

# GREEN PARABLES

Editor

**Mathew Koshy Punnackad**

Co-Editor

**Anne Susan Koshy**



CSI Synod Publication 2016

**GREEN PARABLES**

Editor: Dr. Mathew Koshy Punnackad

Email: [csi.oikos@gmail.com](mailto:csi.oikos@gmail.com)

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First Impression: December 2016

Copies: 1000

Illustration: M. J. Mathew, Pamaruthy

Layout & Printing:

C. M. S. Press, Kottayam, Tel: 0481-2567278

Published by:

Rev. Dr. Daniel Rathnakara Sadananda,

General Secretary of CSI, 5 Whites Road,

Royapetta, Chennai 600014 for Church of South India Synod.

Distributed by: ISPCK, Post Box No 1585, 1654 Madarsa Road,  
Kashmere Gate, Delhi 110 006

ISBN: 978-81-931851-8-6

**Price Rs. 150/-**

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am extremely thankful to the Most Rev. Dr. G. Dyvasirvadani, the Moderator, Rt. Rev. Thomas K. Oommen, the Deputy Moderator, Rev. Dr. D. Rathnakara Sadananda, the General Secretary, Adv. Robert Bruce, the Treasurer and Rt. Rev. B. N. Fenn, Chairman of Synod Ecological Concerns Committee, for their moral support in bringing out this volume of Green Parables. I express my sincere thanks to the Rev. Dr. D. Rathnakara Sadananda for writing the Preface for this book.

I am also thankful to my wife, Prof. Dr. Anne Susan Koshy, for helping me in editing this volume. I am highly obliged to the participants of Green Parable workshops, organised by the CSI Synod Department of Ecological Concerns. I would like to express my sincere thanks to Rev. Dr. Chilkuri Vasantha Rao (former Principal of ACTC and Old Testament theologian), Rev. Dr. Merwin Shinoj Boas, Professor of Ethics, UTC, Bengaluru, Rev. Dr. John Samuel Ponnuswamy, former Professor of Old Testament, TTS, Madurai. (Currently working as the Principal of School of Theology, ECC, Bengaluru), Rev. Joseph Samuel, Professor of New Testament, KUTS who evaluated the parables during the Earth Bible Sermon workshops. I have been enriched by the valuable suggestions of Rev. Dr. D. Rathnakara Sadananda (New Testament theologian) in the publication of this book. I would like to express my sincere thanks to Mr. M. J. Mathew, Reader of Madhya Kerala Diocese for drawing beautiful illustrations and cover.

**Prof. Dr. Mathew Koshy Punnackad**

Editor & Hon. Director of Department of Ecological Concerns

Website: [www.drmathewkoshy.com](http://www.drmathewkoshy.com)

Email: [drmathewkoshy51@gmail.com](mailto:drmathewkoshy51@gmail.com) (personal)

[csi.oikos@gmail.com](mailto:csi.oikos@gmail.com) (official)

## **PREFACE**

It is indeed a privilege for the Church of South India to present the Green Parables, published by the Department of Ecological Concerns, CSI Synod.

A parable may be a proverb, a riddle, a comparison, a contrast or a simple or complex story. The imagery of Jesus' parables encompass both realism and symbolism. On the surface, the parables are everyday-like experiences or are very life-like. However, the term parable (to throw alongside) itself denotes something deeper, symbolic and metaphoric. Jesus, the Teacher par excellence used parables to make people understand God and God's reign.

The parables attracted people towards Jesus, as they were in their language. The parables made people think, question and embark on a process of self-discovery. Parables opened up windows into spaces here-through unknown, unexperienced and unexplored. Parables extended their horizons and transformed their thoughts and deeds. Parables thus created a people's movement to understand, experience and work towards the reign of God. Parables helped people to understand the Creator and the worth of creation and their intrinsic relationships.

Green Parables attempts to re-read, re-tell, re-actualize the parables of Jesus in contemporary narratives. The Department of Ecological Concerns conducted two workshops that enabled the writing of the Green Parables. Fifty-four Clergy from various Dioceses of CSI and thirty-

two teachers from different CSI institutions participated in the workshops to write these parables. Most of the parables reflect the issues related to the modern world. It is hoped that the parables will inspire people to join the movement for a green Earth, motivate people to protect our mother Earth from further destruction and degradation, and convey the message of ecological conservation to the grass roots level through a new way of engaging in dialogue with all beings and their relationships.

In our faith journey we have to take care of all of God's creation. The place of our existence can only become a home if the relationship between nature and human beings is without stresses and strain – if it can be described in terms of reconciliation, peace and a viable symbiosis. Thus, the Bible calls us to conserve the earth in all its biodiversity, recognising the intrinsic value of all creatures. It is to understand the organic relationship between humans and all creation with due recognition that we are what we are by virtue of our internal and intrinsic relationship with the created earth in all its biodiversity. The Bible speaks of the whole creation groaning towards the emergence of a new creation, God's new family.

Care for creation being an integral part of our mission mandate, the CSI has been actively involved in climate justice issues. Indicators of this involvement are the UNDP Eco award to CSI and active participation in the climate change negotiations at COP21, Paris, France in June 2015. During the triennium 2014-2016, the Department of Ecological Concerns has published four books: Green Church, Earth Bible Sermons-1, Earth Bible Sermons-2 and Earth Bible Sermons-3. It has taken the lead to form Green Clergy

Fellowship, Green Teacher Fellowship, Green Sunday School and Green School initiatives. It has also initiated local eco groups to get involved via-various projects to mitigate global warming.

I congratulate the CSI Department of Ecological Concerns, its Hon. Director Prof. Mathew Koshy Punnackad, and the members of the CSI Green Clergy Fellowship for their initiative and commitment in bringing out the Green Parables.

**Rev. Dr. D. Rathnakara Sadananda**  
*General Secretary, CSI.*

## INTRODUCTION

Parables and Miracles of Jesus are of vital importance as far as Sunday classes are concerned. As a young boy I too mugged up these parables and the miracles of Jesus to win prizes. Later I realised that the parables and miracles were taught in the same way in all Sunday Schools expressing the idea that Jesus is the Lord of universe and if we pray and worship God regularly he will protect us, bless us and give us prosperity. The Sunday school books designed by different agencies also emphasise this aspect. The Sunday School texts prepared by some Churches give emphasis to the importance of their Church.

Why did Jesus tell parables? Was it for showing His power and glory. I don't think so. Jesus told parables to help the audience understand clearly what he was saying. He was speaking to the poor innocent and uneducated people. Jesus used parables not only to witness against unjust systems of oppression but also to propose a new way of being in the world—one that would bring people together, creating a community of hospitality, generosity, and love—namely, the Kingdom of God. Often Jesus used a parable in response to a specific question without directly answering the question itself.

Each parable has a significant and universal message. It is useless and irrelevant to mug up parables without understanding the message of each parable. The CSI Synod Department of Ecological Concerns has conducted two

workshops of Green Clergy and Green Teachers to study the message of each parable, imagining how Jesus would have told the same parable in a different way, in the Indian context.

What is the present condition of India? In 2016, three hundred and thirty million people, more than a quarter of India's population, were affected by drought. High temperatures have hit almost all parts of India, with scores of deaths reported from heatstroke. The temperatures have risen earlier than normal, increasing the concerns about this year's death toll. The whole creation is groaning for water due to the desertification, which is an irreversible process. Migration of poor people and wild animals are now common. Is Gospel a good news to the people affected by global warming. If the Church can address the ecological issue it is good news to the affected people. The other side of this story is that the people of India who are vulnerable to the effects of climate change have done the least to cause it.

Big companies are razing the hills, reclaiming wet lands, clearing forests and levelling places ignoring the sanctity of hills, wet lands and forests which are the store houses of water. The innocent poor people of India and other living beings are suffering due to scarcity of water which is the result of Climate Change are saying, "We are thirsty".

"If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink..." (John 7:37). Divine blessings are showered upon all creatures on this Earth and it is the right of living beings to get the heavenly gift of water, abundantly. That is why Revelation states that, to the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life. (not only to human being but to all creations that thirst). The land mafia can not understand the intrinsic value of water, the purpose of water, how it has been connected with all things in nature and the voice of water.

Due to Global warming, nature has become “the new poor,” as vulnerable and expendable as poor human beings and communities have been. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives. And recovery of sight to the blind, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour. (Luke4:18-19). This preferential option, the imperative for Christians to translate this bias into practical care for the vulnerable, in particular to those who have suffered injustice, is set out in the parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew25:31-46.

An attempt has been made to retell Biblical parables of Jesus to communicate the message of parables in an Indian context. We do believe that these parables will motivate you to protect the mother Earth from destruction and help you to understand the message of the parables in a new perspective.

**Prof.Dr. Mathew Koshy Punnackad**  
Editor

## Chapter 1

# THE GOOD SAMARITAN

### Luke 10:25-37

<sup>25</sup> On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

<sup>26</sup> “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?”

<sup>27</sup> He answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’[a]; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’[b]”

<sup>28</sup> “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

<sup>29</sup> But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

<sup>30</sup> In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead.

<sup>31</sup> A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side.

<sup>32</sup> So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

<sup>33</sup> But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him.

<sup>34</sup> He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him.

<sup>35</sup> The next day he took out two denarii[c] and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’

<sup>36</sup> “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

<sup>37</sup> The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise



## **The Good Samaritan -1**

### **BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL**

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?”.

“What is written in the law?” he replied. “How do you read it?”

He answered: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind”; and, Love your neighbour as yourself.”.

“You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied, “Do this and you will live.”

But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbour?”

In reply Jesus said:

A farmer was going from his farmyard to a lonely place to escape from the money lenders. He had borrowed a large sum of money from the financiers for cultivation. As per the advice of modern agricultural scientists, he used a lot of fertilizers and pesticides for his cultivation. In spite of all his efforts, he did not get a good harvest. As his land and house were pledged to the financiers, he had to flee from the village. On his way he fell into the hands of the financiers, who stripped him of his clothes, beat him up and went away, leaving him half dead. No body came to his help. Many passed by on the other side, but at last an environmentalist, came where the man was. When he saw him, he took pity on him, went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring oil and wine. He took him to an inn and stayed with him to hear the sad tale of a modern farmer. The next day he took the farmer to a

forest and the the farmer was delighted to see the serene beauty of the forest.

The farmer asked the Environmentalist: “Who is maintaining this forest?”

“God,” replied the environmentalist. “Yes this is God’s farmland”.

“How does God cultivate?” the farmer asked.

“Dear friend, Nature has a rhythm and if your rhythm harmonizes with the rhythm of Nature, then you will be a successful person. We can see the rhythm of God only through the rhythm of nature if your rhythm cannot harmonize with the rhythm of Nature, you will fail in your career and will end in suicide. In the forest, there is a natural way of cultivation, unlike the modern methods of agriculture”.

“Is agriculture possible without fertilizers and pesticides?”. asked the farmer in surprise.

“Yes friend, when you use chemical fertilizers and pesticides you kill microbes which enhance the nutrient value of the soil. We are upsetting the rhythm of nature by adding toxins to the land. The multinational companies who produce these fertilizers and pesticides, need profit, hence, they advice the farmers to add more and more fertilizers and pesticides to enhance the yield. Every artificial enhancement has a limit. When you add more and more chemicals, all the microbes will disappear from the land which will result in desertification. The trees you see in the forests are more stronger than the trees you grow by using chemical fertilizers. Do not poison your land, because it belongs to God”.

The environmentalist continued: “you have to learn some more lessons from God’s cultivation”.

“As the trees are growing as tall as they can, sunlight cannot fall on the bare ground; it is a planned architecture of

God. Where there are no tall trees, there will be grass on the ground. In God's cultivation, God will not allow sunlight to fall directly on the bare ground. When sunlight falls on the ground, the sun's energy will be transferred to the land. When the temperature of the land increases, the microbes which enrich the nutrient value of the soil will die and disappear resulting in desertification. Land is the womb of life. In God's cultivation, God retains the life giving power of the land. In nature's rhythm, land always prefers to have a green cover. When the energy of the sun falls on the green cover, it is converted to carbohydrates, which in turn becomes the food for all living creatures".

"Do you know where the most poisonous creatures live?". The environmentalist asked .

"No." the farmer replied.

"They live in the central part of the forest, i.e the thickest part of the forest. These creatures are the Guards of God to keep the forest as such. In other words, they are guarding the forest, resisting all attacks which upset the natural rhythm."

The farmer became guilty of his past deeds in upsetting the rhythm of nature. Also he was happy to hear about the wonderful cultivation of God.

The environmentalist further explained the salient features of God's cultivation "If you ask the teak, who is your neighbour? Its answer will be the Mahogani tree. The Mahogani will say that its neighbour is Rose wood. Rose wood would say, Jack tree. In God's cultivation, there is only multi-crop cultivation. Whereas modern cultivation promotes only mono-crop cultivation.

To be more specific, if you ask a tree who is your neighbour?, it will say, my immediate neighbours are air, soil, water, microbes and then comes the next tree. The microbes,

soil, water and the air are showing mercy to the trees to sustain life in its fullness. As a fraternity, all creatures and plants are living like good neighbours, no insect can attack them and also they do not need any artificial fertilizers.

Dear friend, everything in nature is God's creation. All of them have equal rights just as we enjoy. They are our good neighbours".

The environmentalist gave some money to the farmer for his immediate needs and went on his way.

Jesus asked the expert in law: Who is my neighbour?

The expert in law replied: That which shows mercy and concern to enrich life.

Jesus told him, " Go and do likewise"

**Mathew Koshy Punnackad**

## **The Good Samaritan 2**

### **HOPE FOR THE HOPELESS**

Christopher of Kothapalem village married Nayomi from a nearby village and were living comfortably. Nayomi who had completed 12th standard started Nursing Training in nearby town in one of the Christian Mission Hospital- 'Sophia Medical Centre'. Christopher stayed back in the village looking after his small shop.

In the 2nd year of the training period Nayomi fell sick and started having diarrhoea. On investigation she was found to be the victim of HIV. Further investigation revealed that her husband being alone in the village, through contacts with different women got HIV and passed it on to his wife Nayomi. Nayomi, being in a speciality hospital ie. Sophia Medical Centre with plenty of soothing green trees with colorful flowers that promotes life, and a variety of fruits around for the nourishment of HIV patients, received the best possible treatment for HIV. The Director of the hospital was kind enough to provide all the facilities – fresh nutritious food and fresh water from the bore wells, well ventilated room with refreshing breeze, for her speedy recovery while continuing with her studies.

In the third year of the course, she had to face a tough challenge. One of the requirements for the completion of the course was that she had to conduct ten deliveries. Knowing her condition no woman or hospital would allow her to conduct a delivery. Without conducting ten deliveries she will not get a diploma certificate. Nayomi was going through a very critical situation. She had to get her diploma certificate for their livelihood but no institution was in a position to

provide the opportunity to conduct deliveries. Nayomi was an intelligent, highly industrious, and honest student. Knowing her abilities and her unfortunate situation, the Director of the institution wanted to somehow help Nayomi. He diligently searched different parts of India and found one Christian institution – ‘Hope for the Hopeless’ headed by a Christian doctor where HIV women were not only getting treatment but also were conducting deliveries. The Director approached this institution through CMAI and fervently requested the Director of Hope for Hopeless to allow Nayomi to fulfill her course requirement.

By the grace of the Almighty, Nayomi completed her course requirements at Hope for the Hopeless hospital and received her diploma certificate along with her classmates. The merciful Director of Sophia Medical Centre appointed her in his hospital as a staff nurse to provide livelihood for her and her family. Mean while recognizing her potentialities the Central Government offered a good job with a good salary. Considering her future prospects, The Director of Sophia Medical Centre graciously allowed Nayomi to accept the central government assignment keeping her progressive future prospects in view. Now Nayomi is efficiently and comfortably doing her job to the satisfaction of her authorities. Because of one good Samaritan, Nayomi could get well, complete her studies successfully and lead a productive life.

## **The Good Samaritan 3**

### **COMPASSION**

An elephant had lost its way and was roaming in the area where elephants were hunted for the tusks.(The tusk of elephant was smuggled for ornamental purpose. Even if the tusk is removed from the mouth of an elephant it can survive without the tusk if treated) Suddenly a group of people with lethal weapons and rope got down from a vehicle with a powerful lamps which scared the elephant. One among them shot at the elephant's leg with powerful chloroform injection and the others knocked the elephant using a strong rope. They were the tusk robbers, they robbed the tusk of that poor elephant and left it half dead.

A forest officer happened to pass that way in the evening for a visit and the driver of the government vehicle saw the wounded elephant and informed him about it but the officer ignored it. Then an eco-tourist passed that way. He got down from his vehicle around 50 meters away from elephant. He focused the elephant with his advanced DSLR camera and took many photos. Then he got in to his vehicle not even telling his co-tourists about the elephant. Because he intended to upload all the photos on social media to get plenty of likes. The tourist who got in instructed the driver to take another way to reach the destiny and the driver did so.

Later a truck driver a native of the forest (a tribe)came that way and saw the half-dead elephant struggling for survival. He had compassion on that animal, he bandaged its

wounds, applying some herbal medicine to soothe its pains. Then he brought a veterinary doctor from the forest veterinary hospital in his own truck. He treated the elephant throughout the night and finally the elephant survived.

The next day the driver woke up early in the morning he gave some native food to the doctor (fruits, vegetables, honey, cereals, pulses etc..) ‘Look after this elephant’, he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for the extra expenses incurred by you.

“Which of these three do you think was neighbor to the animal (co-creation) which fell into the hands of tusk robbers?”

The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on the animal. “Jesus told him “go and do likewise”

**Jeremiah**

## **The Good Samaritan 4**

### **ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS**

In reply Jesus said: “Thousands of panic-stricken people living in northeast Bangalore were heading to the railway station to board a train to Guwahati, in August, following rumours of violence targeting them. The northeastern migrants were mostly climate refugees, the victims of climate change, who found it difficult to sustain life in their own native places as farmers and agriculturalists. The atmosphere of fear that prevailed in Bangalore had left them helpless like a person who had been attacked by robbers who stripped, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. The Church, a significant component of the society ignored those climate refugees who were fleeing Bangalore and passed by on the other side. So too, the corpus of profit seeking Multi National Companies, when they saw the plight of these unfortunate refugees, passed by on the other side. But a group of people of people, a movement, addressed this issue. They opened a telephone help line, helped move people to safer places, spoke to politicians and the media and made sure that the wounded people were given care so that everyone could experience life in its fullest.

**Sandeep Jacob**

## **The Good Samaritan 5**

### **AN ECO- FRIENDLY LIFE**

Once an intellectual asked the ecologist, “Sir, what must I do to protect the environment?”

What have you learnt in science? he asked.

He answered “We must save the trees and plant as many trees as possible so that we can have fresh air to inhale. We should love nature and lead an eco-friendly life.”

“You have answered correctly, the ecologist replied. Do this and live accordingly.”

But the man wanted to justify himself, so he asked “How can I be friendly with environment?”

In reply, the ecologist said, “There was a drainage canal in front of a school which was situated on the outskirts of a city. There was only one shopping complex built on the outer side of the compound wall of the school. Because of the negligence of the contractor, two concrete slabs of the drainage canal were displaced leaving a big hole. Students, teachers, and customers to the shops threw all the waste polythene covers into it and as a result, the flow of the water in the gutter was blocked emanating a very bad smell. The next day the bad smell emanating from the gutter was unbearable.

The Head master driving to school entered the school through the other gate. An owner of one of the shops also moved his bike to the other side abusing the municipality for negligence. But a new young teacher who came to the school on his cycle saw the hole, stopped his cycle and went near the hole covering his nose to examine it. He found there was

a lot of waste blocking the flow. He took a long stick and cleared some of the polythene covers from the hole and soon the water started flowing slowly. Then the teacher met the headmaster and reported the matter and asked for the help of the NSS Students to clear the further blocks. But the headmaster refused to allow the volunteers on the pretext that there was no fund. Then the teacher at his own expense initiated the NSS Volunteers to clear the drainage canal completely. Next day, he gave a written complaint to the municipality to mend the concrete slabs.

Which of these three do you think was leading an eco-friendly life?

The man replied, “The teacher who took the effort to clear the drainage.”

The ecologist said, “Go and do likewise.”

**R. Sellaraj Manuneethi**

## Chapter 2

# THE LOST SHEEP

**Luke 15:4-7**

4 “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? 5 And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders 6 and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ 7 I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.



**The Lost Sheep**

## **THE LOST POND**

Now all the politicians and industrialists gathered around to hear the Lord. But the religious heads muttered, “this man welcomes all the corrupted and exploiters”.

Then Jesus told them, “Suppose there were 100 ponds in your small native town, used for cultivation. As a result of a wrong development paradigm the waste generated along with the plastics were thrown into the nearest large pond which gradually turned into a stinky, mosquito breeding dirty pond.

The remaining 99 ponds met the cultivation needs, so this single pond being the eye sore did not matter as a water source. An environmentalist when he visited his home town was highly perturbed and he called the local politicians to discuss this. Though there were 99 other ponds that required attention they left the 99 and gathered the villagers for reviving the dead pond. The town volunteered, cleaned it up, dug it up and shouldered the job joyfully. Rains came, the fishes flourished and the birds came, the songs of birds and the green filled the area and the town rejoiced.”

The Lord said unto them, “I tell you, in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over this one pond saved, than having the other 99 useful ponds.”

**Charliban Shanthakumar**

## Chapter 3

# THE SHEEP AND THE GOATS

### **Mathew 25:31-46**

<sup>31</sup> “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne.

<sup>32</sup> All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

<sup>33</sup> He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

<sup>34</sup> “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.

<sup>35</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in,

<sup>36</sup> I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

<sup>37</sup> “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?

<sup>38</sup> When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you?

<sup>39</sup> When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

<sup>40</sup> “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

<sup>41</sup> “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

<sup>42</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink,

<sup>43</sup> I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’

<sup>44</sup> “They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’

<sup>45</sup> “He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’

<sup>46</sup> “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”



## **The Sheep and the Goats**

### **THE JUDGMENT OF THE NATIONS**

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at his left.

Then the king will say to those at his right hand, “Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.” Then he will say to those on his left hand, “You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil

and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.”

Now both the righteous and those at his left hand will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry, or thirsty? And when was it that we saw you a stranger, or naked? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison?’ And the king will answer the righteous, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these, ‘nature’ who are members of my family, you did it to me.’ Then he will answer those at his left hand, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, ‘nature’, you did not do it to me.’

And the king continued to elaborate.

The vegetation/plantation of the land were hungry: the righteous fed them with natural manures and organic fertilizers, but those at the left hand fed them with chemical fertilizers and pesticides, and thus corrupted the land and the damage caused was irreparable.

The land was thirsty endangered with drought: the righteous came forward and initiated rain water harvesting. The ground water got invigorated naturally through percolation (filter). But those at the left hand had exposed the surface of the land too much in the name of urbanization and development and thus depleted the ground water resource. Therefore, techniques like rain water harvesting were initiated to recharge groundwater which helps even in times of drought.

The air was always a stranger to most of the people; only the air is felt consciously either in the countryside’s fresh air or at the pungent odour in the atmosphere. The righteous protected the air by the natural way of living; whereas those at the left hand polluted the air with harmful chemicals. Rapid

growth of chemical industries and vehicles, too much usage of air-conditioners, refrigerators for their comfort damaged the atmosphere. The chemicals called chlorofluorocarbons, or CFCs emitted by these machines caused ozone layer depletion.

The animals and birds were laid naked: the righteous built national parks, reserves and sanctuaries to protect the habitats of animals and birds. Those at the left hand, in the name of eco-tourism exploited the natural environment thus polluting the environment and damaging the biodiversity leaving behind garbage and feeding the animals with whatever they have.

The earth as a whole was sick and was in prison: only the righteous toiled for the welfare of the earth protecting and keeping it. They helped in regenerating the energy of the soil by creating vermiculture and compost in their locality. Those at the left hand selfishly destroyed the natural resource. They monopolised the earth for their comfort.

After explaining these things to them, the king answered them,

‘And these at the left hand will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.’”

**Jerin Sester C.**

## Chapter 4

### THE FOOLISH RICHMAN

**Luke 12:16-21**

16 And he told them this parable: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. 17 He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’ 18 “Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. 19 And I’ll say to myself, ‘You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.’” 20 “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’” 21 “This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.”



## **The Foolish Richman 1**

### **WHO IS RICH IN GOD’S SIGHT?**

And he went on to say to them all, “Watch out and guard yourselves from every kind of greed; because a person’s true life is not made up of the things he owns, no matter how rich he may be”. Then Jesus told them this parable: “There was once a rich man who had land which yielded good crops. He was interested in Science and Technology. He appointed leading scientists all over the world in his high-tech laboratory and asked them to bring out high yielding rice seeds. As per the direction of the rich man the scientists started research and succeeded in bringing out high yielding genetically engineered seeds. The scientists told the rich man: “If farmers cultivate this high yielding variety of rice seeds, then famine will become a myth.”

The rich man instead of appreciating them became quite astonished. He told the scientists: “Look, you should not eradicate famine with these high tech-seeds. The farmers should come to my company for buying the high tech seeds. They are free to use these seeds, but they may not be permitted to use the seeds in the traditional way. If they make seeds in the traditional way why I should spend money?” The rich man put the scientists in a dilemma. The rich man again told them. You have manipulated the gene to get better seeds. Using the same genetic engineering, why can’t you remove the reproductive part from the seed”

The scientists started research in this direction and at last they succeeded in bringing out seeds with the terminator gene. The farmers had to buy seeds from the company for cultivation, but they could not set apart the seeds for the next annual cultivation. The rich man became happy. He began to

think to himself, I have created the best seeds of the grains which are used by the majority of the people all over the world. The farmers all over the world can purchase the best seeds from my company. The farmers will abandon the traditional seeds and will use my seeds. After some more years the other seeds will disappear and I can monopolise rice farming. Then, the farmers would have no other options and I will make profit from the sale of seeds. I will become the richest man in the world.”Then I will say to myself, Lucky man! You have all the good things you need for many years. Take life easy, eat, drink and enjoy be merry!. But God said to him, “You fool!, You have used science and technology to satisfy your greed. You have been expected to use your knowledge through this technology for the welfare of all. An earthquake will destroy not only the nuclear reactors you have built, but also destroy the life in this place for many many years. Your pride and your greed will be shattered within seconds. This very night if you have to give up your life, then who will get all these things you have accumulated for yourself?”

And Jesus concluded, “This will be the fate of those who pile up riches for themselves but are not rich in God’s sight.”

**Mathew Koshy Punnackad**

## **The Foolish Richman 2**

### **LOVE GOD, NATURE AND MAN**

There was a Millionaire, who purchased acres of fertile land and invested his money on that land to produce more food crops and more commercial crops. He bought new hybrid seeds from an internationally reputed seeds seller who was a member of a Multinational Group of Seeds Company. He cultivated the land and sowed these hybrid seeds using the chemical fertilizers and pesticides. As a result, he got a good harvest through his cultivation. But he was not satisfied with the harvest, his greed compelled him to earn more money for his luxurious life.

Then he decided to invest his money on Industries. For the construction of Industries he used the natural resources as construction material : for sand he took help from sand mafia, for stones and concrete he took help from the stone crusher, who had been demolishing the rocky mountains. And he cut the huge trees from the forest. Through his hard industry and from his cultivation he earned a lot of crops, money and he became very materialistic. He had no sufficient place to keep the large quantity of grain, money and his possessions, so he decided to build more store houses.

Owing to the use of strong chemical fertilizers, pesticides, his land had become infertile, unfruitful and barren. And in the name of urban development and construction, he had depleted natural resources which resulted in severe environmental problems such as soil barrenness, water scarcity, depletion of ground water and pollution at all levels as well as disparities, inequalities, and human rights violation. People began fighting for their basic needs which indicated a new kind of war in future, a resource war. As he was very

rich he did not have to bother about anybody, but he himself enjoyed with drink and women. Finally he was struck by a severe incurable disease which left him lonely and helpless and he was told that he was going to die the same night. Then before his death, he realized his folly. He realized that he should have depended on God, on nature and on fellow human beings for his sustenance which is imperative for eternal and abundant life.

**C. Ramulu Emmanuel**

## **The Foolish Richman 3**

### **BIGGER BARNs**

There was a rich NRI from USA, whose sole concern was minting money and catering to the materialistic pleasures. He hardly had any time to go to the Church or indulge in religious activities. He actually viewed such spiritual and philanthropic concerns with disdain. After years of stay in the USA and making a lot of money, he decided to relocate to his ancestral land in Kerala. He owned around 100 acres of fertile land full of huge trees that supported a thriving ecosystem. Many villagers were dependent on these woods for their sustenance.

Returning to India, he wondered how he could make quick money from his property. He came to the conclusion that he would cut the huge trees and make money by selling the timber. Besides this, he thought he could use the land thus cleared to plant Genetically Modified crops and mint money. He also decided to build a dam over the river that passed through his property and thus channelize it to water his crops. Moreover, he could sell the water to the villagers in times of drought as the water would not cross the dam built in his field.

When the villagers got a whiff of his selfish plans, they came and begged him to abort it. But, he brushed off all requests and was adamant to execute his shortcut method to making money. He soon cleared the land of all trees, planted GM crops, sprayed pesticides in abundance and blocked the river with a huge wall.

Soon the village saw unprecedented suffering. People fell seriously ill and children with severe genetic deformities

were born. He hardly cared for their suffering and the justification that he gave for hoarding the money was that he needed the same to secure his future.

After three months, the monsoons set in, it started raining heavily. Soon it was raining cats and dogs for several days. The atmosphere became gloomy and eerie and the The newly constructed dam was full to the brim. Soon it developed cracks and collapsed. The gushing waters washed off all the crops in the field and even invaded James' house. Meanwhile he was suffering from severe fever and was soon diagnosed with advanced stage of cancer and was given only two months to live by the doctors.

The rich man realised that the millions he had in his bank would not come to his rescue and all that he had got by exploiting nature and his fellow human beings was retaliating on him as a curse. He went to the Church after a gap of several years, repentant and wiser. He pledged all his money for the greening of the land and for the betterment of the the villagers.

**Nair Anup Chandrasekharan**  
**Joby Varghese Joy**

## Chapter 5

# TAKE THE LOG OUT OF YOUR OWN EYE

### Luke 6:39

He also told them a parable: ‘Can a blind person guide a blind person? Will not both fall into a pit? A disciple is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully qualified will be like the teacher. Why do you see the speck in your neighbor’s eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? Or how can you say to your neighbor, “Friend, let me take out the speck in your eye”, when you yourself do not see the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor’s eye.



## **Take the log out of your own eye**

### **CAN THE BLIND LEAD THE BLIND?**

There was a young Christian who had a great vision to work for the betterment of humanity. He had a passion to be a great person in the world and he often desired to become a millionaire so that he could help others. He met many successful entrepreneurs and wealthy business magnates. Initially he started on a small scale by supplying fruits as a fruit dealer, since fruits are an essential part of the Indian diet and have great demand round the year from all sections of people. He bought fruits from the farmers and artificially ripened it with harmful chemicals like calcium carbide and sold it. He artificially waxed with petroleum based chemicals some fruits in order to prevent moisture loss and to increase the shelf life.

He expanded his business to other cities and invited many investors, commission agents, retailers, farmers and wholesalers to invest and share profits. Farmers and consumers got economically 'poor deal' but he monopolized the fruit market's economy in between as a trader. He established his own fruit trading business and gave employment to others. He started a website and mobile app, online and he sold the fruits by home delivery.

He started a ministry by the name 'Fruitful ministry' to reach the unreached people and started a school for poor people and provided free education. He often helped poor people and donated lots of money to people in need. He became an inspiration for many youngsters in and outside India. He became an international export fruit trader who supplied fruits abroad and became an emblem for the fruit market in India. He even sponsored international conferences on 'Ecology'.

Though he was an inspiration for many people and he himself had succeeded in his life, given employment to people, helped the poor and the needy, he was not sensitive towards the environment. On the contrary this young person has been harmful to society by killing people with the slow poison through fruits coated with petroleum based chemicals and artificially ripened fruits. These chemicals cause serious health hazards and cancer to public health. How can this so called 'developed young person' guide another person to come up in life? Why is this so called economic development not concerned, linked and sensitized with 'sustainable development'?

(For example in India, many farmers are struggling with lack of proper rain, crop failure as a result of the water shortage created by many multinational companies. It takes more sugar and many litres of water to produce one litre of Coca Cola and moreover this drink is harmful to public health. It's quite absurd that the same company that abused precious water resources sponsored an international conference on 'World water forum'. 'Can the blind guide the blind person? Will not both fall into the pit?')

**RSV. Sukumar Babu**

## Chapter 6

### THE LOST COIN

#### Luke 15:8-10

8 “Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins[a] and loses one. Doesn’t she light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it?9 And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.’ 10 In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”



#### The Lost Coin -1

#### HEALTHY LIFE

Once there was a beautiful green village by the river. This village was blessed abundantly with all natural resources and had an unpolluted atmosphere. The president of the village had an open heart and delighted in sharing the beauty and abundance of the wealth. His vision was to give a healthy and sustainable life style to his villagers. Therefore the president of the village decided to share the resources of the village for the common good. They were leading a peaceful

life but suddenly they were affected by the illness spreading in the villages. In each family the people started falling sick with terrible vomiting, diarrhoea and high fever. Day by day the severity of the sickness increased and some children succumbed to it. The compassionate and caring president was shaken by this news and was deeply concerned about the well being of the villagers. He ordered an immediate nursing care for all the people suffering from vomiting and diarrhoea and formed a team to find out the cause of the sickness and to prevent it. But the team found out nothing. Disappointed the president himself decided to find the root cause of the people's suffering. He visited each and every house in the village and enquired about their health condition. He checked the drinking water, air pollution, use of pesticides, general cleanliness, addiction to liquor, addiction to drugs, deforestation, global warming, wastage and food. But the president was perplexed finding no reason for their health hazards and he continued his enquiry . Days passed by, one day as he was visiting the villagers he happened to see a family cooking in front of their house using firewood. He was shocked seeing their cooking vessel finding that there was a layer of plastic on the top as the rice boiled. Right away he understood the seriousness of the problem and gave that rice as sample for medical research. It was reported that the rice they ate had a mixture of plastic rice. Following that he came to know that the villagers were buying the rice from the nearby city shop. Hearing that, the president gathered up the villagers and neighbouring villagers together and rejoiced and celebrated for finding the cause and suggested to them to cultivate their own fields using all the natural resources. He made all the arrangements for it. The villagers accepted his suggestion and produced good quality crops through organic farming and got nutritious food and consequently a healthy life.

**K. Jason**  
**Annie Vidhya**

## **The Lost Coin-2**

### **WATER CONSERVATION**

Once there lived a dynamic young woman, who was among the few educated women in a village. She often worked for ameliorating the lot of the villagers and was able to make a difference to their lives. Though troubled by occasional water scarcity, the life in the village was more or less peaceful till the day a Readymix Concrete Plant was set up in the village. It was a huge project which entailed a tremendous use of the natural resources, most of all water. The huge machines, while manufacturing cement caused ear splitting noise and the fly ash emitted from them caused severe air pollution over a radius of more than two km.

Within less than a couple of months severe eye infections plagued the villagers besides asthma and several skin related issues. An exponential rise of the cases of cancer was also reported. The villagers soon realised that this polluting industry would be a life threatening one and they made several representations but of no avail. To make things worse, the insensitive businessmen embarked on expanding the unit.

They dug a huge pond that would satisfy their requirements of water and pumped thousands of litres of water from it. Soon the villagers found their wells drying up as all the water channels emptied itself into the pond that was dug in a low lying area. Seeing the village parched for water and the villagers down with several illness, the conscientious woman decided to take up the issue. She threatened to fast

unto death if the company did not take corrective measures. Simultaneously, she also started to educate the villagers on various water conservation strategies like rain water harvesting, recharging of the water bodies, constructing check dams etc. She gave the villagers lectures on the different ways in which they could mitigate the effects of pollution in their lives.

Seeing the young lady's resolve, her family members, her friends, neighbours and then thousands of villagers joined her struggle. Soon the national media started covering the satyagraha and the company was forced to make amends. It had to set up less polluting technologies which caused less burden on water and other resources and the villagers too by then had themselves learnt to adopt various conservation strategies.

Thus the problems of the village were solved and the heroic lady led the villagers in their celebrations.

**Nair Anup Chandrasekharan**  
**Joby Varghese Joy**

## Chapter 7

### THE TALENTS

#### Matthew 25:14-30

<sup>14</sup> “Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them.

<sup>15</sup> To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag,[a] each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey.

<sup>16</sup> The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more.

<sup>17</sup> So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more.

<sup>18</sup> But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.

<sup>19</sup> “After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them.

<sup>20</sup> The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.’

<sup>21</sup> “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’

<sup>22</sup> “The man with two bags of gold also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two bags of gold; see, I have gained two more.’

<sup>23</sup> “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’

<sup>24</sup> “Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. ‘Master,’ he

s a i d  
‘I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed.

<sup>25</sup> So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’

<sup>26</sup> “His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed?’

<sup>27</sup> Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.

<sup>28</sup> “So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags.

<sup>29</sup> For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them.

<sup>30</sup> And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’



## **The Talents**

### **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

As Jesus was sitting alone on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately and asked about the signs of the end of the world. Jesus answered, “There lived a farmer who set out on a journey to a far off place, and he entrusted his eight acres of land to three of his servants with the responsibility of taking care of it and cultivating the land. Before his departure, he called his servants and said “Well my servants, I will be away for an year on an assignment in a far off place. Therefore I entrust my lands to you with the responsibility of working hard, taking care of it, tilling it and producing fruitful harvest which would be beneficial for the Earth and God’s creation.” Saying this he divided his land

into three portions and gave five acres, two acres and one acre to each of them respectively. They were overjoyed and gladly accepted over the responsibility and began working hard. After a year the farmer returned and went to take account of the of the yields of the land which he had given over to his three servants. He called his first servant who had been given five acres of land and asked him to give his report. The servant replied “Master I used the land for farming using traditional and organic manures and I got a fruitful harvest. And I am very happy that I have been able to conserve the land and feed ten families with healthy food. Hearing this the farmer said “Well done my servant. You have been faithful with what you have been given. So I am giving you another five acres, use it for the welfare of all creation.” Then he called the next servant to whom he had given two acres of land. He replied “Master I have used this land cultivating high yielding crops avoiding commercial fertilizers and pesticides. Through organic farming I have been able to provide many families with healthy food.” The master said cheerfully “Well done my servant. You have been faithful with what you have been given. So I am giving you another two acres, continue working for the welfare of the creation.” And finally he called the third servant who had been given one acre and asked him to give a report. The third servant said “Master, as you have given me less compared with the other two, I thought of using the land for inorganic farming using modern technologies to get an instant yield. But unfortunately it spoiled the soil’s quality and I could not use the land for farming. And moreover the crops through inorganic farming failed to give a healthy life to the people. This lessened the sale of our products in the market. In order to use the land fruitfully I made an alternative plan and I plotted this land and gave it for industrial

purpose so that will bring a better profit..” The farmer shouted in anger saying “You, unfaithful servant, you have taken advantage of the power given to you, instead of taking care of the land, you have ruined the quality of the land for your greed and you have failed to work for the welfare of the creation. Therefore I am taking it from you.” He gave the one acre to the first servant who had five acres and encouraged him to use it for sustainable development.”

Then Jesus said, “For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. And throw that worthless servant outside into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

**K. Jason**

## Chapter 8

# THE FALSE SHEPHERDS

### **Ezekiel 34:1-25**

<sup>34</sup> The word of the LORD came to me: 2 Mortal, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel: prophesy, and say to them—to the shepherds: Thus says the Lord GOD: Ah, you shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? 3 You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fatlings; but you do not feed the sheep. 4 You have not strengthened the weak, you have not healed the sick, you have not bound up the injured, you have not brought back the strayed, you have not sought the lost, but with force and harshness you have ruled them. 5 So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd; and scattered, they became food for all the wild animals. 6 My sheep were scattered, they wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill; my sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth, with no one to search or seek for them.

7 Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: 8 As I live, says the Lord GOD, because my sheep have become a prey, and my sheep have become food for all the wild animals, since there was no shepherd; and because my shepherds have not searched for my sheep, but the shepherds have fed themselves, and have not fed my sheep; 9 therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: 10 Thus says the Lord GOD, I am against the shepherds; and I will demand my sheep at their hand, and put a stop to their feeding the sheep; no longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, so that they may not be food for them.

God, the True Shepherd

11 For thus says the Lord GOD: I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. 12 As shepherds seek out their flocks when they are among their scattered sheep, so I will seek out my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places to which they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. 13 I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the watercourses, and in all the inhabited parts of the land. 14 I will feed them with good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel shall be their pasture; there they shall lie down in good grazing land, and they shall feed on rich pasture on the

mountains of Israel. 15 I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord GOD. 16 I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with justice.

17 As for you, my flock, thus says the Lord GOD: I shall judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and goats: 18 Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture, but you must tread down with your feet the rest of your pasture? When you drink of clear water, must you foul the rest with your feet? 19 And must my sheep eat what you have trodden with your feet, and drink what you have fouled with your feet?

20 Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD to them: I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. 21 Because you pushed with flank and shoulder, and butted at all the weak animals with your horns until you scattered them far and wide, 22 I will save my flock, and they shall no longer be ravaged; and I will judge between sheep and sheep.

23 I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. 24 And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them; I, the LORD, have spoken.

25 I will make with them a covenant of peace and banish wild animals from the land, so that they may live in the wild and sleep in the woods securely.



## **The False Shepherds**

### **LET THE RIVERS FLOW GENTLY**

The lord spoke to the prophet “Mortal man” he said “denounce the ministers of irrigations. Prophecy to them and tell what I , the Sovereign Lord, say to them. You are doomed, you the ministers of irrigation! You take care of yourselves but never tend the rivers. You take drinking water, take electricity and eat the fishes from the rivers. But you never take care of the rivers of your country. You have not taken care of the drained ones, never cleaned the weeds across the rivers and allowed the plunderers to mine the river for soil ores. Because no authorities intervene to protect the rivers, most of the rivers have dried up and disappeared.

Now you the ministers, listen to what I, the Lord, am telling you. As surely as I am the living God, you had better listen to me. The rivers created for you have been exploited and destroyed by the cheap politicians and miscreants, because there was no sincere authority. You ministers, who are in power, take no notice of the pathetic conditions of the rivers. You all take care of yourselves by taking commissions from the business men and do not make any effort to maintain the condition of the rivers. So listen to me, the ministers, I the Sovereign Lord declare that I am your enemy. I will take rivers from you and never again let you be the ministers. Never again will I let you use the rivers for selfish purposes. I will rescue the rivers from you and let you not exploit them with politics.

I, the Sovereign Lord, tell you that I myself will take care of the rivers in the same way as a shepherd takes care of his sheep that were scattered and are brought together again. I will bring them back from all the places where they were

scattered on that dark disastrous day. I will take them out from different states, gather them together and bring them back to the country. The entire country which is very much agricultural gets tremendous benefits out of them. I will free them from the political clutches and make them flow throughout the country. I myself will be the care taker of the rivers and I will keep them safe.

I will look for those that are lost, bring back those that were plundered, clean those that are blocked and sanctify those that are used for superstitious purposes. But those that are used for evil purposes, I will destroy because I am the Lord who does what is right.

Now then the rivers I , the Sovereign Lord, tell you that I will judge each of you and separate the good from the bad. Some rivers are not used for satisfying the needs of the people, but the rivers used for all kinds of social evils. The rivers are not used for the people of the particular region but also for the people anywhere. They are used only for politics.

So now I, the Sovereign Lord, tell you that I will judge between the political river and non-political rivers. The political river ignored the people. But I will rescue the rivers and not let them be abused by the politicians any more. I will judge each river separately and give them good ministers like my servant David. They will take good care of them. I , the Lord, will be their master. I will make a Covenant with them that guarantees their security. I will get rid of all the dangerous criminals from the river so that all the rivers can flow gently and create green pastures throughout the country.

**R. Sellaraj Manuneethi**

## Chapter 9

### THE PRODIGAL SON

11 Then Jesus[a] said, “There was a man who had two sons. 12 The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.’ So he divided his property between them. 13 A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. 14 When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. 16 He would gladly have filled himself with[b] the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. 17 But when he came to himself he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! 18 I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.”’” 20 So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. 21 Then the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’[c] 22 But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23 And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; 24 for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!’ And they began to celebrate.

25 “Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. 27 He replied, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.’ 28 Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. 29 But he answered his father, ‘Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!’ 31 Then the father[d] said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. 32 But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.’” Luke 15:11-32



## **The Prodigal son**

### **ORGANIC FARMING**

Then Jesus said, “There was a Jamindaar (Land Lord) in a village who had two sons and 100 acres of ancestral property. 80% of the land was used for cultivation and 20% of the land for growing cattle feed. His family depended upon the land for their livelihood. His elder son was working in the field along with his father to get a good crop and his younger son was studying in a town. He took his graduation in Civil Engineering and wanted to become a big millionaire by establishing his own business. So the younger son forced his father to divide the property.

The Jamindaar tried to explain him about the natural production from the agricultural land which would be more than enough for them to survive. But his younger son did not listen and persisted on receiving his share of the property. So his father divided the property between them. The younger

son sold his immovable properties, took the money, went to the city and started a business along with his partners, a real-estate business and 1000 houses were planned for construction. They made a residential venture on cultivable land with a good capital amount. In the very first year they sold almost all the houses and received a huge amount of profit so he enjoyed lavishly and spent his money on all sorts of pleasures.

Gradually his business failed and the other partners and workers left him and soon he became bankrupt, he lost his business and was left with no money to survive. He tried for ways to work to satisfy his hunger. He found a job in a nearby hotel but was not satisfied with a day's meal. So he started eating the food everyday which was already prepared for the customers. One day the owner found that he was eating the food in the kitchen without telling the owner and was immediately dismissed.

At this juncture he came to his senses and remembered his father's house where plenty of food was available for the entire household including servants and the cattle. He knew that he was no longer able to provide food for himself and would starve to death. So he decided to return back to his father and beg forgiveness, "Father, I have sinned against God and you. I am no longer fit to be called your son. Please give me a place among your servants so that I would help you to see that you produce a good crop with the help of natural chemicals and pesticides."

As he was nearing home, his father saw him from a distance and with tear filled eyes he ran towards him hugged him, kissed him, and took him home. The young man fell at his father's feet and asked forgiveness for what he had done. His father had compassion on him and ordered his servants

to give him good clothes and a place to live and presented a gold ring. The Jamindhar ordered them to make a feast so that they would celebrate his son's return.

His elder son came back from the field tired of the day's work but to his surprise there was a celebration going on in the house. He was shocked for a while and asked his servants about this celebration. One of his servants replied and said that this celebration for his brother's return. The elder son became furious and refused to go inside. His father pleaded with him to join the feast. But he complained about his brother and said, "he had taken all your property and spent it lavishly and now you are celebrating a feast for him. I have never disobeyed you, but you never gave anything to celebrate with my friends". His father said to him, "my dear son you are always with me and all that is mine is yours so don't worry, go and enjoy the feast". Hence forth both the brothers started working in the field to get a good crop through organic farming.

**B. Jawaher Paul**

## Chapter 10

# THE LOOTERS

**Luke 12:54-56**

### Interpreting the Time

<sup>54</sup> He also said to the crowds, “When you see a cloud rising in the west, you immediately say, ‘It is going to rain’; and so it happens.

<sup>55</sup> And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, ‘There will be scorching heat’; and it happens.

<sup>56</sup> You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?

**Luke 6:49**

<sup>49</sup> But the one who hears and does not act is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the river burst against it, immediately it fell, and great was the ruin of that house.”



**The Looters**

## GOD'S CREATIONS

He also said to the crowds, ”When you see a cloud rising in the west , you say at once, ‘A shower is coming’ . And so it happens. And when you see the south wind blowing, you say there will be scorching heat and it happens. You hypocrites!

You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?

And why do you not judge for yourself what is right? As co-travellers with the exploiters of the Earth, make an effort to force exploiters to stop exploiting, make them realize its interdependency, and to reconcile with it, so in the near future all are not dragged to the resistance of nature and disaster. I tell you, you will never be in peace in your graves until your next generation pays the last penny for your follies”.

And his disciples of today did not understand him and asked, “Lord, what is interdependency and resistance of nature? How will it lead to disaster?” He answered them, “There was a foolish dealer in wooden furniture and his friends living at the foot of the Western Ghats. He said to his friends “Look all these trees are highly valuable, let us cut all the trees to make furniture and become rich’. They cut the whole jungle for the valuable trees and soon became rich, but the mountain became a bare mountain. The small and big animals, the insects, the birds and the flora and fauna were no more. And then came the great monsoon rains, the earth swelled, the mountain slopes swelled, and the mountain soil was no more held by the roots of the trees and plants, which resulted in a great landslide that buried the merchant and his friends’ houses and families. And there was great weeping”

“The valuable mountain trees and the water beds were interdependent and was critical to all the creatures dwelling in it. Resistance of nature- of land sliding- occurred with uncontrolled destruction of trees.” And He said, “Verily, verily I tell unto you, there are going to be destructions and great crying for your children, unless you stand up today for the Lords creation. The dark days are not far upon you”.

**Tharian Koshy**

## Chapter 11

# THE SOWER

### Luke 8:5-8

5 “A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell on the path and was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up. 6 Some fell on the rock; and as it grew up, it withered for lack of moisture. 7 Some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew with it and choked it. 8 Some fell into good soil, and when it grew, it produced a hundredfold.” As he said this, he called out, “Let anyone with ears to hear listen!”



## **THE SOWER -1**

### **WEB OF RELATIONSHIPS**

Then Jesus began to explain the story of the sower saying, the Sower went out to sow and he sowed the seeds, he didn't follow a systematic pattern of cultivation. When the harvest came, he was surprised to see that only a few seeds had given him the yield. The astonished sower was terribly disturbed and was wondering why the other seeds could not bear fruit as he had sowed the same kind of seeds. He went to verify the places where he had sown the seeds.

As he walked through the field, the seed which had fallen on the path way cried, 'It is only through kindness alone that one seed can produce good crop. There is no selfish reason for this. But unfortunately, many economists and financial planners who use genetic engineering apply innovation and technology and destroy the life within me. They apply patents on me which are illegitimate because putting a toxic gene into a plant cell is not "creating" or "inventing" a plant. Many economists and the financial planners who are selfish devoured the life within me and restricted my growth. The Sower felt sorry for the seeds which were devoured by the new technology and the economists' selfish motives which have taken away the life from the seed. As he passed by, the seeds which had fallen on the rocky ground cried, 'Though I had the strength to sprout up and start to produce crop, the soil was destroyed and more over due to the over use of Science, technology and chemicals, the soil has become infertile and severe climatic changes resulted in excessive heat making my life impossible. As he walked further, the seeds which had fallen amidst thorns yelled, 'I think I'm dying. My heart is beating too fast, I'm too weak and I feel I don't even have the energy to give yield. It's been like this for many

days and it's getting gradually worse and I'm not the only one. My own illness can be attributed to heavy metal and all the chemicals I'm exposed to every day. I can't escape from them. The overuse of the fertilizers and pesticides have destroyed the microbes which will enhance my growth. When the microbes and all the nutrients of the soil are poisoned the web of relationships that holds us collapses. This is the reason why I was not able to flourish due to the unfavourable conditions created by the usage of chemicals.

At last the sower witnessed that the seeds which fell on the land which were not contaminated with the chemicals and not affected by the modern technology and genetic engineering could produce good crop some thirtyfold, some sixtyfold and some hundredfold. The seeds were free from contamination, free from human greed and free from destruction.

**Palleti Solomon Santhi Swaroop**

## **THE SOWER -2**

### **VALUE OF TREES**

Sunday is a holiday for all and that's a day when children enjoy themselves by singing songs, worshiping and telling parables from the Bible. On the other days some children pass by the Church on their way to school and hear some people singing in the church. The children wait for Sunday because they used to go to church every Sunday to worship and to attend Sunday school. One Sunday the kids were late to church, and they heard only half of the parable that was preached by the priest (presbyter) in the church. The Children felt disappointed that they were able to hear only half, so the next Sunday they decided to come on time to hear the parable. They wanted to be first in the church the next Sunday because they didn't want to lose the message preached by the Presbyter. First they attended Sunday school and learnt many new songs and heard good stories that were taught by their teacher. All the people who attended the church saw the children and felt happy that the youth in the church were increasing. Every Sunday the priest was ready with his parable and the topic on that particular Sunday was about the Environment. A large congregation was present ranging from the older to the younger generation. So he began to teach them about ecological issues by narrating a parable. He said to them; Listen everybody, the Trees went out to learn about their survival. Some trees went to the old people and asked them to take care of them, but the old people answered that as they were old and awaiting death, they could not take care of them. Their children had left them, and they had to take care of themselves till their death, so they couldn't help them. Other trees approached the family people and asked whether they

could take care of them. The family happily agreed to look after the trees but as days passed they forgot to look after the trees because of their problems. Other trees went to the youth, but now-a-days youth are busy with their studies, as they were more concerned about their studies and careers so they too failed to take care of the trees. Some of the trees went to the children. The Children are the real care takers of environment and they heard the plea of the trees and readily agreed to take care of the trees. As the days passed, the children took care of the trees by watering it, so the trees felt very happy about the children and the trees also wanted to continue to grow under the care of the children. These trees came to grow in sixty and hundreds and became a large forest. All the people and the children really enjoyed the parable and finishing the prayers all departed from the church. A few days later as the children were going to school they saw some wood cutters trying to cut the trees. Immediately the children ran to them and requested them not to cut the trees, explaining the value of trees and the environment. The children also explained to them the importance of a green planet by growing trees, about Ecological imbalance and also the parable narrated by the priest.

**Prasad Reddy Malla**

## Chapter 12

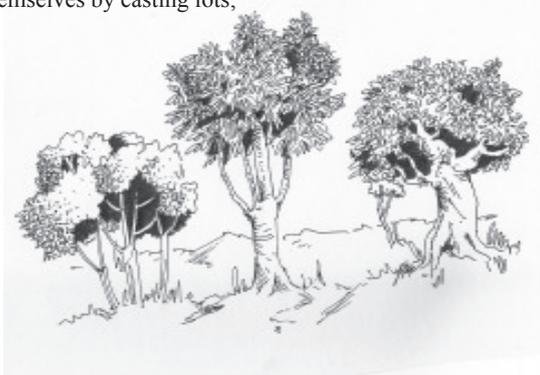
# THREE TREES AND THEIR DREAMS

### **Luke 2:7**

7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Matthew 8:23 Jesus Stills the Storm. 23 And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him.

Matthew 27:35 35 And when they had crucified him, they divided his clothes among themselves by casting lots;



Two hundred years ago in a dark thick Forest there were THREE TREES who lived like brothers and one day they were sharing their desires among themselves. The first Tree said, “with my physique I want to become a GOLDEN BOX (to keep the gold ornaments) in a King’s house. The Second Tree said, “ with my body I would like to become a THRONE OF GOD”. In the same way the third Tree said, “I would like to become a Tall TREE in the WORLD touching the sky to reach God in Heaven”.

As the days passed by, a man went to this particular forest and cut down these trees and took them home. The first was transformed into a manger for keeping grass for

cattle. The first tree felt so sad and wept because its dream did not materialize. In the same way the man made the second tree a boat. This Tree too wept but of no avail. The third Tree, was not used but kept inside a dark room. In the same way the third tree became so sad because he was not used. Their hopes were shattered to pieces and they resigned themselves to their fate.

But the great day came, The Son of God had to take birth in this world to atone for the sins of man. One day a lady called Mary, wife of Joseph conceived by the Holy Spirit of God came to the Cattle house. She gave birth to a baby Boy and kept Him in the Manger. When the baby Boy was kept in the Manger the first tree felt so happy because its dream had come true for it felt that no Gold is greater than God. The baby Boy who was kept in the Manger is the Son of God and King of Kings. So it felt that the baby boy was greater than gold and was very happy. One day the King had to go to Galilee for His Ministry. So He had to travel in a boat. The second tree wanted to become a throne of God and as the Lord stepped into the boat the second tree's dream also came true. It was overjoyed by the touch of God. God came into this world to cleanse our sins by His death on the Cross so that people could cleanse their sins with His Blood. But our Sins betrayed Him to die on the Cross. So the Man brought the third tree from the dark room and made it a Cross. So the Lord gave His life for our sins on the Cross. In the same way the third Tree's dream also came true. It almost reached the sky by the God's touch. The Three Trees which wept at the beginning were as amazed and overjoyed at last because the King of Kings touched them.

**Prasad Reddy Malla**

## Chapter 13

### THE FIG TREE

#### Matthew 24:32-35

32 “From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. 33 So also, when you see all these things, you know that he[a] is near, at the very gates. 34 Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. 35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.



## **The Fig Tree**

### **NATURE NEVER CHEATS**

There were three friends who were skilled in biotechnology and they even refused jobs from big companies so that they could invent a sustainable agriculture. They used their parent's land and learnt from their personal experiences. They started their project which worked well for the first few months and they were happy with the progress and had great expectations. Soon trouble came their way when the rains failed. The friends waited a few more months with hope, but two of them lost hope and eventually gave up. The third friend couldn't give up his project to revive the agricultural approach and held on to his faith and hoped for rainfall.

One day, while strolling, he saw some dragonflies swarming around the fields, which reminded him of his parent's words, that where there are dragonflies rainfall will soon follow. He was very happy and his hope was revived and so he waited. Soon, his prayers were answered when rain poured down the next day washing away his worries and sprouting happiness in his heart. Even, when his friends refused to come back for they are not able to let go of their luxurious lifestyle brought by their jobs, he didn't stop and kept moving forward. His hard work paid off as his project turned out to be a great success. He realized that nature never lies, and decided to depend on it in the future and proceeded with his experiments on agriculture.

One day while reading the newspaper, he was shocked to see a particular piece of news. The news was about companies outsourcing and his friend who committed suicide because of unemployment.

**K. Jeremiah Kirubananth,**

**A. S. Archana.**

## Chapter 14

### THE GRAIN OF WHEAT

**John 12:24**

24 Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.



**Illustration Green Parable 14**

#### TOTAL SURRENDER

Aaron, a medical orderly with his wife Suseela, a balwadi school attendant were working in Bethesda Hospital which is a Christian Mission Hospital. They were blessed with two sons. The elder son John from his childhood was a little uncontrollable moving with boisterous children in the town. Somehow he completed his Carpentry course in the

same institution where his parents were working. After receiving carpentry certificate he got married but his misbehavior was beyond control and so his wife deserted him and left the house. Interacting with antisocial elements he developed all sorts of habits, with the result he caught HIV. As his parents were in Bethesda Hospital which is a special hospital for the treatment of HIV victims, he received the best treatment.

The environment was so conducive for health; various types of vegetables and fruits were grown for the hospital kitchen. The hospital had plenty of trees that could provide clean, pure air, and as the trees absorbed rain water hospital had pure water from the bore wells. Green soothing refreshing environment, pure water, air and good food facilitated speedy recovery from his illness. Even during the period of his treatment he continued his relations with all antisocial activities working against the institution. As this kind of behavior was going on, God's persistent call of repentance compelled John somehow to find a vocation for his livelihood, which led him to pursue an evangelism course since he had no other option.

Whether it was the compelling circumstances that made life more difficult to live in the world or the evangelism course, John's behavior was completely changed and he bid goodbye to antisocial activities and turned over a new leaf. He was desperately in search of a job. Aware of his dire need for a job and the circumstances that completely changed his life, the Director of Bethesda Hospital appointed him as an evangelist in the hospital Chapel. John started doing a good job taking part in all the chapel activities and tried to lead others to the Lord.

John 12:24 says, ‘Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit’ . In this story John who was uncontrollable, atrocious and was leading a miserable life which led him to the point of eternal death changed his life completely and surrendered to God’s will. He left all his antisocial activities and devoted himself completely to the service of the Lord. Praise God for John’s rebirth and all glory to God Almighty.

## Chapter 15

### THE FISHING NET

#### Matthew 13:47-50

47 “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; 48 when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad.49 So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous 50 and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.



## **THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN**

The kingdom of heaven is like this. An export company made an advertisement inviting agriculturists to bring their produces to be exported to a pollution free country. Many agriculturists responded fervently and came with their produces. The manager of the company with his assistants inspected all the produces brought by the agriculturists testing them with his company standards and selected a few produces which were worthy enough to be exported to the clean country and rejected the others considering them as waste and harmful. Those whose produces were accepted were paid a lump sum amount instantly and those whose produces were rejected, murmured and went empty handed. It will be like this at the end of the world: the angels will go out and gather up the evil people from among the good and will throw them into the fiery furnace, where they will grind their teeth.

**R. Sellaraj Manuneethi**

## Chapter 16

### THE LION'S WHELPS

<sup>2</sup> and say: What a lioness was your mother among lions!  
She lay down among young lions, rearing her cubs.

<sup>3</sup> She raised up one of her cubs; he became a young lion,  
and he learned to catch prey; he devoured humans.

<sup>4</sup> The nations sounded an alarm against him; he was caught in their pit,  
and they brought him with hooks to the land of Egypt.

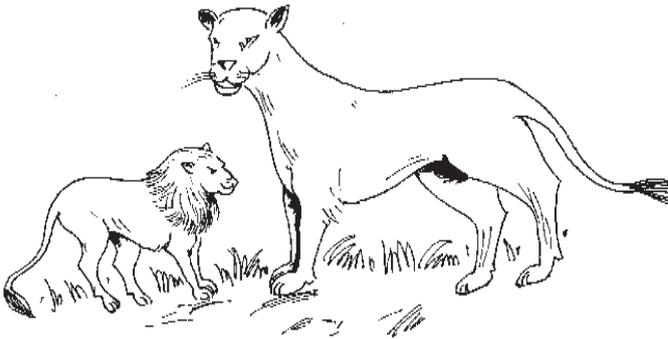
<sup>5</sup> When she saw that she was thwarted, that her hope was lost,  
she took another of her cubs and made him a young lion.

<sup>6</sup> He prowled among the lions; he became a young lion,  
and he learned to catch prey; he devoured people.

<sup>7</sup> And he ravaged their strongholds, [a] and laid waste their towns;  
the land was appalled, and all in it, at the sound of his roaring.

<sup>8</sup> The nations set upon him from the provinces all around;  
they spread their net over him; he was caught in their pit.

<sup>9</sup> With hooks they put him in a cage, and brought him to the king of Babylon;  
they brought him into custody, so that his voice should be heard no more  
on the mountains of Israel. Ezekiel 19:2-9



## TRIBAL LIVELIHOOD

Take up a lament concerning the princess of Israel and say " What a lioness was your mother among the lions she lay down among them and reared her cubs, in a beautiful and dense forest where enormous species exists she brought up one of her cubs, trained to protect the forest and secure the resources. A group of patriots entered and seduced the cub by saying that they have successful plans to protect the forest in a better way. Their continuous requests of assurance made him change and slowly it became a slave to them and the forest was expropriated when the mother lion saw her hope unfulfilled her expectation gone she took another of her cubs and made him a strong lion. He earned the livelihood of the family by following their traditional mode of food production out of their small piece of land which was remnant after the expropriation. Suddenly a group of intellectuals from the west side of their village came and said to the cub, that there is a modern option to produce food without this much of hard labour. The cub was attracted by their luxurious vehicles and their rich dresses. Then the cub started to listen to their proposals and became pet to them. They tied the lion in front of their multistoried bungalow as a watch dog and the village ended up with scarcity of water. Your mother was like a vine in your vineyard planted by the water it was fruitful and full of branches because of abundant water.

**A. Ernest**

## Chapter 17

### THE TEN BRIDESMAIDS

25 “Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids[a]took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom.[b] 2 Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. 3 When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; 4 but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. 5 As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. 6 But at midnight there was a shout, ‘Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ 7 Then all those bridesmaids[c] got up and trimmed their lamps. 8 The foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ 9 But the wise replied, ‘No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.’ 10 And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet; and the door was shut. 11 Later the other bridesmaids[d] came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’ 12 But he replied, ‘Truly I tell you, I do not know you.’ 13 Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.[e]

**Matthew 25:1-13**



## **The Ten Bridesmaids**

### **THE ‘READY’ CITY AND THE ‘PRUDENT’ VILLAGE**

The ‘Ready’ City and the ‘Prudent’ Village were making preparations to face the huge environmental hazards. They were expecting a frightening situation when the water on the earth would be scarce due to climatic conditions. One day a city dweller and a villager happened to meet. The city dweller told the villager about their plans, “we have built huge tanks and reservoirs to store millions of tons of water”. The villager replied, “We are trying to naturally preserve water. We have been employing rain water harvesting methods and we ensure that the underground water does not get depleted.”

The days passed, the climate changed and as they expected, the rise in temperature caused the life on this beautiful earth unbearable for the people. The water resources in the village started getting dried up and the city dwellers were also careful in using their stored water.

The same villager and the city dweller happened to meet once again. The city dweller said, “our water level in the storage tanks are very low now and it has created a panic among us. The people are becoming more greedy and selfish now.” The villager said, “it is difficult for us too, as the water levels in our wells are also low. Even though it is difficult to collect, there is always a little water in the wells but we survive by sharing whatever little we have.”

**Sandeep Jacob**

## Chapter 18

### THE THISTLE AND CEDAR

#### 2 Kings 14:9

9 King Jehoash of Israel sent word to King Amaziah of Judah, “A thorn bush on Lebanon sent to a cedar on Lebanon, saying, ‘Give your daughter to my son for a wife’; but a wild animal of Lebanon passed by and trampled down the thorn bush.



#### SALVATION OF THE MOTHER EARTH

Once there lived a well known environmentalist who contributed immensely towards environmental conservation activities. He was deeply concerned with the reckless urbanisation that was happening across the world. Through several lectures, published papers etc. he warned the governments of the world of the impending disaster if the plunder of the natural resources was not curbed. However, as

fate would have it, nobody paid any heed to the warnings issued by him. However, led by a brutal and insensitive business magnate, industrialists teamed up to set up business ventures. Trees were cut, water bodies were polluted and noxious gases were released into the atmosphere by the polluting industries. They contemptuously ignored all the proposals for the salvation of the mother earth forwarded by the environmentalist.

As time passed, the world started witnessing strange happenings. It appeared as if the devil himself were playing tricks with the earthlings. The sky started raining acid rains, the rivers went dry at some places while at some others they flooded their banks, human beings died in hordes because of diseases like cancer and the whole eco-system went out of balance. The people of the world suddenly realised that the kind environmentalist's prophetic words were coming true. They realised that the businessmen had tricked them with false promises of material success. When they questioned the profit mongers, the smart businessman once again saw an opportunity to make quick bucks out of this tragedy facing the world.

They told the gullible earthlings that they would help in afforestation efforts and guided them to plant only eucalyptus, neem, prosopis juliflora and such trees which would help him gain monetary benefits. Thus such trees were planted all over to the exclusion of other species. This led to a huge imbalance in the eco system. Several other species of plants and trees were wiped out by prosopis juliflora and it also caused ground water depletion. Birds and insects did not find these trees suitable to make their nests and homes and were gradually wiped out and the condition of the world worsened.

Finally the people woke up to the reality and approached the kind hearted environmentalist for a solution. He filed a case against the industrialists who were found guilty and were expelled from the city. He later guided the people to plant several varieties of shrubs, plants and trees. He encouraged them to cut down all toxic emissions and plastic wastes. Water bodies were cleaned and soon the change was visible.

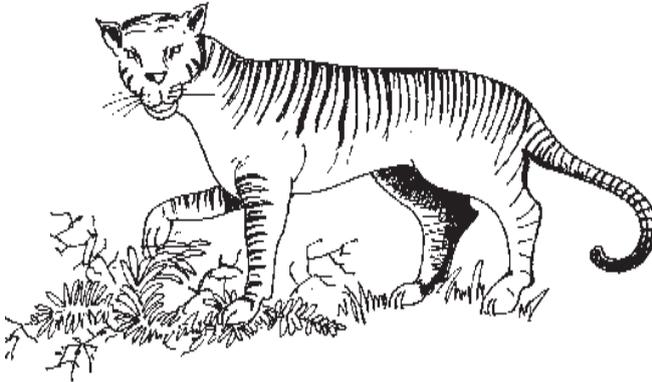
The earth was green once again, the music of the birds and bees echoing through the atmosphere once again and nature gained in vitality, rains were abundant but not excessive and everyone rejoiced and thanked their saviour.

**Nair Anup Chandrasekharan**  
**Joby Varghese Joy**  
**Ramulu Emmanuel**

## Chapter 19

# THE “WOMAN OF TEKOA”

2 Samuel 14



### **The Woman of Thanneergramam**

The woman of Thanneergramam booked an appointment with the Chief Minister and came to meet him. She fell on her face to the ground and paid homage and said, “sir, please listen to our plea”. And the kind minister asked her, “what is your problem?” She answered, “I belong to the Thanneergramam village. Our village was our mother and we have always lived in the abundance of water. The clean air, the pure water and the unpolluted land were our heritage and a real experience for us, but now we suffocate in filth. Please save us.” The minister could not understand what this woman was upto. So he asked her for a clarification and then the woman said, “Once there were certain huge trees in a forest. The trees were so benevolent that they shed their own branches and leaves for everyone who came to them for help.

One day, the trees witnessed a debate between two animals. The trees watched closely to see who they were. One was a lion and the other a man. The trees listened keenly. The lion was arguing, “see, we cannot let you occupy the whole place. Our sisters and brothers depend on these trees for living.” The man continued, “no sir, listen please, just imagine a land where there is no dirt. Look around those trees and see how messed up the place around it is – filled with dead leaves and filth. If we just cut down the tree, we could build houses for all of us. We could arrange systems of waste management and create a mess-free life.” The man began to convince the lion about cleanliness and even showed pictures of small villages and clean cities. The lion was amused. Taken in by these false promises, the lion agreed to the cutting of the trees. The trees saw how the man transformed their own branches into a sharp weapon and how he began to cut it. Every shred of wood that fell to the ground cried out to the man, but he paid no heed. The lion slowly watched the man’s deeds. Having cut the trees, he assumed himself as a God and took the dust, stones and rock and used it to build huge buildings. The lack of trees resulted in the lack of fresh air and all the other animals of the forest began to suffocate. The lion felt bad seeing this situation. But even then the lion seemed to ignore the consequences.”

Then the woman asked the minister, “Who is to be blamed here – the lion or the man?” The minister replied, “definitely both of them, the lion should not have allowed the man to destroy the trees.” The wise woman then told the minister, “I am sorry to say this. But your government itself is responsible for the pollution of Thanneergramam. When the government finds rural areas as places to dispose the waste from the cities, you are polluting our land. We suffocate in your waste.”

**Betty Elsa Jacob**

## Chapter 20

# THE WEEDS

### Matthew 13:24-30 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

24 He put before them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; 25 but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. 26 So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. 27 And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, ‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?’ 28 He answered, ‘An enemy has done this.’ The slaves said to him, ‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’ 29 But he replied, ‘No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. 30 Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.’”



intend to serve only organic food in this hotel? But then, where did these hybrid vegetables come from? The owner answered, “Our enemy has done this.” The workers said to him, “Then do you want us to go and charge them?” And he replied, “No; for I have devised a different plan.” He instructed the workers, “invite the opponent for dinner to celebrate our hotel’s successful anniversary.” Now the workers said to him, “Shall we then separate the hybrid from the organic vegetables to prepare food?” But he replied, “Do not do so for it will spoil my plan. Prepare the food items with both organic and hybrid vegetables separately. And at the dinner time I will tell the waiters to serve the organic food to the customers and serve the guests with food made from hybrid vegetables.”

## Chapter 21

### THE ROUSING LION

24 Look, a people rising up like a lioness,  
and rousing itself like a lion!  
It does not lie down until it has eaten the prey  
and drunk the blood of the slain.” Numbers 23:24



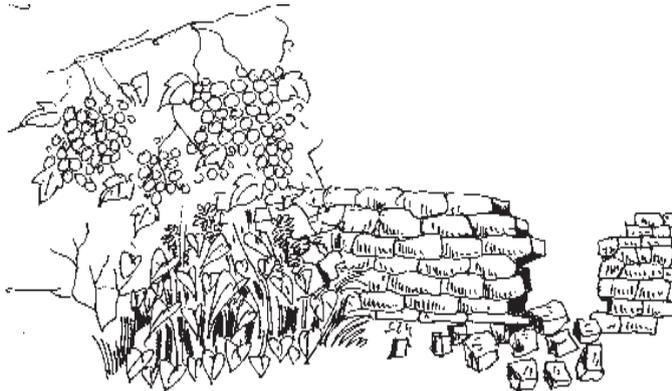
There was a notorious boy in the VIIth grade. The principal called the boy and asked him to water the plants in the garden as a punishment for his mischievous behavior. His parents alleged a complaint against the principal for giving such a harsh punishment. The principal ignored it. The boy was watering the plants daily. As he did it regularly, he got interested in gardening and spending time with nature. Years passed by and the boy was now in grade IX. The school was running under heavy loss.

The management changed the principal and ordered to cut down all the trees inside the school and construct new class rooms. The boy who became so attached to the plants and trees could not tolerate it, so he protested through fasting. Two days they never bothered on the third day all the students of his school sat before the management fasting and protested against the cutting of trees and the order was repealed.

## Chapter 22

### THE LABOURERS AND HIS VINEYARD

- 30 I once walked by the field  
and the vineyard  
of a lazy fool.
- 31 Thorns and weeds  
were everywhere,  
and the stone wall  
had fallen down.
- 32 When I saw this,  
it taught me a lesson:
- 33 Sleep a little. Doze a little.  
Fold your hands  
and twiddle your thumbs.
- 34 Suddenly poverty hits you  
and everything is gone!  
Proverbs 24:30-34.



Two friends, one from a village and one from a city met on a fine day. The one from the city took the villager around for sightseeing. They happened to walk around a lake which was once helpful in storing rainwater that was used for cultivation, drinking and for domestic purposes. But, now, because of poor maintenance and poor policy making of the corporation, the lake got polluted by the dumping of domestic wastes and industrial effluents. The contaminated water became so stinky that the two friends were not even able to cross the lake without their noses covered. The villager witnessing the condition and the reason behind it thought about the pond back in his village. He realized that the pond in his village and the lake are in the same condition. He panicked.

He excused himself from his friend and immediately went back to his village. He checked the condition of the pond and cringed seeing the similar state of the pond and the lake. With determination he started to clean the lake. Slowly and steadily his hard work paid off and soon the pond became clean and he took measures to keep the pond clean thereafter. But as for the city friend, who was sluggish about nature's condition, was affected with a disease after being bitten by a mosquito from the same contaminated lake he had visited a few days ago.

**K. Jeremiah Kirubananth,  
A. S. Archana,**

## Chapter 23

### WORKERS IN THE VINEYARD

#### Matthew 20:1-16

20 “For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. 2 After agreeing with the laborers for the usual daily wage,[a] he sent them into his vineyard. 3 When he went out about nine o’clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; 4 and he said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ So they went. 5 When he went out again about noon and about three o’clock, he did the same. 6 And about five o’clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, ‘Why are you standing here idle all day?’ 7 They said to him, ‘Because no one has hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard.’ 8 When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, ‘Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.’ 9 When those hired about five o’clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage.[b] 10 Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage.[c] 11 And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, 12 saying, ‘These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.’ 13 But he replied to one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage?[d] 14 Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. 15 Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?’[e] 16 So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”[f]



The kingdom of heaven is like the dream of a man, who dreamt of nature personified. Nature went out looking for the people who would take care of its beautiful mango grove, and after settling with the people to pay them with five mangoes; sent them into the grove. Nature found many more people to work in the grove at different time intervals, and promised them to pay what is just. And all the people laboured to keep the grove productive. Then, when the time came for the payment , Nature said to the Big Mango Tree, “call the people and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then to the first.” Those who entered the grove last received five mangoes as their wage. When the people who entered the grove first came they thought that they would receive more than five mangoes; but they too received the same. And when they received it, they complained against Nature, saying, “these people who laboured only at the last hour have also received the same wages, but we have toiled all day long more than these people.” But Nature indignantly replied to them, “see, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the five mangoes?” Take what belongs to you and go; I have the right to give to the last people the same as I have given you. Don’t I have the authority to do what I want with what belongs to me? Or, are you envious because I am generous? To me the last and the first aren’t different.

## Chapter 24

### THE THIEF AND THE FAITHFUL SERVANT

<sup>42</sup> Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day[a] your Lord is coming. <sup>43</sup> But understand this: if the owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into.

<sup>44</sup> Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.

#### **The Faithful or the Unfaithful Slave**

<sup>45</sup> “Who then is the faithful and wise slave, whom his master has put in charge of his household, to give the other slaves[b] their allowance of food at the proper time?

<sup>46</sup> Blessed is that slave whom his master will find at work when he arrives.

<sup>47</sup> Truly I tell you, he will put that one in charge of all his possessions.

<sup>48</sup> But if that wicked slave says to himself, ‘My master is delayed,’

<sup>49</sup> and he begins to beat his fellow slaves, and eats and drinks with drunkards,

<sup>50</sup> the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour that he does not know.

<sup>51</sup> He will cut him in pieces[c] and put him with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Matthew 24:42-51



Human beings disappointed God by not maintaining his creation instead defying it and causing disaster to his creation. In accordance with the Eco-Justice Principle, the Principle of Voice where Earth is a subject capable of raising its voice in celebration and against injustice have been guided in attempting to retell this chapter from an Ecological Perspective.

Therefore keep watch because you do not know on what day or hour Tsunami occurs. If at all people were aware of its causes and consequences they wouldn't have spoiled God's creations and would have avoided such calamities.

Blessed are those who are preserving God's creation (nature) by cherishing its beauties. But those who are lethargic and careless in their responsibilities towards nature by saying climate change is not an issue will surely have to face God's wrath since in an unexpected hour Tsunami will occur. And on that day or hour they will be destroyed and will be assigned a place with hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

**R. Annie Vidhya**

## Chapter 25

### A HOUSE DIVIDED AGAINST ITSELF

#### **Mark 3: 23-25**

<sup>23</sup>. And he called them unto him, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan?

<sup>24</sup>. And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.

<sup>25</sup>. And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand.

<sup>26</sup>. And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end. Verse 25 “And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand.”



### **A HOUSE DIVIDED AGAINST ITSELF SUSTAINABLE LIFE**

A middle aged man returned from abroad and settled down in his native place. He was immensely rich and he decided to build a big house of 4000square feet. He told his wife and children that he was going to demolish the old house with a JCB and prepare the site for the new house. His younger daughter asked him, “father, what will you do with the JCB?”

He told her that the JCB would remove the old house, remove all the trees, plants and everything around here and make a site for their new house.

The children become very sad .They asked their father, “How about the coconut tree and Jack trees, Mango trees, Neem trees and our kitchen garden? Are we going to remove all?” “ Father, please don't do that. We see many birds living on the trees in their nest, we love eating fruits from our tree; we enjoy playing with butterflies and squirrels. Where will they go? What will they eat? How will we play with them?” They raised many questions . Then they showed their father the bird nest on the tree with eggs, small insects like grasshoppers, Earthworm living in their lawn. Father asked his wife, Darling, Did you hear, what they are saying? The wife answered , the Bible says in Mark 3: 25 “If your house is divided against itself that house cannot stand”. “We have already built a house and we are only four members. We need only a small house, that's enough for our family. Let us not disturb our environment which is also a part of our family”.

In the course of their discussion, the young parish priest of their Church visited them. He also participated in their family discussion and supported the views of the wife and children, “this is also true in any development process. When we construct a Church, we should remember that we should not disturb our environment. It's time to wake up to support the harmonious relationships between nature and human beings. The fields bring forth grains which can be harvested and then we prepare food, the upper soil becomes fertile by the small insects and worms the tree brings forth fruits, and the harmonious bio diversity may be disturbed by the developmental process. We must try to live with nature and it will sustain life generation after generation”.

**T. Irwin Gnamuthu**

## **Chapter 26**

### **THE MUSTARD SEED**

Matthew 13:31-32 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

31 He put before them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; 32 it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.”



#### **THE MUSTARD SEED 1**

##### **THE HIDDEN TRUTH**

A farmer accompanied by his son went to his farm . The labourers were planting some seeds. A conversation ensued between father and son.

Son : Daddy, what are they planting?

Father : They are planting mustard seeds.

Son : I have seen mustard seeds, but I have not seen mustard plants.

Father : Come, follow me. I shall show you. Look here. these are mustard plants.

- Son : Nice daddy. They are really beautiful. They look like ferns. The flowers are bright yellow and they have four petals. The flower looks like the Greek cross and the fruit is a long thin pod. Let me break one. Ho! The pod contains a lot of seeds but they have a pungent taste.
- Father : The mustard, the radish, the turnip and several ornamental plants belong to the same family called “ cruciferae “.
- Son : Daddy, the mustard plant is only a herb but Jesus in his parable says that the seed grew into a big tree shooting out large branches on all sides. So that the birds of the earth nested in the branches. Perhaps in the days of Jesus the mustard grew into trees. In the book of Numbers we read that when the men who were sent by Moses to Canaan to spy out the land came back, two of them brought a bunch of grapes. The fruits were so big and so heavy that the two men carried the cluster on a pole between them. But how small grapes have become now, likewise the mustard tree also must have become small. But I think that the modern Science and Technology can make the herb grow into a tree.
- Father : Son, have you heard about genetic engineering?
- Son : Yes daddy, last year our biology teacher taught us about chromosomes, genes, DNA, RNA, Genetic engineering etc. and also how hereditary traits are passed on to the next generation.
- Father : Experts in genetic engineering are able to manipulate the genes and bring about changes in the characteristics of plants. You may wonder how they do it. Experiments have shown that many of

the genes within a cell are inactive most of the time or all of the time. But they can be switched on or off. The genetic engineers selectively switch on a particular genes and get the desired result. They can also switch of active genes. But they can not make a herb grow into a tree as the basic laws of nature are not changeable.

Son : Daddy, the mustard plant is a herb. Why then does Jesus say that it grew into a big tree? He is the creator of all living and non living thing and knows every thing. I am sure that there is a hidden truth in the parable.

Father : I appreciate your curiosity my son. Yours is a relevant question. Some Bible scholars say that this parable gives a prophetic message. The abnormal growth of the mustard seed into a tree refers to the abnormal and incredible growth of the Churches in the fourth century under the patronage of Constantine the Great, the Emperor of Rome. Constantine was a Gentile. According to the legend, a cross and the words “in this sign conquer” appeared to him. So he adopted Christianity forthwith and issued the Edict of Milan in 313 AD granting tolerance to Christians who had been suffering persecution for three centuries. He gave land to churches and granted special privileges to Christians. This made the people of other religions to switch over to Christianity not because they were saved but because they wanted to enjoy the special privileges. There was a virtual influx and soon Christianity grew into a worldwide religion. This explanation of the mustards abnormal growth is not

accepted by all.

Son : So only our Lord knows the truth. I believe that He will reveal to me the hidden truth some day.

Father : Certainly my son, He will fulfill your desire. He never lets down His children.

**S. John Kennady, D. Kathiravan**

## **THE MUSTARD SEED 2**

### **A SMALL IDEA**

Youngsters are generally full of novel ideas. Four young students were in search of innovative ideas for their project. They roamed around the city keenly observing the environment. They noticed how many electronic products were being dumped on a daily basis. So they decided to do their project on e-waste management.

They found that the reason for e-waste was because foreign countries dump their garbage here in the name of newly introduced products, also the unused electronic products are dumped like any other garbage by normal families who don't have much awareness of the radioactive element caused by the dumped plastics or how much it affects the environment like the mutations and extinctions in flora and fauna. As a solution they used bio-remediation, that is using bacteria that will disintegrate the molecular bondings of the e-waste.

Their project became a huge success, that even the other countries took note of and tried to adapt this method to avoid e-waste and to maintain the biological equilibrium

**K. Jeremiah Kirubananth,**

**A. S. Archana**

**Appendix 1**  
**Ecological Interpretations of Parables**

**BALAAM'S ORACLE**

**Chilkuri Vasantha Rao**

**INTRODUCTION**

It is during the 40 year wilderness wandering of the Israelites, in the last lap of their journey they enter the territory of Moab, located in the east side of river Jordan. The Israelites under the leadership of Moses go on the rampage defeating the king of the Amorites and the king of Bashan. Startled by the developments in the region, Balak the king of Moab hires a prophet named Balaam to put a curse on the advancing Israelites. Balak takes Balaam and offers sacrifices on seven altars of Baal expecting Yahweh to give Balaam a prophecy regarding the Israelites. Upon receiving a prophecy from Yahweh, Balaam accordingly blesses the Israelites. Balaam tells the disappointed Balak that he could only utter the utterance given to him by Yahweh. Frustrated Balak gives it a second trial. He takes Balaam to another cultic place of Baal at Piggah and builds seven altars again and makes sacrifices on each of the altars. Balaam this time pronounces another oracle of blessing on the Israelites.

***Balaam's Second Oracle Concerning Israel***

“Look, a people rising up like a lioness,  
and rousing itself like a lion!

It does not lie down until it has eaten the prey  
and drunk the blood of the slain.”(Num. 23:24)

*Even the third time Balaam utters another oracle concerning Israel with similar words: “He crouched, he lay down like a lion, and like a lioness; who will rouse him up?” (Num.24:9). Balaam seems to be a well informed person. The*

oracle of blessing he uttered concerning Israel resonates the blessing of Jacob to Judah:

Judah is a lion's whelp;  
from the prey, my son, you have gone up.  
He crouches down, he stretches out like a lion,  
like a lioness—who dares rouse him up? (Genesis 49:9)

This metaphor of a lion along with Judah is also applied to Gad and Dan respectively in Deuteronomy 33:20 and 33:22. Balaam, now being led by God, utters this oracle by appropriating the blessing not just to one tribe of Judah or Gad or Dan but to all Israel; the nation as a whole. Israel is prophesied upon and blessed to be like a lion, young lion and a lioness.

### **Lion in the Hebrew Scriptures**

The Lion in the Hebrew Scripture is portrayed as the most powerful of all the animals. It is the king of the beasts (Mic. 5:8), fierce (Job 4:10), roaring (Ps.22:13), skillful in hunting (Ps. 10:9), strong (Judg. 14:18), courageous (2 Sam. 17:10), dwelling in the forest (Jer. 12:8)- caves (Nah. 2:12)- and on the banks of Jordan (Jer. 50:44). Such descriptions of lions indicate how common a lion in the Palestinian geography was during the Old Testament times. The Hebrew Scriptures indicate a lion with several words and is mentioned about 130 times. It became a symbol of the tribe of Judah. King Solomon had the Temple as well as his residence decorated with the figures of lions.

The Hebrew Scriptures have made the lion into a classical symbol of strength, courage, power, ferocity and dignity. But the saddest part of the whole story is that lions remain in the papers of the Hebrew Scripture described only in words but sadly extinct in today's Palestine, Israel and in the surrounding countries.

## **Lion Metaphor for God**

The metaphor of the lion has been an important metaphor in the Old Testament usage, it is used to portray God, God's divine character and God's attributes, hence we realize that the lion as an animal has been admired by the people of God for its qualities. God is described with several characteristics of a lion, God is strong as a lion (Isa. 38:13), God is frightening as a lion (Hos. 11:10), God protects God's people as a lion does (Isa. 31:4), God is destructive as a lion (Lam. 3:10), God even appears to possess the title 'The Lion' (Amos 3:8).

The lion, however, as the creation of God is much to be appreciated. The lion and its qualities make us realize God's creative power in and through such a majestic creation. Yet the lions are dependent on God for their sustenance (Job 38:39-40), when they are hungry they look to God and God gives them food (Psalm 104:21), they are liable for God's judgment (Job 4:10) and in and through their Creator, they are transformed from their sinful violent instincts into agents of peace in the Millennial Age (Isa. 11:6-7).

The question, however, remains, should this magnificent creature appear only in the millennial age and continue to be absent in this present age due to its extinction in the Biblical land otherwise called the Holy Land? If these gigantic cats go missing then how will they appear in the millennial age? Should, then, the millennial age be defined to be an age of peace only because of the absence of these ferocious cats?

For our better understanding of God, if God is described using the metaphor of a lion, then in the face of the extinction of the lions should we revert back to making God as a metaphor in understanding the vanquished existence of these creatures?

## **Lion figurative of human beings**

There are various Hebrew words that literally describe the lion's characteristic features and behavioral patterns by way of even mentioning their body parts, such as; for instance the teeth of the lion are mentioned (Job 4:10), as well the paws of the lion are mentioned (I Sam. 17:37) among many others.

Lions are mentioned figuratively in describing human beings. For instance the king's wrath is like the roaring of a lion (Prov. 19:12; 20:2), the bravest soldier's heart is like the heart of a lion (2 Sam. 17:10), the rulers of the nation are as cruel as the lions are (Ezk. 22:25; Zeph. 3:3), the enemy nations are as much destructive as the lions (Lam. 2:15), and the protection of the conquerors is like that of the lion's protective nature (Isa. 5:29).

Kings, Princess, Rulers, Soldiers, Conquerors and Enemies get recognition in terms of how they resemble the lions, young lions and lionesses in their ruling, planning, combating, winning and conquering. The big cat has become the yardstick to measure their valor and victory. These princely figures had two roles to play. One is to look to the welfare of their subjects and the other is to defeat and destroy their enemies. The friendly comparisons with the lions lead them to be recognized to be as powerful as the lions themselves. But at the same time these very rulers have become responsible in treating these creatures with contempt to the extent that they are no more available for making any comparison with any of the rulers in the future, since they are today the most endangered species on the face of this earth. Should these rulers not have treated the cats to be part of their subjects who needed protection? They only treated these animals as their enemies and began to annihilate them, to the extent that they are today on the brink of extinction.

## CONCLUSION

Lions that freely roamed on our planet earth are today numbered and are found to be dwindling in their figures. Rampant poaching indicates the disrespect of the human beings towards these splendid creatures. In the Indian sub-continent apart from the conserved lions in the Gir National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary forest of Gujarat there are said to be barely one hundred lions in the rest of the country. There are movements all over the globe dedicated to conserving this wonderful creature of God. As God's children we need to do our part, since God is not only the Creator of the lions but also the protector of the lions:

You alone are the LORD;

You have made heaven,

The heaven of heavens, with all their host,

The earth and everything on it,

The seas and all that is in them,

**And You preserve them all.**

The host of heaven worships You. (Neh. 9:6)

If lions are allowed to become extinct, how would we be able to understand that the tribe of Judah is like a lion?

How can we any longer employ the metaphor to understand God, if we do not know what a lion is?

How will one draw figurative parallels with valiant human beings when there are no lions to compare them with?

In any case, we need lions not only to understand the tribe of Judah or the majesty of God and the heroism of humans but also to conserve lions as God's creatures and as our good neighbors, who have a rightful share in this beautiful planet, which is further beautified with their marvelous presence.+++

## 2. SAMSON'S RIDDLE

**Chilkuri Vasantha Rao**

### INTRODUCTION

In the text Judges 14:1-20 we are told about the event of the marriage of Samson the Israelite Judge with a Philistine woman. The writer of the book of Judges gives his comment stating that although the parents of Samson were against the marriage, God allowed it, he says: "His father and mother did not know that this was from the LORD; for he was seeking a pretext to act against the Philistines. At that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel." (v.4). Samson with his parents goes to the village of the woman and as per the custom of the Philistines the marriage ceremony involved a social function, where the young men of the woman's relatives gathered around him. It is in this celebration Samson poses a riddle, giving the young men seven days' time, which was the time till the end of the celebrations. On the event of success Samson promised gifts but if they failed, they were to give him the gifts. The riddle was:

"Out of the eater came something to eat.

Out of the strong came something sweet." (v.14)

This riddle was based on the experience of Samson. On his way to the woman's village, when he came to the vineyards of Timnah, suddenly a young lion roared at him. Samson killed the lion. On his second visit to Timnah, Samson, out of his curiosity, looked at the carcass of the lion and saw bees and honey in it. Samson ate the honey and also shared it with his parents. The young men could not solve the riddle but with the help of his wife, who in turn got the secret from Samson, the young men opened the meaning of the riddle. Samson knew what had happened and said the following:

“If you had not plowed with my heifer,  
you would not have found out my riddle.” (v.18)

We can read the whole event in the book of Judges 14:1-20. What makes me curious is the comment of the author of the text, who gives us a hint of the political situation of the times. Philistine dominated Israel (v.4). It is puzzling to see what a lion was doing near the vineyards (v.5). The bees and honey found in an unusual place of a carcass of a lion is interesting (v.8). The lion and the bees also reveal to us the ecological status of the geography. Not to mention, the marriage celebrations do point to the social customs of the Philistines. Amidst all these details, we need to glean facts from the narrative and make meaning out of them. Let me begin with the question, why was the lion near the vineyards? To answer this question we need to study the political situation of the Philistines.

### **1. Human Aggression towards Nature**

In what way did the Philistines dominate Israel? It is during the late Bronze Age and the early Iron Age that Philistine was technologically advanced and it is with this technology they dominated Israel. In a conflict with Israel as narrated in I Samuel 17, there is a graphic description about the armor of Goliath:

5 He had a helmet of bronze on his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail; the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of bronze. 6 He had greaves of bronze on his legs and a javelin of bronze slung between his shoulders. 7 The shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron; and his shield-bearer went before him. (I Sam. 17:5-7)

We note the Philistines were well advanced in industry making war weapons of bronze, wood and iron. Samson gives us another aspect of their advancement, in his words to the Philistines: “If you had not plowed with my heifer” (v.18). The plow or plough is an agricultural implement and were

made by the Philistines. This again indicates how agriculture was prevalent in Philistine. Their deity 'Dagon' was an agriculture deity. Agricultural knowhow was seen to be their monopoly.

In their domination the Philistines suppressed any technological advancement of the Israelites.

19 Now there was no smith to be found throughout all the land of Israel; for the Philistines said, "The Hebrews must not make swords or spears for themselves"; 20 so all the Israelites went down to the Philistines to sharpen their plowshares, mattocks, axes, or sickles; 21 The charge was two-thirds of a shekel for the plowshares and for the mattocks, and one-third of a shekel for sharpening the axes and for setting the goads. 22 So on the day of the battle neither sword nor spear was to be found in the possession of any of the people with Saul and Jonathan; but Saul and his son Jonathan had them. (I Samuel 13:19-22)

Archaeological excavations of the Philistine territory reveal to us that they build forts in their cities.

Technological development anywhere requires raw materials; Philistine was active in metallurgy, construction, agriculture and viticulture. For this purpose, just as bronze and iron were smelted, woods were also cut for timber. The process of deforestation was already taking place due to rampant developmental activities. Agriculture and viticulture expansion makes it imperative for forests to be cut. Timnah the village of the woman would have extended itself into the forest area, or at least forests would have been felled, which was the habitat for umpteen numbers of living creatures, animals and wild beasts.

In my many visits to the Maharshi Stanely Jones Sattal Christian Ashram in Uttarkhand, the participants go to a nearby butterfly museum established by a German, who lives there. There are hundreds of dead butterflies that are preserved and exhibited. There are thousands of moths and other insects. The owner of the museum observes that every time when they spot a new butterfly, moth or an insect that is not native

to the place it is an indication that these creatures are migrating to new places, since their habitat has been destroyed by the expansion of human occupation. There have been occasions in Hyderabad, when leopards were suddenly seen in the city and the reason is the same, since their habitat is destroyed, they go out in search of new places and end up in entering cities. The other reason is that along with the destruction of their habitat their food chain is also lost and this drives the animals to migrate to new places.

My question of what was a lion doing near a vineyard of Timnah village is answered by the above observations. The loss of its habitat and the loss of its food chain, probably led the lion to be in search of a home and a meal and ends up in a confrontation with the humans in this instance with Samson. The text tells us that when Samson came to the vineyards of Timnah, “suddenly a young lion roared at him” (v.5). The young lion’s roar is indicative of its suffering and pain on account of the loss of its habitat and sustenance. This reality and the process were perceived later by the prophets, who openly denounced human aggression towards the rest of the creation indicating particularly deforestation that was detriment to the very existence of the animals and wild beasts inclusive of lions:

2 Wail, O cypress, for the cedar has fallen,  
for the glorious trees are ruined!

Wail, oaks of Bashan,

**for the thick forest has been felled!**

3 Listen, the wail of the shepherds,  
for their glory is despoiled!

**Listen, the roar of the lions,**

for the thickets of the Jordan are destroyed! (Zechariah 11:2-3)

The roaring of the young lion at the vineyards of Timnah was the wailing of the lion was because the thick forest is

destroyed and the very existence of the animals is at stake. But the human response is so wild that the forests are destroyed, the food chain is destroyed and when the animals complain even the animals are destroyed. The killing of the young lion is the typical behavior of human beings towards creation and all its inhabitants. It is time that we heed to the roaring/wailing of the lions and the rest of the creation and rethink of our development paradigms and take serious the sustainable development models, which advocate holistic wellbeing of the creation inclusive of the human species.

## **2. Nature's Bounty towards Humans**

Samson's two journeys to Timnah are very significant. In his first journey to Timnah we have seen the typical human aggression towards nature. But in his second journey to Timnah, on the contrary, Samson sees Nature's bounty towards Human Beings.

8 After a while he returned to marry her, and he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion, and there was a swarm of bees in the body of the lion, and honey. 9 He scraped it out into his hands, and went on, eating as he went. When he came to his father and mother, he gave some to them, and they ate it. But he did not tell them that he had taken the honey from the carcass of the lion. (Judges 14:8-9)

The bees utilized the carcass of the lion to begin a beehive there. They replaced the death forces of human beings into a life giving vigor. Right at the rottenness of the decayed lion the bees produced honey. The deadly sight of a dead animal was transformed into a pleasant sight of a bee colony. A lifeless immovable lump was altered into a movement of life. With one life destroyed the bees have multiplied the lives through their living right there on the carcass. The Syriac and the Arabic translation of the riddle of Samson read 'BITTER' instead of 'STRONG' making the riddle to read: "...Out of the strong/BITTER came something sweet", by the replacement of 'strong' with 'bitter' is an indication that

the bees changed something ‘bitter’ into something sweet.

Nature’s response to human violence was benevolence. I have known people who have been stung by bees and some have died out of fear and others because of their venom. In the event of Samson’s journey again to Timnah for the purpose of marriage, he was inquisitive to see what happen to the lion he killed. To his utter surprise he saw bees and honey. It would have been so easy for the bees to sting Samson to death on the spot, but the benevolent bees let him live and also to eat their honey and further even to carry it away to treat his parents with their produce. Bees have been gracious to Samson. This probably was a transforming experience to Samson. The bees have changed the bitter experience of human beings ready to confront nature with violence into approaching nature with love, care and protection.

Samson with this personal experience of seeing the transforming events of death into life formulated his riddle:

“Out of the eater came something to eat.

Out of the strong came something sweet.” (v.14)

## **CONCLUSION**

The riddle of Samson and the context of the formulation of the riddle unravel the truth about the need of the human beings to be mindful of their developmental activities and technological advancements. Humans are not to take the nature or the creation for granted. Creation has been sustaining all life including the human species. Human species ought not to be aggressive towards the rest of the created order but learn to reciprocate benevolently in sustaining all life in all our activities. As the riddle goes in Syriac and Arabic translation, all human bitter behavior towards created order must be transformed to be sweet behavior. +++

### 3. JOTHAM'S FABLE

Chilkuri Vasantha Rao

#### INTRODUCTION

Gideon was a judge in Israel between 1169-1122 BCE. He hailed from the tribe of Manasseh and lived in Ophrah. He had 72 sons (Judg. 8:30; 9:5) by his many wives and one among them, Abimelech by his concubine, who was from Shechem.

Gideon was a judge of great valor, when Gideon defeated the Midianites, (Judg. 8:1-21) the Israelites tried to make him king (v.22), but Gideon refused and said that neither he nor his sons would rule, since God alone was king, (v.23). After the death of Gideon a power struggle ensued (v.31). One of his sons named Abimelech desired to become king (Judg. 9:13).

Abimelech went to his mother's home in Shechem (Judg.9:1) and requested his relatives to speak to the lords of Shechem of him being king as against the 70 sons of Gideon. He appealed to the Shechemites stating that he was their flesh and bone (Judg.9:2-3). Abimelech not only aspired to be king but he also assumed that his brothers probably had the same aspiration.

Hence, in the pursuit of becoming king Abimelech hired people and killed his 70 brothers. The youngest of the brothers named Jotham hid himself and escaped death (vv.4-5), the people of Shechem and Beth-Millo, then made Abimelech king (v.6).

Abimelech had done evil by putting the sons of Gideon to death and also by erroneously becoming king, which in the Israelite convictions, rightly belonged to God alone. How then would Jotham the sole survivor of Gideon's sons confront the people of Shechem with this terrible evil?

On the day when Abimelech was crowned as king, Jotham spoke out to the citizens of Shechem and Beth-Millo from the top of Mount Gerazim (Judg. 9:7), with the Fable of the Trees.

### **THE FABLE OF THE TREES**

- <sup>8</sup> The trees once went out  
to anoint a king over themselves.  
So they said to the olive tree,  
‘Reign over us.’
- <sup>9</sup> The olive tree answered them,  
‘Shall I stop producing my rich oil  
by which gods and mortals are honored,  
and go to sway over the trees?’
- <sup>10</sup> Then the trees said to the fig tree,  
‘You come and reign over us.’
- <sup>11</sup> But the fig tree answered them,  
‘Shall I stop producing my sweetness  
and my delicious fruit,  
and go to sway over the trees?’
- <sup>12</sup> Then the trees said to the vine,  
‘You come and reign over us.’
- <sup>13</sup> But the vine said to them,  
‘Shall I stop producing my wine  
that cheers gods and mortals,  
and go to sway over the trees?’
- <sup>14</sup> So all the trees said to the bramble,  
‘You come and reign over us.’
- <sup>15</sup> And the bramble said to the trees,

‘If in good faith you are anointing me king over you,  
then come and take refuge in my shade;  
but if not, let fire come out of the bramble  
and devour the cedars of Lebanon.’ (Judg. 9:8-15)

### **JOTHAM’S FABLE**

In the Indian tradition we have abundance of fables as they appear in the Panchatantra, in which birds and most commonly animals are the dramatis personae, such as the fox, the ass, the lion and the others, but in the Jotham’s fable the members of the plant kingdom such as the olive, the fig, the vine, the thorn bush are both the actors as well as speakers.

By using a fable, Jotham seems to be keeping up with the family tradition of proverbial speeches, which his father Gideon also used (Judg. 8:2). Prophets used such parabolic devices as a powerful tool to confront evil in a subversive manner as we find in the example of ‘the ewe lamb’ in 2 Samuel 12:1-4.

Jotham aim in using this fable of the trees was to call the people of Shechem to a realization of their folly in selecting Abimelech as their king, who is represented by the thorn bush, which would inflict pain on the people and that his rule would be detrimental to the peace of the nation. The trees represented various personalities, such as the Olive tree Gideon who rejected to be a king, the fig tree the sons of Gideon who too did not accept to rule as king, the vine probably represented the priests, who refused the invitation to become king.

Although there is personification of the trees in the fable, we need to note that in the personification their traits are transferred to the human personalities. This reminds us to

understand the nature and function of the trees themselves in their cosmic existence.

### **TREES IN JOTHAM'S FABLE**

The olive, the fig and the vine are among the highly prized trees in region of Samaria and are the staple products that are among the seven important agricultural species of Israel. They are mentioned in the book of Deuteronomy 8:7-8. They have symbolic values such as Olive represents Abraham (Rom. 11). The fig tree symbolizes the nation of Israel and in the New Testament the vine is referred to Jesus (John 15). We observe that the call to be elected as the king was contrary to their very nature and function. They fulfilled their purpose in their life by bearing fruit. Every tree knew its function of contributing to the society without having to run the society.

### **THE NATURAL SETTING**

The geographical setting of Shechem is a place with plains, mountains, valleys, trees and people. History is not devoid of geography. It is the geography that much influences the history and history in turn affects the geography. The fable has an important element of perceiving the nature and function of the said trees both in relations to its environment, in relation to God and in relation to the people. From the dialogue between trees we can ascertain their self understanding.

### **SELF UNDERSTANDING OF THE TREES**

One of the trees that are mentioned in the fable of Jotham, for instance, the cedars are mentioned as the ones that rejoice in God, "Yea, the fir trees rejoice at thee, and the cedars of Lebanon.... (Isa. 14:8). This holds good to every tree in the fable. The Olive tree, the fig tree, the vine, the thorn bush and the cedar rejoice like the fir trees. They rejoice being in

relationship with their Creator and in a symbiotic relationship with the human being and the rest of the creation.

Secondly, when each tree was asked to be king, we realize the fact that they have a basic inherent natural worth. They were looked up to as the ones that had potential in them for greater tasks.

Thirdly, by rejecting to be king, they are conscious and knew for what they were created for. They are in harmony with the Creator's will for their existence in the divine economy.

Fourthly, they had a clear recognition of their vocation and derived personal satisfaction coming forth from their fruit-bearing.

Fifthly, they project a strong sense and desire to do good rather than being great.

Sixthly, although humans think and refer to the thorn bush as useless, it undoubtedly has a rightful purpose in the ecosystem as God's good creation.

Seventhly, in adhering to the purpose of the tree and in bearing fruit God their Creator is glorified (John 15:8).

Having deduced the meaningful existence of the trees, we could take one representative tree from among the Olive, fig, and vine and discover what the trees meant when they opted to be dedicated for the purpose for which they were meant to be. We shall choose the very first mentioned tree, which is the Olive tree.

### **THE OLIVE TREE HONORS GOD**

The existence of the olive tree is intertwined with the existence of the human beings. Both have coexisted at least for the past 5000 to 6000 years, dating back to the Early Bronze Age, which is a period between 3150 to 1200 BCE.

In the Jotham's fable, we note that the trees made a request to the Olive tree:

“The trees once went out  
to anoint a king over themselves.  
So they said to the olive tree,  
‘Reign over us.’” (Judg. 9:8)

*The Olive tree answered in the following manner:*

“The olive tree answered them,  
‘Shall I stop producing my rich oil  
by which gods and mortals are honored,  
and go to sway over the trees?’” (Judg. 9:9)

The response of the Olive tree is a theological response; it says that it has a function and purpose of honoring God with its rich oil. Along with gods, however, the mortals are also mentioned, which would mean that the Olive tree has a meaningful existence with self worth and with a purpose of fulfilling its service towards God and God's creation including human beings. Human beings, with my delight, have associated with the Olive tree by drawing similes, such as:

“But I am like a green olive tree  
in the house of God.  
I trust in the steadfast love of God  
forever and ever.” (Psalm 52:8)

We do not see the Olive tree merely with a utilitarian value for human beings but with its own theological assertion of honoring God with its produce. In the Bible we see the Olive tree, Olive fruit and the Olive oil play an important role. In Deuteronomy 8:8 the olive is listed as one among the seven species found in Palestine.

Its yellow wood was used in the temple. Its oil considered sacred was used in the religious ceremonies as sacrificial offerings, for anointing priests and kings. Olive oil in course of time has become the symbol of wisdom, purity, glory, peace, power and fertility. It was also used as ointment. Its oil was used in cooking and utilized for lights.

The Olive branch itself was a symbol of peace. Olive twigs were used for purification and benediction. Victors in games and war were adorned with a crown made of Olive leaves. Olive branches, which may have been used for ritual purposes were found in the tombs of kings in Egypt. Olive leaves are used as incense in some countries.

In the ancient world Olives were used for food and it was cultivated to be a commercial fruit. Greeks smeared oil on their bodies and hair for health. The olive was minted on the Greek coins. In the middle of the Roman Forum grew olive among others with the purpose of providing shade. In some countries olive fruit is seen as substitute for dates, when the latter are scarce. Olive wood being hard is known for its color and durability, is much valued by the woodworkers, hence furniture, utensils and decorative items are made out of it.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Olive tree is a wonderful creation of God. It is in the service of its Creator and in the service of the rest of the creation. It has an independent existence relating to God and glorifying God for its life and purposeful living.

The Olive tree among all other trees enjoys God's protect by law:

“If you besiege a town for a long time, making war against it in order to take it, you must not destroy its trees by

wielding an ax against them. Although you may take food from them, you must not cut them down. Are trees in the field human beings that they should come under siege from you?" (Deuteronomy 20:19).

Individuals, real estate business, construction companies, development projects, laying of high ways, commercial agriculturist and others must be cautious of advertently or inadvertently uprooting the trees. They are protected both by God's law and human laws. Uprooting any tree is an insult to its Creator and planting a tree is glorifying its Creator. +++

## 4. GREEN HERMENEUTICS

Mervin Shinoj Boas

The Bible has to be read and interpreted as per the demands of the contemporary context. One of the crucial contemporary issues is ecological crisis. Therefore, the Bible should be interpreted from the ecological perspective. There are eco-justice principles that help us to read and interpret the Bible with a deep concern towards God's creation. Here is an attempt how we can apply eco-justice principles in the parables to make them 'Green Parables.'

### **Parable One**

#### **The Shepherd and the Flock (Ezekiel 34:1-25)**

This parable begins with the commission of a **Son of Man** who has been called to be with the mind of God that is totally disturbed due to the irresponsible nature of leaders towards God's creation. This parable reveals God's great passion towards God's own creation.

The Son of man is asked to declare the revelation from God to the destroyers of God's creation in order to protect the creation. Son of man represents the agents of God who should have great commitment towards God's creation. Therefore, the text demands us to be with the same for safeguarding the Earth and its components. Son of man stands against the group of people who destroy, exploit, and victimize the co-creatures for their own personal benefits and interests. This group is anthropocentric in nature. They are known as Shepherds who are supposed to take care of God's creation. Therefore, they have been appearing as friends, custodians, and stewards of co-creatures but unfortunately they have been feeding themselves instead of feeding the sheep.

This portion of the text stands against **the anthropocentric approach** while many biblical passages are anthropocentric in nature. It means that biblical texts are written by human beings for reflecting the primary interests of human beings and for the purpose of human welfare and for showing human relationship with God and with a target of personal salvation. Thus anthropocentric method does not have space for non-human world or other co-creatures. But this text gives us consciousness about the presence of the Earth components and encourages us to join with the Earth community in the struggle for bringing justice for Earth.

Moreover, the text states that the shepherds eat the fat, they clothe themselves with the wool, they slaughter the fat ones, but they do not feed them (v. 3). In verse 8 it is reminded again, “the shepherds have fed themselves and have not fed my sheep.” Here, the point should be noted that even though the shepherds own the flocks God says that they are mine. We should recollect the indigenous value of Tribal communities that argues that Earth components belong to God and God is the sole owner of them and privatizing the Earth components is a sin against God and creation. Moreover, this passage states that the shepherds consider their flock only on the basis of its intrinsic worth. This approach reminds us about the first eco-justice principle.

### **The Principle of Intrinsic Worth**

Earth is considered on the basis of its utilitarian value for human beings. This notion is opposed by this principle and demands to have a position to understand the Earth and its components on the basis of its own intrinsic worth or value. Dualism does not allow us to go with this ecological position. Dualism does not permit us to consider the Earth with its own significance and value but only heaven. On the ground of dualism, heaven is viewed as spiritual, superior, pure and

eternal whereas Earth is material, inferior, corrupt and transitory. There are biblical texts that promote the same concept. For example, Heb. 11:13-16. Here heaven is described as our true home and Earth as a motel. Therefore, Earth components should not be taken care of. Principle of intrinsic worth encourages us to examine while reading the biblical text whether Earth components are respected and honoured on the basis of its own intrinsic value. Here, we can easily find out that the sheep are neglected, exploited, and victimized by their own shepherds. It means that its own intrinsic value is not considered and they are treated only on the basis of human need and benefit.

Neglecting this world and glorifying the 'other' world is one of the hermeneutical impacts of dualism. Heaven and Earth are understood as two opposing cosmic domains with the support of dualism. Heaven is honoured and Earth is given only secondary value. In Isaiah 66:2, heaven is declared as God's throne and Earth or land as God's footstool. Earth is under the feet of the ruler. In the ancient Near East, the imagery of a person or nation as a footstool is an image of subservience. Thus Earth is devalued. Heaven is God's abode and Earth is God's property. The principle of Intrinsic value stands against this epistemological position.

We can find out the biblical texts that glorify the value of the Earth or devalue the Earth. This parable holds the both insights; devalues and values the Earth. The shepherds devalue the Earth and God values the Earth. Many biblical passages devalue the Earth due to anthropocentric approach. But, Genesis I declares that Earth is good because of God's pronouncement. God finds that Earth is good. The principle of Intrinsic value demands for a deep examination of biblical texts to understand Earth with its own intrinsic worth or value. Therefore, the intrinsic value of the sheep should be noticed,

acknowledged, and considered in this parable. Re-reading of the text on the basis of this principle is demanded here.

### **The Principle of Mutual Custodianship**

The text says that “The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them (V. 4). This passage shows that the principle of custodianship and stewardship are negated. Actually, eco-justice principles do not stand for the traditional concept of custodianship and stewardship due to its anthropocentrism. Custodian is the one who keeps something under his/her own custody. Therefore, Earth is under the hegemonic power of the custodian. Thus, Earth is subjugated, oppressed, and exploited. Stewardship also promotes a concept that Earth is given in the hands of human beings. Therefore, human beings have the power to take any decision about Earth on behalf of God. This attitude also is a ground of victimization of Earth. In verses 22, God takes a strong decision that the creation should not be victimized any more. Instead of custodianship and stewardship, ‘kinship’ is promoted by the eco-justice principles. But kinship is also negated in the verse 4 due to not taking care of the co-creatures and at the same time taking a stand to exploit them. God’s interaction with the Earth is totally on the basis of kinship. Therefore, God demands us to maintain a kinship approach towards God’s creation through revealing God’s attitude towards creation

Furthermore, the fifth eco-justice principle, the principle of mutual custodianship, states that the Earth does not need any rulers for its survival or to maintain its balance. It needs partners to live with it. This principle reflects the role of human beings in the Earth community. The concept of custodianship has been critiqued by Clare Palmer due to its

anthropocentric nature and its hierarchy of power and its language of human dominion over Earth. The concept of stewardship also is critiqued due to its negation of God's presence on Earth. Here God is understood as an absentee landlord who has put humanity in charge of God's possessions. Human beings are instituted as agents to act on behalf of God on Earth community matters. A feudal system is constructed by stewardship with a concept of God as master and owner of financial resources who leaves everything with human beings to rule. Gen. 1:26-28 promotes this idea. Therefore, as it has been mentioned earlier, the concept of 'kinship' is considered as a good method to interact with the Earth community.

In this context, a natural kinship of human beings with members of the Earth community is recommended. Co-equality is the criterion here. Human being is a co-equal participant in this circle. All kinds of hierarchical structures are opposed here because in a circle there is no beginning and ending point. Indigenous traditions of Australia, where from we got the eco-justice principles, promote kinship with Earth. This principle instructs to understand Earth as sacred due to opposing hierarchical injustice structures. Earth should be read and interpreted with kinship. Hermeneutics of kinship brings 'green' to the Earth.

In this particular passage, firstly the shepherds do not care their co-creatures. Therefore, they are weak, sick, injured, the strayed, and lost. Instead of taking care of them in this situation the shepherds rule them cruelly and harshly (V. 4). As a result, the sheep are scattered and eaten by wild beasts.

In this situation the principle of custodianship reminds us about the need of keeping a kinship towards the Earth components for its survival and this principle does not allow

anybody to overrule the Earth components. Further, this text acknowledges that the disappearance of the Earth components take place due to the cruel approach and attitude of the human beings. This text does not meet the mission of the Principle of Mutual Custodianship and thus challenges us to the destructive power of the human beings through exploiting and overruling the co-beings.

Even though the sheep are ill-treated brutally, killed cruelly and ruled mercilessly we cannot hear the voice of sheep directly but God speaks on behalf of them and stands against to all who silence the voice of the Earth components. God's voice for the sheep which are silenced is very powerful. We are reminded about our mission that the voice of the silenced to be heard. It happens in this text. From the beginning to end of this passage God speaks for the silenced voice with a great passion. This is what the Principle of Voice demands from our part.

### **The Principle of Voice**

This principle demands us to hear the voice of Earth in the text. But, unfortunately the voice of Earth is silenced in this parable though the sheep, a Earth component, are treated brutally. The passage does not reveal the crying voice of the sheep.

The principle of voice states that Earth has its own voice; a voice to celebrate its life as well as a voice to resist injustice because Earth is a living subject and entity both biologically and spiritually. Gaia hypothesis of James Lovelock declares that Earth is itself alive, sustaining and regulating its own environment. Salie McFague uses the metaphor of the body of God for describing Earth as a living entity. Jay McDaniel talks about the organism of Earth that consists of the total community of subjects. Earth as living entity promotes Earth consciousness that help us to hear the voice of Earth.

The principle of voice demands us to examine how an earth component is silenced. As it is mentioned in eco-justice principles, how a voluble subject (Earth) has been oppressed to a mute object? Here, no need to think that human categories have been imposed upon a non-human reality. “Earth does not speak with human voice or uses human language.” The modes of self expression and communication of Earth and its non-human members of Earth community are quite different. There is a clear and strong Earth language. There are different sounds for waves. Birds have its’ own language. The responsibility of human beings is to learn that language to understand the voice of Earth. Indigenous poet May Duroux hears the land crying. David Suzuki hears the cry of polluted seas. But Western dualism understands all non-humans components of Earth community as objects which do not have its own voice. The principle of voice negates the concept. Further, Western dualism promotes that only human beings have genuine feelings, spiritual consciousness and a capacity to worship. Other components of Earth community do not have these abilities. Only human beings know how to praise God and its language. The principle of voice objects this notion by advocating that all living creatures on Earth have its own language to praise God.

This principle gives us awareness that many a time biblical interpretation suppresses the voice of Earth and thus Earth voice is silenced because voice of Earth has been acknowledged as a threat towards anthropocentrism just like the voice of women has been silenced by thinking that it is a threat towards patriarchal structure. The principle of voice struggles to construct Earth-sensitive human beings.

Prophet Jeremiah (12:4,11) hear the land mourning. Job (12:7) says that ask the animals and they will teach you. But at the same time most biblical writers are happy to curse

Earth as a consequence of human behaviour. The principle of voice demands us to hear the voice of Earth that has been silenced and teaches us that Earth is a living entity.

Even though there is move in this text to silence the voice of Earth from the part of human beings this parable acknowledges the voice of the victimized and the silenced through the voice of God. This mission should be taken up by the lovers of Earth.

At the same time we should be very careful to note the anti-ecological element of the text. For example V. 16 b states that God will destroy the fat and the strong sheep. The voice of the fat and strong sheep is silenced in the name of God. This is against the voice of the Earth component as well as the principle of voice. It reminds us that both ecological and anti-ecological elements can be found in the same passage. Therefore, ecological reading of the text is a very serious task.

## **Parable Two**

### **Three Servants are Given Talents (Matt. 25:14-30)**

This parable talks about the over exploitation of Earth resources for making huge profit in order to please the capitalists or masters. Making 100 percent profit within a short time clearly states about the over exploitation of land to get more products through utilizing fertilizers and pesticides and modern technology that forcing the land to produce more crops. We have to remember that everything is from soil. Nothing is here without land. Therefore, land is needed for all kinds of businesses.

In this parable the voice of the earth is silenced and at the same time the exploiter speaks on behalf of the earth. The exploited is silenced and the voice is given to the exploited by the exploiter. Postcolonial epistemology takes a crucial position towards this kind of notions. After silencing

the Earth I begin speak for the Earth. Then the voice of mine will be acknowledged as the voice of Earth. Unfortunately, the voice I make is against the feeling of Earth but due to the dominant power of human beings over Earth the voice of humans will be accepted. The eco-justice principal of Voice stands against this notion; imposing our voice over Earth since Earth has its own celebrating and resisting voice.

The capitalist who gives capital to his agents to do business gives silent permission to exploit the natural resources as much as possible. It can be acknowledged during the time of submitting the accounts. The agents who gained 100 percent profit within a short time were appreciated. Making huge profit through exploiting the natural resources is the story of this parable that takes place in our context enormously. Multinational corporate focuses on the village areas due to the availability of natural resources at a cheap cost brings uncountable destructive factors of Earth and environment. Earth is vehemently exploited and the down trodden communities are victimized.

The ecologists and environmentalists find that neo-capitalism is one of the main factors that destruct Earth in numerous ways. The third servant takes a position against the capitalism and does not bring profit to the capitalist because he does not want to make big profit through exploiting the natural resources for his business in order to please the master. This position should be well appreciated in the contemporary context where even Government supports to exploit the natural resources for the sake of capitalists. Money is focused and Earth is exploited. Again, voice of the earth is silenced and the exploiter's voice is being heard as the voice of Earth.

The third servant stands against the nature of the capitalists or the masters of wealth. He says that this kind of people are very hard, reaping where they did not sow, and

gathering where they did not scatter seeds. Making money through exploiting the people of land and the natural resources is identified as the main issue of the destruction of Earth. Again the parable shows the life of the people who love earth and stand for the earth community in the neo-capitalist era. The group who destructs Earth will be accepted by the multi-corporate and the people who stand for the survival of Earth will be punished.

**The principal of purpose** clearly encourages us to suspect all the projects that take place in the name of “sustainable development.” The so-called developments implemented by the developers come out with this fancy concept but this concept of sustainable development is not for the survivability of the Earth Community but for the better future for the human beings in the days to come. The purpose should be analyzed very deeply in order to understand the hidden agenda of the developers who are the main people who destruct Earth without minding the purpose of the Earth components. This principle brings meaning to the text. The third servants analyzed the hidden agenda of the capitalist and his agents and stayed away from this development project for the sake of the sustainability of Earth and its components.

## 5. ECO READING OF THE PARABLES

John Samuel Ponnuswamy

### INTRODUCTION

The parables of Jesus are well known, and they are related to other literatures. They indeed belong to a Jewish genre, of which we find many examples in rabbinic literature. The background for the parables of the New Testament is to be found in the world of Israel's sages. Parables do exist in the Old Testament but without that name. For instance, the prophet Nathan tells David a simple story about a rich man and a poor man that seems unconnected to David, but in fact it makes him realize his sin (2 Samuel 12:1–19).

A large chunk of the Jewish parables is related to a group within the Jewish community called *Hasidim* present in Galilee. They had religious laws of their own, but they were very pious and sinfearers. They preferred poverty, healed the sick, brought rain and rescued people from trouble. With this we get closer to Jesus. He urges, "He who has ears, let him hear" (Matthew 13:9). The parables are simple but they must be understood on a deeper level. Let me mention a saying from *Pirkei Avot* (Sayings of the Fathers 2:15) with which the authors say, "The day is short, the work is plentiful, the workers are lazy, the wage is abundant and the master of the house hastens!

### **Jesus and the parables**

Jesus taught about God by using concrete illustrations that reach the heart through the imagination. They challenged the mind on the highest intellectual level by using simple stories that made common sense out of the complexities of religious faith and human experience. On the one hand, in finite terms God is beyond human comprehension, but on

the other, his infinite majesty may be captured in vivid stories of daily life. Jesus loves to use parables to communicate his message. The word-picture of the parable creates a drama that picturizes the reality clearly. The resemblance between the reality and the illustration makes an instructive comparison. The way the parables speak about God is deeply rooted in the historical and cultural background of the Hebrew Bible.

The Gospel parables of Jesus, moreover, are full of everyday ordinariness along with a God-consciousness. The unexpected usually enters into the drama with a surprise action by one of the leading characters or an unanticipated change of events. The stage of daily life becomes the scene for viewing the world from God's perspective. Parables use rich imagery of language to catch the listener unaware. At first it all seems so familiar, and then a shift develops in the plot of the story. The ordinariness of the parable is transformed by a surprising twist. The familiar setting of the parable allows each person to understand God's will. The local color of the story is changed for a special purpose. The drama comes alive in meaning because of the theological significance of the parables.

One-third of the recorded sayings of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels are in parables. One must understand parables to know Jesus. After all, Jesus was a Jew, and his parables represent a form of Judaism from his time. Moreover, the stories of God and people that Jesus used to illustrate his message called for a decision from everyone who listened. Parables are works of art in the discipline of communication.

The parables provided a way for the people to understand scripture. The parables made the message lucid and practical. Everyone enjoys the dynamic force of a good illustration. The only way to refute a parable is with another parable. A parable is often told to make one point. They begin

with God and involve people. God is like a generous householder or a compassionate father. These stories help us to imagine what God is like.

Agricultural laborers fill the dramatic scenes of the stories. The plots, which often involve the rich and their money **lenders** or the landowners and their work forces, are derived from the situations of daily life. They may even contain depictions of high-society weddings. These stories are fond of contrast, exaggeration, intrigue, and surprise. Money, power, greed as well as generosity, humility, and compassion generate the interest of the listener. Humor is also prominent in many parables.

The predominant characters of parables, such as king, servant, steward, son, or prince, are selected for theological or exegetical reasons. Without God, Gospel parables lose their central focus. They portrayed God through metaphor and personal experience. Jesus told stories to his own people. He knew their language. He was a part of their culture. The parable teaches more by intuition than by precept. The message is caught rather than learned.

The parable of the Prodigal Son, for instance, introduces a new plot and a major conflict with the elder brother. The audience has been set up for the deviation from the beginning. The parable has prepared the stage for a surprise already in the introduction of the cast, which mentioned a man and his two sons. In a similar way, the Gospel parable of the Unmerciful Servant introduces a second mini-drama. A major conflict is resolved when the king forgives his first servant of an enormous debt. This is like the prodigal who returns home and is received by his compassionate father. But the stories do not end there. Second conflict is introduced. The prodigal has a brother, and the servant who received mercy is called upon to show mercy to his colleague. The second mini-drama becomes the primary

focus of the parable teller. In these examples the classic form of the parable has been artistically expanded for more dramatic impact.

The purpose of the parables in the Gospels was to instruct. Jesus' parables illustrate and teach, despite the argument of a number of scholars that they were designed to conceal his message from the people. The comparative study of the parable as a genre proves that the force behind the parable was designed to drive home a point.

At first parables were oral stories told to illustrate and communicate. Being told before live audiences, they were intended to entertain and challenge the listener by urging a response. The Gospels portray Jesus as an itinerant teacher who taught in parables. As Jesus travels from place to place, he sits down in a boat to teach the people, or upon a mountain, or on the plain. He also appears sitting in the temple giving instruction. His disciples ask him questions, and he gives his response. The open fields of harvest or the fishermen's nets around the Sea of Galilee may have been the actual background for the presentation of some parables.

### **Eco Reading of the parables**

Now we are reading the gospel parables in a contextual frame work of the ecological and environment preservation. Given the exploitation, domination, and degradation of creation at human hands, we desperately need to discover the role of the Bible in the human (mis)treatment of nature and to explore the role that the Bible might take in fostering a renewing and sustaining of nature. Of course, we cannot separate human beings from the rest of nature. We are inextricably formed by, dependent upon, and bound up with all of nature. What we humans do affects the rest of nature, and what happens to the rest of nature affects the well-being of humans. Therefore, concern for nature should inform our reading of the Bible. In a sense, because we are so integrally

related to the rest of nature, those who interpret the Bible with nature in mind will be giving voice to creation, both human and non-human.

I believe we are entering an environmental age in which the devastating changes to the environment and our consequent preoccupation with the environment will alter every aspect of our personal and communal lives. So as Christians we need to explore the Bible for what it says about creation and the role of human beings as part of that creation.

Some of the problems in reading the New Testament from an eco-justice perspective clearly lie within the New Testament itself. Numerous examples of disparaging attitudes toward nature in the New Testament include the drowning of a herd of two-thousand pigs in the Sea of Galilee (Mark 5:1-20), the cursing of a fig tree (Mark 11:12-14, 20-25), and by Paul that God has no interest in oxen for their own sake (1 Corinthians 9:9-10), and the destruction of nature by God as punishment for idolatry in the Book of Revelation.

Other problems lie with our interpretations of the New Testament rather than with the writings themselves. One way to rectify our blindness is for interpreters of the Bible to be conscious of reading not only from our “social location” but also from our “natural location.” That is, we can interpret and appropriate the biblical materials in light of our human relationship to the natural world—personal, regional, and global. If we keep before us the dynamic, interactive relationship between humans and the rest of nature, we will surely begin to see aspects of the biblical materials we have long neglected. And in so doing, we will be able to integrate our commitment to care for creation into our whole interpretive process.

It is mentioned in Mark, “And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan, and he was with the wild beasts,

and the angels waited on him” (Mark 1:12-13). In anticipation of such a realm, Hosea predicted a time when God would abolish war from the land and make a covenant “with the wild animals, the birds of the air, and the creeping things of the ground . . . and make you lie down in safety.” (Hosea 2:18).

For example, the biblical motif of identification with the least and the oppressed could be extended to encompass nature. Matthew declares that “Insofar as you have done it unto the least of these my brothers and sisters, you have done it to me” (Mark 25:40). Mark declares that, “Whoever receives one such little child receives me.” Luke states that Jesus “came to seek and to save the last” (Mark 19:10). Luke’s overarching theme is about God’s “preferential option for the poor.” Why not include trees, animals, air, and water as oppressed, exploited, dominated, and marginalized creatures with whom God identifies? What would it mean to live with nature in such a way as to serve nature? What would it mean to care for the most vulnerable and endangered species in creation? How would our humane treatment of the least in nature complement to our care for the least of our brothers and sisters? Can we even think about the liberation of humans without also thinking about the liberation of the whole creation in which we are embedded?

In regard to eco-justice issues, there is much in the New Testament to resist and there is much to celebrate. There is much to be cautious about and there is much that can guide us and empower us for the decisions that lie ahead. To learn from the Bible and to be transformed by what we read is a need for our times.

### **The parable of the prodigal son**

The parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15 is a classic example for the parables of Jesus. It begins with the phrase,

“There was a man with two sons”. The turning point in the story is the leaving of the younger son from the family to a distant country. He received his share from his father and thus severed all relations with his family. In a short time, the younger son spent away all his money and became a poor man. This is the next shift in the story. The third twist comes when he returns to his family seeking for shelter and food. He did not expect a restoration into the previous status as a son, but to be received as one among the servants. The compassionate gesture of the father to receive him and embrace him comes as a shock to the hearers. The final twist comes when the elder son is unable to receive his brother and feels rejected by his father. The parable at every turn raises the enthusiasm of the reader.

There is another parable about the builders. One built his house on a rock. The other man built his house on sand. When the rain came, the house built on the rock withstood the rain. The house built on sand was washed away. The parable came to explain that the one who hears and lives according to the Torah is a strong man like the house built on rock. The one who heard and didn't walk according to the Torah is a weak person like the house built on sand. A slight variation is, the one who obeyed the Torah is like the wise man. The one who did not follow the Torah is like the foolish man.

One thing that is common for both the parables are the intervention of nature in their life. In the first parable, it is famine. In the second parable, it is rain. However, the elements of nature present in the parables are hardly perceived. A professor in USA, Mark Allen Powell, when asked twelve seminary students in his country to write the story of the prodigal son, none of them remembered the ‘famine’ in the story. Then he organized hundred people and only six of the hundred people wrote about the famine in the

story. Subsequently, he gathered fifty people in Petersburg in Russia, forty two out of fifty people remembered 'famine' in their story. Perhaps, the social memory in Russia about how six lakhs people died of starvation in a three years famine has not vanished yet. It became a crucial cultural aspect for the Russian people.

In the parable of the prodigal son, the famine is a crucial cultural element. It occurs frequently in the history of the Hebrew people. Genesis recalls, "and there was famine in the land, and Abraham went down to Egypt" (Genesis 12:10). It is narrated in the Ruth, "Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, there was famine in the land" (Ruth 1:1). The prodigal son set off to a distant country that was afflicted by famine. Was it Egypt? Moab? Babylon? It haunts the Jewish imagination to know where was that famine actually. In one famine story, Abraham returned with much gifts. In another story, Elimelech never returned from Moab. Hence the enthusiasm in the prodigal son story whether it will end like Abraham story of Elimelech story? Hence the father was anxious for the son. When he saw the son, He cries, he was dead, he has come back to life"(Luke 15:32). But the elder son declares that he is dead, like the second story. Now the readers must say how they want the story to conclude. In this story, the younger son becomes the recipient of gifts, sandals, garment ring and feast.

According to the Jewish tradition, there were ten famines. Nine have come. One will come in future! In the days of Adam (Genesis 3:17), In the days of Abraham (12:10), In the days of In the days of Isaac (41:56), In the days of Jacob ( 1 Kings 18:2), In the days of Elijah ( II kings 6:25), In the days of Elisha (II Samuel 21:1), In the days of judges ( Ruth 1:1). During the famine, starving people resorted to eating wild vines, heads of animals, garbage, dung, and even human flesh (II Kings 4:39, 6:25, 6:28, Lamentations 4:4-10). Hence they must be brought to repentance (I Kings

8:35=36, Hosea 2:8-23, Amos 4:6-8). Of course, God protects the people in famines (Psalm 33:1-19), Psalm 37:18-19). We must seek for our repentance in the context of nature.

Let us come back to the story. The younger son Some how talks to his father into handing over “the share of the property that will belong to me.” The lad then “gathered all he had and travelled to a distant country, and there he spent away his property in dissolute living.” Let us not rush ahead to the event of repentance and forgiveness. Let us reflect on the phrase that looks like our culture: “he squandered his property in dissolute living.” Just like the younger son who spent away the inheritance, we’re thoroughly enjoying our excessive pleasures. We see our extraordinary levels of consumption as “the good life”. We don’t want to think about what will happen when the resources run out. Rather than seeing our resources as a short and unsustainable reserve, we tend to think of what we’re doing as “normal” — and even hope to do more of it. We face the same situation as the prodigal son. The wealth that allows our lavish living will not last. The party will be over soon, and the poverty that follows will be painful.

To sustain our “dissolute living”, we’re going to extreme measures to get the energy resources that we have taken for granted. As the world economy has expanded nearly 10-fold since 1950, consumption has begun to outstrip natural assets on a global scale. Yet as our human family has grown and the global economy has expanded, demand has surpassed the earth’s regenerative capacity. We are overharvesting forests, overplowing fields, overgrazing grasslands, overdrawing aquifers, overfishing oceans, and pumping far more carbon into the atmosphere than nature can absorb. We are, indeed, exhausting our rich — and prematurely claimed — inheritance. Our excessive living is taking us toward impending collapse.

The prodigal son of Jesus' parable had a humiliating, but viable option. He could go home to dad and beg for a job on the prosperous and sustainable family establishment. But we may not have even that option. When our excessive consumption exhausts the planet and destabilizes civilization, there will be no other place to go.

The alternative points us toward the one reasonable choice — a rapid shift toward renewable energy, ecological restoration, and sustainable communities. The sooner we make those changes, the better off we will be. The essential first step in making those changes is to reject the unsustainable path that our society is travelling. Rather than seeing ourselves as blessed and righteous in our over-consumption, we need to recognize that we are acting like the prodigal son, squandering everything in dissolute living.

Like the prodigal son, confessing our mistakes will allow us to discover both joyful forgiveness and better opportunities. We can make the personal and collective choices that will take us toward a healthier and more sustainable future — but first we must admit to ourselves that we have been blowing Earth's bounty on a wild and irresponsible life style. Future generations will not appreciate the way we have wasted that inheritance. Perhaps, if we act soon, they will appreciate our repentance and our responsible choices.

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## CONTRIBUTORS

Ms. Gladys Jenifer , Assistant Professor in English, Bishop Heber College, Trichy  
Rev. Joy Masilamani, Presbyter, Diocese of Malabar  
Rev. Jeri Rajkumar, Presbyter, Diocese of Coimbatore  
Rev. Lino S. John, Deacon, Diocese of Madhya Kerala  
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Dr. Nair Anup Chandrasekharan, Assistant Professor, Bishop Moore College, Mavelikara  
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Mr. D. Kathiravan, Assistant Professor, St. Johns College, Palaymcottai, Tirunelvely  
Rev Prasad Reddy Malla, Presbyter, Karimnagar diocese  
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Mr. R. Sellaraj Manuneethi, Head & Assistant Professor of English, Pope's College, Sawyerpuram. Rev.C.Ramulu Emmanuel, Presbyter, Karimnagar Diocese  
Mr. K.Jeremiah Kirubananth, Assitant Professor, Bishop Heber College, Trichy  
A.S.Archana, Assistant Professor, Bishop Heber College, Trichy  
Ms.Betty Elsa Jacob, Assistant Professor, CMS College, Kottayam  
Dr.R.Annie Vidhya, Assistant Professor, Voorhe's College, Vellore  
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Ms.Esther Hema Nalini, Principal, Katrina Moller College of Nursing,Arogyavaram  
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