

## More Keys to the Parables

*“Unto you it is given to know the mystery  
Of the kingdom of God: but unto them that  
are without, all things are done in parables.”  
Jesus alone with His close disciples. (Mark 4:11, Luke 8:11)*

This is a continuation of a discussion of the parables of Jesus that began in the previous edition of [\*the Journal of Esoteric Psychology\*](#).

Some may find the use of Eastern esoteric terminology in the context of the Gospels of Jesus to be quite perplexing. If this is the case, the reader may be benefited by reading the book “*Mystical Theology*” by Jesuit Scholar William Johnston. He does a wonderful job of demonstrating how yogic terminology can be very helpful in understanding the mystical experiences of a number of revered Christian saints.

### **6 - The Candle Under a Basket**

(Matthew 5:14-15, Mark 4:21, Luke 11:33)

*Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.*

Is the body the house of the indwelling spirit? Saint Paul spoke of the circumcision of the heart (Romans 2:29). If concealed by the shells of the three material bodies, the inner light is hidden and the body is dark. When the spiritual light is fully revealed all seven energy centers (chakras) along the spine are enlightened and the body becomes full of light.

*I have looked and behold a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top thereof: And two olive trees (the ida and pingala of yoga?) by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof. Zechariah 4:2-3.*

Does the Jewish menorah, with its seven candlesticks, symbolically represent the seven-chakra subtle-body energy system? How does the spiritual radiance that goes forth into the world from an enlightened individual affect others?

### **7 – Sitting at the Banquet Table**

(Luke 14:7-12)

The above banquet teaching is introduced in the Gospel of Luke by saying “He then told His disciples this parable: when you sit at a banquet table don’t take the highest seat...but the lowest...”. In another version banquet “rooms” replace “seat” but the intention is the same.

Since the editor of Luke tells us it is a parable we should not assume the obvious, literal interpretation. In Luke 14:15, one of the guests says: “Blessed is the one who will eat bread in the kingdom of God.” Eating bread in the kingdom of God is a good metaphor for meditation. The word “table” can be a metaphor for the human body. We refer to the legs of a table and the head of a table. The seats of a table could then be a reference to the chakras of the body. Note: the third eye chakra is often referred to as the “seat of the soul.”

“Room” could be seen as a metaphor for one of the bodies surrounding the indwelling spirit. Remember how Saint Teresa of Avila used the seven “interior castles” as similar metaphors. Yoga teaches that we have more bodies than just the outermost physical.

The lowest major chakra is located at the base of the spine. It is particularly associated with the physical body. Hence, the above parable may be advising the meditator to begin with awareness and attention on the physical body before being drawn up into more subtle realms.

However, one should not necessarily assume that meditation should begin at the lowest chakra in our age that is highly polluted—physically and psychically. The heart center may be more appropriate for the contemporary aspirant. Regardless, meditation should be learned directly from a competent teacher and not from a cryptic parable handed down to us through a two-thousand year chain of intermediaries. If the entire body is considered then one should note that there is a chakra in the sole of the foot. Jesus said to Peter: Unless I wash your feet you will “have no part with me” (John 13:8).

Jesus said: “*I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God,*” Mark 14:25.

A literalist thinks Jesus is referring to drinking an alcoholic beverage in heaven. A yogi sees the vine as a good metaphor for the nervous system of the subtle anatomy. Jesus is referring to drinking the divine nectar, amrita, which flows down into the body from the pineal gland (sixth chakra) during deep states of meditation.

## **8 – Excuses for not Meditating** (Luke 14: 16-21)

Note: This parable follows the one above in Luke. Are they related?

*A certain man held a great feast and invited many. However, he was given excuses for not attending.*

*The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. Verses 18 – 20.*

The call to come into the banquet feast is the constant pull toward the Center of our being that we resist when we reject the attractive force of Divine Love. Examining the field is what we are doing

when our attention is drawn outward to the surface of life. Having purchased the field, we are attached to it.

The desire to evaluate five oxen is the second excuse. What is the significance of the number five? We have five senses. They are like oxen, which pull us in the field of life. They pull our attention outward. We have purchased them. Hence, we are attached to them. We are also constantly evaluating our sensory impressions with judgments. The outward pull of the senses toward the surface of life results in the third excuse – human attachments.

### **9. – The Light of the Body**

(Luke 11:34-36, Matthew 6:22-23)

*The light of the body is the eye, therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness. If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.*

In Luke's Gospel this parable follows immediately the parable concerning light under a bushel basket. Does this suggest a relationship between the two?

Mystics of all spiritual traditions speak of focusing attention on a single, interior point during meditation. When we perceive with the two eyes of the brain and its nervous system we experience the duality of good and evil. Is this eating from the forbidden tree of knowledge of good and evil?

When we perceive with the single, interior eye of the spiritual heart we experience Divine Love, unity and nonduality. Is this eating from the tree of life?

*“The eye with which I see God is the eye with which God sees me” – (Meister Eckhart describing one of his interior, meditation experiences)*

*“And with the eye of my soul saw above the same eye of my soul, above my mind, the Unchangeable Light ... He who knows the truth knows that light: and he that knows it knoweth eternity.” (Saint Augustine)*

### **10 - The Mustard Seed**

(Matthew 13:31-32; Mark 4:31-32; Luke 13:18-19)

*The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field:*

*Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.*

In the Chandogya Upanishad 3:14.3 a “grain of mustard” is used as a metaphor for the Atma (Divine Spirit) located in the spiritual, human heart. It is described as being simultaneously extremely small and extremely large.

In metaphysics air is the element associated with the mind. A bird is to the air as a thought is to the mind. During meditation when attention is focused steadily on the interior, central point of the spiritual heart the Divine Spirit manifests in the treelike-subtle anatomy of the soul. Thinking is stilled and thoughts come to rest.

*God is a circle with a center everywhere and a circumference nowhere.”  
I am the “bright and morning star.” (Jesus, Revelation 22:16)*

*May the “day star arise in your hearts.” (II Peter 1:19)*

*The three wise men followed the star to the place of Christ’s birth. (Matthew 2)*

## **11 - Stages of Unfoldment**

(Mark 4:26-29)

Immediately before the mustard seed parable above, Mark’s Gospel records another parable which is certainly related. The kingdom of God is compared to a seed that grows from the ground without human knowledge of how it grows. It is mysterious.

*For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself, first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.*

If we assume that Jesus is not giving His agrarian audience a lesson in Agriculture 101 then the above description of growth could be an accurate, metaphoric depiction of how Kundalini moves upward through the spinal column, into the brain and then flowering in the crown chakra.

## **12- The Lost Sheep**

(Luke 15:4, Matt 18:12, Thomas, logion 107 )

*What man among you, having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it.*

*The lost sheep is the largest. (Gospel of Thomas, logion 107)*

The number 100 symbolizes completeness so having 99 is being incomplete. The Upanishad states that there are 100 subtle nerves or nadis that radiate out of the subtle heart. The mystical Gospel of Thomas adds that the lost sheep was the greatest of them all. Could this greatest one be a metaphorical reference to the sushumna, the central nadi which is the greatest of them all. In meditation one leaves, withdraws one attention from all the other nadis in search of this great one – the straight and narrow way.

*“Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” (Matthew 7:14).*

### **13 - The Lost Coin**

(Luke 15:8)

*What woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, does she not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she finds it?*

It was a custom for a woman to wear a head band with ten pieces of silver. If she should lose one of them it was thought to bring misfortune.

The house has been used as a metaphor for the human body by Jesus in other parables. There is a saying in Eastern meditation that “breath sweeps the mind.”

Yoga teaches that there are nine “gates” in the body through which life energy can be lost: two eyes, two nostrils, two ears, the mouth, the anus and sexual organ. The tenth gate is the crown chakra which leads to liberation.

### **14 – The Hidden Treasure in a Field**

(Matthew 13:44)

The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hid in a field; that when a man found it, he hid for joy thereof goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field.

Do we know what spiritual treasure lies hidden beneath the field of our ordinary awareness? How can one discover and retrieve the treasure hidden beneath surface awareness? Why do those who discover the inner treasure often find it necessary to initially hide their discovery from those around them? What would happen if the discovery was prematurely shared - especially to those not ready? “Don’t cast your pearls to swine.” (Jesus).

In what sense do we not own our surface awareness and the treasure that lies beneath it? What must we get rid of to become the owner of that treasure? What does it mean to own it?

### **15 - Three Types of Ground**

(Matthew 13:4-9, Mark 4:3-9, Luke 8:5-8)

Seeds are sown in four locations: off to the side of a road, where they were eaten by birds; on hard, stony ground where they withered; on thorny ground where they choked; and on good soil where they flourished. The parable ends with the phrase “He who has ears to hear let him hear.” This indicates that there is a hidden meaning in this parable for the spiritually mature. It might also be a reference to hearing the cosmic OM from the center point of the soul.

Living off-center, away from the straight and narrow road (the sushumna) we fail to grow from our center point. Thoughts (birds) consume our attention and vital energy. Yoga teaches there are three states of nature called gunas. Tamas guna is hard and inert. Rajas guna is agitated and restless.

Sattva guna is serene and most conducive to the growth and unfoldment of the central seed-point (nada bindu) of the soul.

### **16 - Weeds Among the Wheat**

(Matthew 13:24)

When a farmer who had sown seeds of wheat in his field was asleep, his enemy came and sowed weed seeds among the wheat. The servants of the farmer discovered the deed and asked the farmer if they should pull up the weeds. The farmer said “No, lest while you gather up the tares (weeds) you root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.”

There is a similar Buddhist parable in which creepers are substituted for weeds in the story. Regarding meditation, one is often advised to focus on the positive to cultivate the innate divinity from the center point. Putting attention on negatives sown by the ego in order to try to root them out through rational means may cause one to lose contact with the Inner Light. When the inner Divine Light manifests to sufficient intensity it will automatically burn away the negatives allowing our true Divine Self to shine unobscured.

### **17 - The Pearl of Great Price**

(Matthew 13:45)

The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls:  
Who when he found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

This parable occurs in Matthew’s Gospel immediately after the Hidden Treasure parable above. Do they share any common themes? How was the discovery of the “one pearl” made? By diving deeply to the center of the heart in meditation? “Dive deep for the pearl within.” (Ammachi)

Could the “one pearl of great price” and the “mustard seed” both be metaphors pointing in the same direction?

### **18 - Laborers in the Field**

(Matthew 20:1-16)

Jesus begins this parable by saying that “the kingdom of heaven is like.” He then goes on to describe a landowner who hires five groups of laborers to work in his vineyard. The hiring is sequential and spaced throughout the day. The first group is hired near dawn and the fifth and last group is hired late in the day. All the groups work from the time they are hired until the end of the day. Curiously, when it is time to pay them, the groups are paid in the reverse order in which they were hired. The big surprise though is that all the groups received the same pay regardless of how long they worked.

Yoga teaches that we have not just a physical body but also other normally invisible and subtle bodies. The five bodies (sheaths, koshas) are called the Annamaya (physical), Vijnanamaya

(intellect), Manomaya (mind), Pranamaya (life energy) and the Anandamaya (bliss). These five sheaths cover the hidden, radiant, true self – the Atman. “Don’t hide your light under a basket.” (Jesus)

As one goes inward during meditation one engages (“hires”) the five sheaths sequentially starting with the physical (most outer) and ending with the most subtle (most inner) Anandamaya Kosha until one reaches the radiance of the inner, true Self. The light from that radiant Self then manifests outwardly penetrating the koshas in the reverse order that they were originally encountered during the meditative journey inward – the innermost (last “hired”) being closest to the radiant center receive the Light first. However, it is the same Divine Light that is gracing each of the koshas regardless of how long they were engaged in meditation.

## **19 - The Light Body**

When the prodigal son returns from his journey to the “far country” in the parable he receives the father’s finest robe. Luke 15:11-32. “...the father said to his servants, bring forth the best robe, and put it on him ...”

In the parable of the wedding feast, a guest is cast out because he does not have the proper wedding garment. Matthew 22:12-13. “*And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? ...*” *Then said the king...cast him into outer darkness,*”

Jesus demonstrates His Light Body on the mountain and after His resurrection. In the Book of Revelation (7:13) robes are made white by the blood (fire) of the savior.

\* \* \* \* \*

John R. Francis lives in the San Francisco Bay Area and has been a practitioner and teacher of esoteric Christianity since 1975. He is the author of “*The Mystic Way of Radiant Love: Alchemy for a New Creation.*” John welcomes correspondence at [johnf153@yahoo.com](mailto:johnf153@yahoo.com)