

# The Surprising Genius of Jesus

Peter J. Williams

@DrPJWilliams



**Elon Musk** 

@elonmusk



The limbic instinct for vengeance is incredibly strong, which is why turn the other cheek is such a powerful idea

3:24 AM · Mar 19, 2022

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# Three Stories by Jesus

# Did Jesus tell His shortest parable?

- “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in **three measures of flour**, till it was all leavened.” (Matthew 13:33, 19 words)
- “It is like leaven that a woman took and hid in **three measures of flour**, until it was all leavened.” (Luke 13:21, 15 words)
- “measure”
  - Greek *saton* (σάτον)
  - Hebrew *seah* (סֵאָה)
- Josephus: “The *saton* is equivalent to one and a half Italian modius” (ἰσχύει δὲ τὸ σάτον μόδιον καὶ ἥμισυ Ἴταλικόν, *Antiquities* 9.85)

# Seah only in 6 OT passages

- Genesis 18:6 And Abraham went quickly into the tent to Sarah and said, "Quick! **Three seahs of fine flour!** Knead it, and make cakes."
- 1 Samuel 25:18 Then Abigail made haste and took two hundred loaves and two skins of wine and five sheep already prepared and **five seahs of parched grain** and a hundred clusters of raisins and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid them on donkeys.
- 1 Kings 18:32 And he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain **two seahs of seed.**
- 2 Kings 7:1 But Elisha said, "Hear the word of the Lord: thus says the Lord, Tomorrow about this time **a seah of fine flour** shall be sold for a shekel, and **two seahs of barley** for a shekel, at the gate of Samaria."
- 2 Kings 7:16 Then the people went out and plundered the camp of the Syrians. So **a seah of fine flour** was sold for a shekel, and **two seahs of barley** for a shekel, according to the word of the Lord.
- 2 Kings 7:18 For when the man of God had said to the king, "**Two seahs of barley** shall be sold for a shekel, and **a seah of fine flour** for a shekel, about this time tomorrow in the gate of Samaria,"

# only once with baking, with same number

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# Features

- “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in **three measures of flour**, till it was all leavened.” (Matthew 13:33)
- “It is like leaven that a woman took and hid in **three measures of flour**, until it was all leavened.” (Luke 13:21)
- Palestinian
- OT based
- Evocative of Sarah

A close-up photograph of a person's hands, wearing a grey knitted sweater, holding a stack of several silver coins. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent dark grey filter.

## 2. The Temporarily Rich Man and Lazarus

Luke 16:19–31



## Saying more with less (Luke 16:19–31)

- 20 And at his gate **was laid** a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, 21 who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. 22 The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried ...
- ... 27 And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house— 28 for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.' 29 But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.'

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# The rich man – echoes of Ahasuerus

- There was a rich man who was clothed in **purple and fine linen** and who **feasted sumptuously every day**. (Luke 16:19)
- Now in the days of Ahasuerus ... 3 in the third year of his reign he **gave a feast** for all his officials and servants. The army of Persia and Media and the nobles and governors of the provinces were before him, 4 while he showed the riches of his royal glory and the splendour and pomp of his greatness for many days, **180 days**. 5 And when these days were completed, the king gave for all the people present in Susa the citadel, both great and small, **a feast lasting for seven days** in the court of the garden of the king's palace. 6 There were white cotton curtains and violet hangings fastened with cords of fine **linen** and **purple** to silver rods and marble pillars, and also couches of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl, and precious stones. (Esther 1:1–6)

# Echoes of Job

- 19 There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who **feasted** sumptuously **every day**. 20 And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, **covered with sores** ... 23 ... in Hades, being in torment, he [the rich man] **lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side**. (Luke 16:19–23)
- His sons used to go and **hold a feast in the house of each one on his day** (Job 1:4)
- So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord and **struck Job with loathsome sores** from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. (Job 2:7)
- And **they lifted up their eyes from afar** and they didn't recognize him and they lifted up their voice and wept. (Job 2:12)

# Father Abraham

- ... The rich man also died and was buried, 23 and in Hades, being in torment, **he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off** and Lazarus at his side. (Luke 16:22–23 ESV)
- On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar (Genesis 22:4 ESV).
- 4 links: “lift up” + “eyes” + “from afar” + Abraham.
- Abraham is person most often said to lift up his eyes and see (Genesis 18:2; 22:4, 13).

# Father Abraham

24 And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.' ... 27 And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house—28 for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.' 29 But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' 30 And he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' 31 He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.'

A person is walking away from the camera in the center of a vast, flat, green field. The sky is a uniform, light blue-grey color, and the horizon is a straight line in the distance. The overall mood is one of solitude and contemplation.

### 3. Jesus's longest parable

Luke 15:11–32 (388 words)



Link words	Two sons (15:11-32)	Bad Steward (16:1-9)	Rich man and Lazarus (16:19-31)
Father	15:12, 21 (address); 15:17, 18a (thought); 15:18b (both)		16:24, 27, 30 (meaning of 'Abraham')
Waste	15:13	16:1	
Longing	15:16		16:21
how many/how much	15:17	16:5	
self address	15:17-19	16:3-4	
far off ... saw	15:20		16:23
Quickly	15:22	16:6	
Celebrate	15:24, 29, 32		16:19
calling one (pros-kalesamenos hena)	15:26	16:5	
Friends	15:29	16:9	
Child	15:31		16:25
There was a rich man		16:1	16:19

## Audience: 2 + 2

- Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. 2 And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them." (Luke 15:1–2 ESV)
  - Tax collectors + sinners
  - Pharisees + scribes
  - Scribes count words and distinguish similar phrases

## Three stories

- $1/100$  sheep lost going away
- $1/10$  coins lost at home
- Two sons, one lost going away, the other lost at home

# The opening

- Luke 15:11–12 There was a man who had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, “Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.” And he divided his property between them.
- Legal side:
  - Younger son gets share of moveable property
  - Older son now owns farm

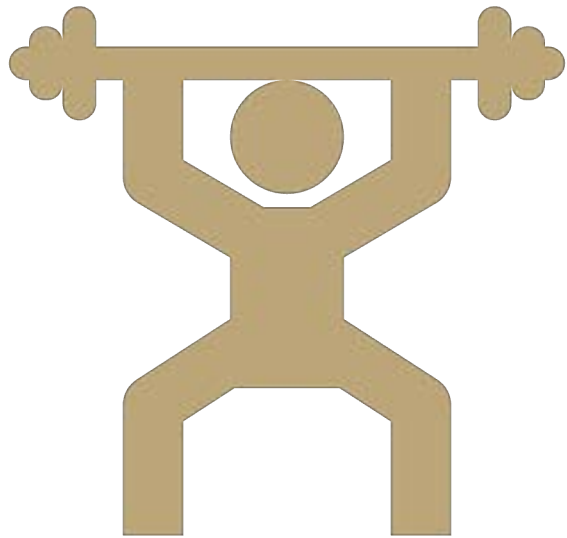
# Why does younger son end up feeding pigs?

“And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need” (Luke 15:14 ESV)

- (1) Because he wasted his money (his own fault)
- (2) Because a famine hit the one land he chose to go to (his bad luck)

# Saying a lot with a few words

- 15 So he went and hired himself out to one of the **citizens** of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs.
- 24 And they **began to** celebrate.
- 25 Now his older son **was in the field**, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing.
- 29 "**Look**, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet **you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends.**"
- The **missing ending**



Stretching the scribes

# OT background: Jacob and Esau

- Luke 15:11 There was a man who had two sons.
- Who had two and only two sons?
- Isaac: Jacob (younger) cheats Esau (elder) out of inheritance
- Older brother is angry

**Contrast:** Younger brother goes into far country with nothing, comes back with lots



# Jacob and Esau

- 27 When the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, a **man of the field**, while Jacob was a quiet man, dwelling in tents. ...
- 30 And Esau said to Jacob, "Let me eat some of that red stew, for I am exhausted!" (Therefore his name was called Edom.) 31 Jacob said, "Sell me your birthright now." 32 Esau said, "I **am about to die**; of what use is a **birthright** to me?" (Genesis 25:27–32 ESV)

# Jacob and Esau

- But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and **ran** and **embraced him** and **kissed him**. (Luke 15:20)
- But Esau **ran** to meet him and **embraced him** and fell on his neck and **kissed him**, and they wept. (Genesis 33:4)

# Every scribe knew Genesis 33:4

וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּ אֶרְצָה שָׁבַע לַ  
פְּעָלִים עַד גִּשְׁתוֹ עַד אֲחִיו  
וַיִּכַּץ עֵשָׂו לִקְרֹאתוֹ לֵ  
וַיַּחֲבֹקְהוּ וַיִּפֹּל עַל עַמְצוֹ  
וַיִּשְׁקְחוּ וַיִּבְכּוּ וַיִּשָּׂא אֶת  
עֵינָיו וַיִּרְא אֶת חֲנֹשׁוֹס אֶת  
הַיִּלְדִּים וַיֹּאמֶר מִי אֵלֶיךָ

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ג'  
מש  
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וַיַּחֲבֹקְהוּ וַיִּפֹּל עַל עַמְצוֹ  
וַיִּשְׁקְחוּ וַיִּבְכּוּ וַיִּשָּׂא אֶת  
עֵינָיו וַיִּרְא אֶת הַנְּעִים וְאֶת

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כבו

Left: Leningrad Codex; Right: British Library Or. 4445

# Puncta extraordinaria

- In codices and scrolls
- In Ben Asher and Ben Naphtali
- A scribal feature in Dead Sea Scrolls
- Mentioned in Greek manuscript
- Mentioned in Talmud
- Purpose already forgotten by time of Mishnah
- 15 sets in OT; 10 in the Pentateuch; 5 in Genesis

# Softer connections

- (1) a man with two sons
- (2) an older brother coming in from a field
- (3) someone saying they are dying of hunger
- (4) cheating out of inheritance
- (5) young goats
- (6) best robes
- (7) Older Brother “drew near” (Luke 15:25); cf. “draw near” 6x (Gen. 27:21–7)
- (8) Father who sees far away vs father who can’t see up close

# Esau

- At first stayed at home waiting for his father to die.
  - Now Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him, and Esau said to himself, "The days of mourning for my father are approaching; then I will kill my brother Jacob." (Genesis 27:41 ESV)
- Later
  - Forgave his little brother, who had cheated him out of his inheritance.

# Laban (7 verse cluster)

Luke 15	Genesis 31
Older Brother "heard music and dancing." (15:25)	Laban wanted to mark Jacob's departure "with mirth and songs, with tambourine and lyre" (31:27)
Older Brother "was angry and refused to go in." (15:28)	"Then Jacob became angry" (31:36)
Older Brother "These many years I have served you" (15:29)	Jacob: "These twenty years I have been in your house. I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock" (31:41; compare 31:38)
Older Brother: "But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes ..." (15:30)	Rachel & Leah claim Laban "has indeed <i>devoured</i> our money" (31:15)
Father: "all that is mine is yours" (15:31)	Laban: "all that you see is mine" (31:43)

# Jacob and Laban (7 verse cluster)

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Father: "all that is mine is yours" (15:31)	Laban: "all that you see is mine" (31:43)



# Working for no pay

- So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. (Luke 15:15 ESV)
- Then Laban said to Jacob, “Because you are my kinsman, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what shall your wages be?” (Genesis 29:15 ESV)
- (1) Younger brother, (2) herding, (3) in foreign country, (4) for no pay

# Joseph

- Then Pharaoh took his **signet ring** from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand, and clothed him in **garments of fine linen** and put a gold chain about his neck. (Genesis 41:42 ESV)
- "Quick! Bring the **best robe**, and put it on him, and put a **ring** on his hand." (Luke 15:22)
- Great famines
- The only two instant rags to riches stories in the Bible

**Contrast:** No one gave food to Prodigal / Joseph gave food to everyone

# Joseph

- Went to a far country
- Was thought dead
  - Genesis 37:33 And he [Jacob] identified it [Joseph's robe] and said, "It is my son's robe. An evil animal has devoured him."
  - Genesis 45:28 And Israel said, "Enough! Joseph my son is still alive. I will go and see him before I die."
  - Luke 15:24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. (Also, 15:32)

**Contrast:** Joseph forgave / Older Brother doesn't

# Friend, goat and prostitute

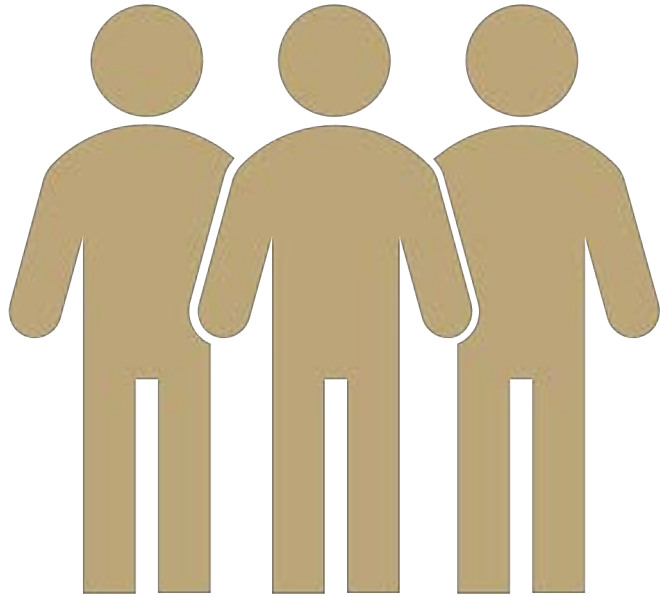
- Luke 15:29–30 I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a **young goat**, that I might celebrate with my **friends**. 30 But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with **prostitutes**, you killed the fattened calf for him!’
- Genesis 38:20–21 When Judah sent the **young goat** by his **friend** the Adullamite to take back the pledge from the woman's hand, he did not find her. 21 And he asked the men of the place, “Where is the cult **prostitute** who was at Enaim at the roadside?” And they said, “No cult prostitute has been here.”

# Judah vs Joseph

- Joseph is in distant country resisting sexual temptation.
- While his older brother Judah, from whom Jews tended to trace their descent, was in the land of Canaan falling into sexual temptation.

# Lessons from Judah

- Judah, who had been about to condemn Tamar for sexual misconduct, admitted: "She is more righteous than I" (Genesis 38:26)
- Judah to his father: "If I don't bring him [my younger brother] to you and set him before you, then I have sinned before you forever" (Genesis 43:9)
- Prodigal to father: "I have sinned against heaven and before you" (Luke 15:18 ESV)
- Judah to younger brother: "Now therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the boy as a servant to my lord, and let the boy go back with his brothers." (Genesis 44:33 ESV)
- Younger brother to father: "Treat me as one of your hired servants." (Luke 15:19 ESV)



Abraham

"A MAN HAD TWO SONS"

# Abraham

- Archetypal father (mentioned 3x in Luke 16)
- Also begins speech with “Quick!” (like Luke 15:22)
- And Abraham went quickly into the tent to Sarah and said, “**Quick! Three seahs of fine flour!** Knead it, and make cakes.” And Abraham **ran** to the herd and took a **calf**, tender and good, and gave it to a young man, who prepared it quickly. (Genesis 18:6–7 ESV)



# First occurrences in Bible

- 1<sup>st</sup> Running
- 1<sup>st</sup> Hospitality
- 1<sup>st</sup> Quick
- 1<sup>st</sup> Fatted calf

## Links with Abraham

- Only other old person in Bible to run
- “Quick”, beginning speech
- Leading to fatted calf
- We know Jesus thought about “3 seahs”

# Three seahs

- “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in **three seahs of flour**, till it was all leavened.” (Matthew 13:33 ESV adapted)
- And Abraham went quickly into the tent to Sarah and said, “**Quick! Three seahs of fine flour!** Knead it, and make cakes.” (Genesis 18:6 ESV)

# Abraham

- Younger son inherits everything
- Abraham is the only father to give away inheritance while still alive
- “Abraham gave all he had to Isaac. But to the sons of his concubines Abraham gave gifts, and while he was still living he sent them away from his son Isaac, eastward to the east country.” (Genesis 25:5–6 ESV)

# Older brother won't celebrate younger brother

- But he was angry and refused to go in. (Luke 15:28 ESV)
- 8 And the child [Isaac] grew and was weaned. And Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. 9 But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, laughing. 10 So she said to Abraham, "Cast out this slave woman with her son, for the son of this slave woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac." (Genesis 21:8–10 ESV)
- Ishmael lost inheritance through despising younger brother

# Contrast

- Abraham didn't allow Isaac to go to a far country
- Abraham to his servant: "See to it that you do not take my son back there."  
(Genesis 24:6 ESV)

# Cain and Abel (Genesis 4)

- Bible's first brothers
- First family conflict
- Older brother associated with field; younger brother with care of animals
- Cain "very angry" when Abel accepted by God
- Bible's first recorded anger is envy of younger brother
- God (father figure) engages graciously with angry older brother (Genesis 4:7)

# Summary

- Clearest connections
  - Joseph: rings + robe (Genesis 41:42)
  - Esau: run, embrace, kiss (Genesis 33:4)
  - Jacob: I've worked all these years (Genesis 31:38)
  - Abraham: "Quick" + fatted calf (Genesis 18:7)
- Dozens of others throughout Genesis



# People with more reason for anger

- Esau, who lost out on his inheritance
- Laban, who lost all his property
- Joseph, whose brothers had sold him
- Ishmael, whose brother inherited everything

# Lessons for scribes

- Joseph was sold by older brothers and forgave them and preserved their inheritance
- Esau was cheated out of inheritance by younger brother and forgave him
- Laban lost his property to Jacob and made a peace treaty
- Ishmael lost any inheritance through despising his younger brother
- Abraham was welcoming
- And many more

# Conclusions

- Jesus knows OT very well
- Able to teach multiple audiences simultaneously
- Stories handed down with integrity
- OT allusions are not superfluous, but are making powerful points
- It's as if Genesis were designed to make building blocks of this story

## John 1:1–5

- **In the beginning was the Word**, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 **All things were made through him**, and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.