**Things to keep in mind as we go through our sermons series on the parables:**

• Parables are little stories used to teach one lesson. You should keep that in mind- a parable doesn’t address many questions, only one; it doesn’t address many issues, just one; it doesn’t cover many points, but one. This means that if we try to find a meaning to every part, every person, or every object mentioned, we will end up distorting the parable and missing the point.

•During Jesus’ time in Palestine not many people could read, so knowledge was transferred through oral tradition. We are a literary culture and when we hear something that reminds us of the past, we go back and read about it, or we “google it.” Oral tradition cultures didn’t have that luxury. Instead, knowledge was passed on through tales and stories that were memorized and so instilled in the collective memory, that the simple mention of little phrases, of certain objects, or incidents would immediately bring back images from the collective memory. Whenever Jesus told a parable or used certain words, the audience’s memory would be awakened making a connection with a Biblical passage, a national historic event, or symbol.

•A good example is found in John 8:55-59. Jesus is speaking about Abraham as one that wanted to see his coming, so someone from the crowd shouted at him: ***"You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am." Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple.***

Why did they try to kill him? His use of the phrase “I am” immediately drew on their collective memory the moment when Jehovah appeared to Moses and commissioned him. Moses asked God for his name and God answered, “I am” is my name. Jesus’ audience made the connection and understood that Jesus deliberately used the phrase to establish his claim to divinity, something they considered a blasphemy.

• Another point to remember is that Jesus draws ideas, situations, and characters from the actual settings of life for his parables. That is why it is important to examine the background, cultural knowledge, practices and ethos of the first century listeners of Jesus’ parables.