



**“The Last Supper: Conversations that Led to the Cross”
By Dr. Will Willimon**

**Session 1: Introduction; Sowing, Seeking, Finding
February 22, 2026 4:00 PM**

Thank you for joining us for this Lenten journey with Jesus. Dr. Willimon warns us from the beginning that we are in for some challenging conversations. These parables aren’t “bedtime stories”; they are “riddles” that may leave us more puzzled than comforted.

INTRODUCTION

- What is your experience with Palm Sunday? Do you see it as triumphant or ominous?
- When you hear the word *parable*, what comes to mind? Gentle moral lessons or something more disruptive?

We wanted Jesus to unfurl a battle flag, storm Jerusalem, and set up a new messianic King of David government. Instead, he gave us a simple supper of bread and wine with a bunch of disappointing, simpleton disciples. – Willimon

- How does this description challenge our expectations of what Jesus should have done?
- What does it mean that Jesus chose a meal over a military campaign?

OPENING PRAYER

Almighty God, you sent your Son to us not with armies and battle flags, but riding on a borrowed donkey, telling stories that turn our world upside down. As we begin this journey toward his table, give us courage to hear his riddles, wisdom to see his kingdom breaking out among us, and grace to join his work in the world, even when we don't fully understand where he's leading us. Amen.

SESSION 1 VIDEO – “The Reckless Sower”

Thoughts to consider as we watch the video...

- Which of Willimon's insights most challenged or intrigued you? Why?
- What questions does this video raise for you about Jesus's storytelling method?

JESUS THE RIDDLER

Matthew and Mark say Jesus said nothing except in parables...Over half of everything Luke quotes from Jesus are in parables, or, as we'll name some of them, riddles. - Willimon

- Why might Jesus choose riddles rather than straightforward teaching?
- What's the difference between a parable and a simple moral lesson?

Ancient Riddle – “What building do you enter blind and exit sighted?”

- How might Jesus's parables function like riddles – requiring us to work for understanding?
- When has a Bible story or sermon left you more puzzled than when you started? What happened with that confusion over time?

God's realm is so different from our kingdoms that when Jesus is revealing, sometimes it feels like he's concealing. – Willimon

THE SLOPPY SOWER

Scripture Focus – Luke 8:5-8

Scripture Focus – Luke 8:11-15

- What farmer would sow seed this carelessly – throwing in on roads, rocks, and weeds?
- Willimon asks, “Can you guess why the Sower is most preachers’ favorite parable?”
- How do the “concerns, riches, and pleasures of life” choke out God’s word? Are these necessarily bad things?

The Sower just loves to sow, slinging seed with abandon, casting good seed into seemingly hopeless contexts, undeterred by the prospect of farming failure, focusing upon the seed that bears fruit rather than the seed that fails. – Willimon

- How does this change your perspective on “failed” evangelism or ministry efforts?
- When have you seen God’s “reckless sowing” produce unexpected fruit?
- How does FBC Elon practice “reckless sowing” versus careful, targeted sowing?

“Rock Concert” Story (p. 6)

- When has God’s word reached you through unlikely or “wasteful” circumstances?
- How does knowing God is the “reckless sower” change how we should approach sharing our faith?

THE IMPOSSIBLE NEIGHBOR

Scripture Focus – Luke 10:25-37

- Why does Jesus make a Samaritan the hero of this story? How would that have landed with Jesus’s original audience?

- Willimon emphasizes the Samaritan's extravagance – “two full days' worth of wages” plus a blank check for future costs. Why does this matter?
- How is this story “more than an example story that exhorts us to better human behavior?”

Maybe I'm more the good-as-dead, helpless, needy guy down in the ditch than I like to admit, in need of some Samaritan who doesn't mind getting down and dirty with the likes of me. – Willimon

- When have you been the person in the ditch rather than the helper?
- How does seeing ourselves as the victim rather than the hero change this parable?
- Willimon suggests we ask not, “To whom shall I be neighborly?” but “Who has been neighborly to me?” How does this reframe the story?

I am grateful that, in my youth, a number of courageous, caring, reckless Black Christians were merciful good Samaritans to me...so that I was saved, lifted out of the ditch of white racism where I lay dying, even though I didn't even know I was sick. – Willimon

- How has someone from an unexpected group been a “good Samaritan” to you or your community?

SCRIPTURE AS GPS

Parables are “a GPS taking you to a new world that's God's rather than the fake world in which we bedded down.”

- How do the parables we have read this evening challenge our assumptions about how the world works?
- What “fake world” assumptions do we need to abandon to follow Jesus?

Scripture Focus – Luke 7:36-50

- Why does Jesus tell the parable of the forgiven debtors in response to Simon’s judgment?
- How does this story illustrate that attentiveness to God will produce attentiveness to our neighbors?

CLOSING

“Go and do likewise” suggests that these parables have missional intent. God has elected the church to embody God’s gracious intentions beyond the bounds of the church. We can’t be faithful just hanging around the church; we’ve got to be out and about on the road.

A Little Reminder...

CLOSING PRAYER

Reckless, seed-slinging God, you refuse to give up on any of us, casting your grace into the most unlikely place – including our hearts. Thank you for the good Samaritans you’ve sent our way when we were lying helpless in life’s ditches. Give us eyes to see where you’re already at work in our community, courage to join your mission of extravagant mercy, and faith to trust that your “wasteful” love will bear fruit in ways we cannot imagine. As we walk toward your table this Lenten season, help us to scatter seeds of your kingdom with the same reckless abandon that you show toward us. Amen.

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Session 2: Open Invitation

Sunday, March 1 4:00 PM
