narrator 2: When the first servant didn't come back Harold sent another to claim his profit. That one met the same fate. Servant after servant was sent on this fool's errand and the ditch where the farmer was hiding the bodies was getting quite full. In the end, having run out of willing servants, Harold sent his own son:

Harold: Son.

Son: Yes father?

Harold: Can you go down to the fields and collect what's owed?

Son: Yes father.

Narrator 2: He met the same fate and now Harold didn't know what to do! Right in the middle of all this Sir Roderick came back.

Roderick: I'm back!

Narrator 2: He took all three of the servants by surprise:

Thomas: That made me jump!

Richard: I wasn't expecting you now!

Harold: That was a surprise.

Roderick: I know. I thought it would be a good idea to turn up unannounced. Now it's time for the inquisition.

Harold: I wasn't expecting that.

Roderick: No-one expects the inquisition. ... Thomas. I left you with most. How did you get on?

Thomas: Well, as you can see from these audited accounts that I have had prepared for you, things have turned out rather well. Not only have I recovered my initial investment, I have made a profit equal to it. I have the pleasure in presenting you with 20 gold coins.

Roderick: Well done, my faithful servant. I am very pleased. And to show you how pleased I am, I'm going to let you keep all your profits!

Thomas: Thank you sir.

Roderick: Richard - you're next.

Richard: If you'd just come over this way with me, master, you will see that this barn is full of corn. When I sell this on the open market I should be left with a clear profit of 5 gold coins - that in addition to the 5 you left me in the first place.

Roderick: Well done, my faithful servant. I am very pleased. And to show you how pleased I am, I'm going to let you keep all your profits!

Richard: Thank you sir.

Roderick: Harold - you're next. ... I said, Harold - you're next. ... What's the matter? What are you doing?

Harold: I'm packing master.

Roderick: Why on earth would you be packing?

Harold: Because I took your money and sort of didn't do anything with it. I tried to get others to do it for me and now there's nothing left. I've lost the lot - including my own son. Knowing you as we all do, you're going to be angry and drive me from your estates - or worse. I'm sorry master. Please forgive me.

Roderick: Forgive you? Forgive you? I trust you with 2 of my hard won gold coins and you waste them. And you want me to forgive you?

Harold: I'm really, really sorry.

Roderick: Well, I'll tell you what I'm going to do.

Harold: Go on. I'm ready for it.

Roderick: Of course I'm going to forgive you, my penitent servant. I am very pleased. And to show you how pleased I am, I'm going to let you keep all your profits!

Harold: But there are no profits.

Roderick: There you go then.

Thomas: You can have my wine press - if that's all right with you sir?

Roderick: Everyone deserves a second chance. *(To Harold)* Try and do better this time.

Harold: I will, sir.

Roderick: Oh, and Thomas?

Thomas: Yes, Sir Roderick?

Roderick: I'm not such an ogre over debts as people think, am I?

Thomas: No, Sir Roderick.

Exit all save Thomas who reflects on this ... Enter Investment 1

Thomas: Ah! The necklace salesman! Have you come at last to pay back my investments and give me my fair share of the profits?

Investment 1: Oh, good sir, please forgive me. The plan has failed completely. The crystals I used were salt crystals and when it rained the necklaces simply dissolved. Like them, I'm all

washed up.

Thomas: What's that to me? You should have known that salt is only good for adding flavour to things. And I have a watertight and legally binding contract with you that ensures that you will pay me what you owe.

Investment 1: But I have no money.

Thomas: And still you wear a cloak on your back (*Enter Investment 2*) ... And here's another one I was looking for!

Investment 2: Well, I wasn't looking for you.

Thomas: Don't tell me, things haven't been going too well with you either.

Investment 2: How did you guess? It seems that if you fit asses with sun glasses they think it's night and stop working all together. They just sit down and fall asleep.

Thomas: So, you've got no money for me either.

Investment 2: As a matter of fact ... No.

Investment 3: (*Entering*): Woe, woe and thrice woe!

Thomas: Stand over there with that one while I sort this one out.

Investment 3: I'm ruined! The rabbis have ruled that my foot wipes are unclean!

Thomas: Well they would be after wiping all those dirty feet.

Investment 3: No. They've ruled that they are unclean before anyone uses them to wipe feet. Something to do with getting the papyrus off cuts from the Egyptians. Now I haven't got a shekkel to my name.

Thomas: And here I stand with 3 legally binding contracts. And all 3 of you know how strict my master is for the letter of the law.

Investment 1: You're not going to take the cloak of my back, are you?

Investment 2: Or the roof over my head?

Investment 3: Or what little food still remains in my larder on which to feed my wife and 7 children? ... Come to think about it, would you be interested in a wife and 7 children?

Thomas: No, I'm going to do what my master would do in these circumstances.

Investment 2: It is the roof.

Investment 1: And my cloak.

Investment 3: How about just the wife then?

Thomas: No. None of these. I'm going to ... forgive you, just as my master has forgiven those who have failed him.

Narrator 2: This made these debtors respect Thomas for his generosity. In later years, when he grew old and needed their help, they remembered this act and helped him. In fact, the more that Thomas had forgiven, the more help those debtors gave him in the future! Harold thought he'd try and sort out things as well. He got some of his mates together and went after the crooks who had robbed him of his income. This led to an almighty punch up and attracted the attention of the authorities. Everyone was arrested and hauled before the judge - which just happened to be Sir Roderick:

Sir Roderick: What am I going to do with you Harold? I let you off the debt when I could have had you beaten and driven from my home. Instead of showing similar mercy to those who had wronged you, you went after them. Shall I now give you what you deserve? Shall I have you beaten and driven from my estates?

Harold: No, master, please forgive me. I've learnt my lessons this time and won't do anything like this ever again.

Narrator 2: And Sir Roderick forgave his penitent servant and, as the master always rewards a penitent heart, he took them all off for a party!

Link 3: Hey! That sounds like another story!

Link 4: It is!

Act Three: Party Time:

Narrator 3: Once there was this man who planned a great feast:

Host: Steward!

Steward: Yes master?

Host: I am planning to hold a feast to honour one who is a very special person. You are to make plans immediately.

Steward: Yes master, I will.

Host: And steward.

Steward: Yes master?

Host: Have some of my servants take these invitations out to the great and good of the town as I wish them to join me in honouring this person.

Steward: I will see that it is done.

Narrator 3: Unfortunately most of the people in the town didn't like the host, so they made up all sorts of excuses.

Servant 1: My master has sent me to invite you to a party to honour a very special person.

Baldy: Sorry. I can't come. I'm washing my hair.

Servant 1: My master has sent me to invite you to a party to honour a very special person.

Guest 2: I'm sorry. I can't come. I've got to watch some paint dry.

Servant 1: My master has sent me to invite you to a party to honour a very special person.

Guest 3: (*wearing party hat, etc.*): I don't do parties - especially his.

Servant 1: My master has sent me to invite you to a party to honour a very special person.

Guest 4: Come in for a minute while I get ready.

Narrator 3: Some of those invited were so upset that they beat up the servants.

Servant 1 staggers back onto stage

Guest 4: And don't come back here with improper suggestions like that ever again!

Guest 5: Yes? What do you want?

Servant 1: My master has sent me to invite you to a party to honour a very special person.

Narrator 3: Some are even killed ... *Guest 5 stabs Servant 1 with a sword who staggers around the stage before finally dying ...* eventually. Meanwhile back at the party place:

Host: I don't understand it. Why haven't my guests started to arrive? Don't they want to join me in honouring this person?

Steward: Master?

Host:: Yes steward?

Steward: We've got a problem. No body of note or position in this town wants to come to your party. Some of your servants have been beaten up - one has been killed. Host:: Right! That's

the last time I'm going to invite them to anything I'm planning. Send out the servants again - not the one that's dead, of course - and invite those people who you would not expect me to invite. I'm determined to see this person honoured.

Steward: It shall be done.

Narrator 3: And so, once more, the servants went out onto the streets with their master's invitations.

Servant 2: My master has sent me to invite you to a party to honour a very special person.

Lawyer: Oh thank you, thank you. I knew he would get round to me in the end. I am truly worthy of such an honour. Maybe even the party is being held in my honour. Can you tell me servant? Is this why you have invited me, Henry Grabbit, senior partner in Swindle, Twist and Grabbitt, solicitors?

Servant 2: You're Henry Grabbitt, solicitor?

Lawyer: Yes, that's right.

Servant 2: Not Gerry the builder?

Lawyer: No. He lives next door.

Servant 2: Sorry, my mistake. ... *(goes next door)* ... My master has sent me to invite you to a party to honour a very special person.

Lawyer: You can't be inviting HIM. He's a builder and not a very good or trustworthy one at that!

Builder: Yeah. I'm not very trustworthy. Some have even told me I'm so bad I even give cowboy builders a bad name. ... You haven't come about that house I built upon the sand have you?

Servant 2: No, but you are Gerry the builder?

Builder:

Yes. Servant 2: Well, the invitation is for you.

Lawyer: And you've nothing for the house of Grabbit the lawyer?

Servant 2: As a matter of fact I do have something for that house.

Lawyer: Oh, thank you, thank you. I knew there was a mistake. I'll overlook your error my man. Hand it over.

Servant 2: Here you are.

Lawyer: But this isn't for me. It's for Lazarus.

Servant 2: That's right.

Lawyer: That's the old beggar man who sits by my gate. On a good day he gets the scraps off my table. Your master can't possibly want him at the party!

Servant 2: That's the name on the invitation. ... Why don't you come along and sit outside my master's gate? Maybe Lazarus will let you have some of his scraps.

Narrator 3: Finally the guests started to arrive at the party:

Host: Welcome, welcome. Lazarus my old friend welcome. Come and sit at table. ... No, not that seat. You are most welcome but that seat is reserved for the guest of honour. Let me find you a seat more fitting to your status. Doctor Dave! What are you doing sitting way down here?

Doctor Dave: I'm not important. This is a fitting place for someone like me.

Host: Nonsense! Stand up immediately and give this seat to Lazarus here. ... Now, you come with me and sit here. This is a much more fitting place. And you. What do you think you're wearing at this special feast?

Ill Dressed: What I was wearing when I was told to come here. I made no special arrangements.

Host: Well, I'll make some for you. Bind his hand and foot and throw him in the cellar!

Steward: Master?

Host: Yes?

Steward: Your good friend, Sebastian Jacobson, has sent word that he needs your help. Shall I tell the messenger that you can't come at the moment?

Host: No. Nothing is more important to me than a friend in need. What has happened?

Steward: The messenger says he has fallen into a ditch while helping his partially sighted neighbour go into town to the market.

Host: He's blind as a bat himself! It was all bound to end in tears. I'll go and help at once.

Steward: But what about the party?

Host: Give my guests some more wine while they wait. Continue with the preparations while I'm gone. Have the cooks light the barbecues but warn them that it may be some time before I return so they should take care. They should make sure they have enough coals to cook the meal at that time.

Narrator 3: So the Steward did just that while his master went off to help his friend in need.
Unfortunately one of the cooks was not as cautious as the other.

Cook 1: Pour on the lighting fuel! Let's get it going! The higher the flames the hotter the coals!

Cook 2: You should take more care. The hotter the coals the quicker they burn and we don't know when the master will return. We should only burn what is necessary to keep the fire going until he comes back.

Cook 1: Nonsense! I've got plenty of coals.

Cook 2: You'll be sorry!

Cook 1: It'll be alright.

Narrator 3: But it wasn't. Long before the master returned, his fire had gone out. ... And when the master did return, he was not very pleased:

Host: What's all this then? It looks like you've lost your flames.

Cook 1: Yes, master. I have. All I've got left is ash.

Host: Well, you won't cook much on that, will you?

Cook 1: No master.

Host: Well then, you're like your coals.

Cook 1: What do you mean?

Host: You're fired.

Narrator 3: And so, at last, it was time for the party.

Host: Friends! Welcome my honoured guest!

Steward: I don't see him. Where is he?

Host: It's you.

Steward: What do you mean, it's me?

Host: All the years you have worked for me you have listened to my instructions and tried your hardest to fulfil them. You have been honest, hard working and never once complained. You've even found time to help others in their work and encourage those along the way who were perhaps finding their duties and obligations a little wearisome at the time. You

have always been respectful of others no matter what their station. In fact you have behaved exactly as I have asked you to and how I try to act myself. Well done, my good and faithful servant - take the seat of honour!

All: Well done! ... Speech! ... Hurrah!

Steward: Thank you, master, you do me great honour. Before I sit down I'd like to propose a toast. One of my master's friends is not with us tonight. I'm sure he would have come but he was always so busy. He felt that he had to have everything just right. He felt that everything had to be in its place and his future secured. He was such a special friend of my master that I took the invitation for him to join us to at the party myself. But it was too late. He'd worn himself out with all the storing and sorting, preparing and securing, and he died early this morning - before I could give him his invitation. I'm sure he knew about it but he was so busy that without that invitation he was bound to miss out on the party. And that's what he did. He missed out on the party. So I'd like to propose a toast to absent friends.

All: Absent friends!

Narrator 3: And that brings us to final moral to all these stories. The Parables that Jesus used were not meant to be theological arguments to think deeply about. They were meant to be simple stories that were fun to listen to but with a message for all who heard them. That's what we've tried to bring you in this retelling of the stories of Jesus today. If you've heard something in these tales that speaks to you - or says something about your situation, don't miss out on your opportunity. Don't be an "absent friend".

Host: Remember: You have to be ready to go on digging deeper until you find the truth. But never give up. Because there is always someone ready to love you with a father's love, and there are always those along the way to help you. There are even people here tonight longing to talk with you.

Steward: Put aside all the other things that you're doing because you think they're more important - all the storing and sorting, preparing and securing. Don't delay, act today. Reach out and accept your invitation.

Host: Then your ears will hear, and your eyes will see, and you'll make it to the feast prepared for you and all human kind. After all, everyone is invited to this party!

All: Cheers!!

Parables: Holy Tales With a Twist The End

Production Notes

The “Aston Villa” fan in the parable of the Good Samaritan are the traditional rivals of Coventry City fans who wear sky blue. Local variations are sure to apply and should be used.

In the Parable of the Sower the seeds were small wrapped sweets. The idea behind this was even if they were not all picked up during the evening, it wouldn't matter if the left overs were found later because they could still be eaten.

The “Mustard Seed” produced the traditional “beanstalk” with leaves attached to a string that “grew” up the front of the pulpit. The “Added Birds” were a simple nest with a couple of birds in it and were simply placed on the lectern on the pulpit. You can do better!

The piece was originally performed with a single Narrator and 5 other actors of various ages playing the other parts. It is possible to reduce this to a Narrator and 4 other actors, or to add more as the number of performers permit. Part of the charm of the piece is, however, this constant changing of hats - literally! - amongst the cast members to keep the stories moving.

For further information or for details of other shows written and produced by Roger Price please visit his website at: www.rogoofsham.co.uk.

Roger keeps an on line ‘Blog’ where he takes a sideways and reflective look at this confusing world. This can be accessed at: www.unconventional-disciple.co.uk