

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND ADVANCE READING ASSIGNMENT

NT 875
Teaching and Preaching
the Parables
(January 14-18, 2008)

Instructor

Jocelyn McWhirter, Ph.D.

Department of Religious Studies

Albion College

611 E. Porter St.

Albion, MI 49224

jmcwhirter@albion.edu

(517) 629-2919 (home phone)

(517) 629-0268 (office phone)

Credits

3 units

I. Course Description

Since parables constitute such a large component of Jesus' teaching in the Synoptic Gospels, the competent teacher or preacher of these Gospels must become a master of interpreting them. In this course, we will take significant steps in this direction by learning and evaluating different exegetical methodologies and trying them out on various parables. We will also discuss and practice strategies for communicating what we have learned to our students and parishioners.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. To learn about historical criticism, source criticism, redaction criticism, literary criticism, and reader-response criticism as it relates to the parables, and to evaluate the usefulness of each approach for understanding them.
2. To read and interpret the parables as recorded in Mark, Q, Matthew, and Luke.
3. To explore different ways to teach and preach these parables, so that we will be better equipped to do so in our various ministries.

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Pre-Seminar

1. Read all of the required books. In addition, read Mark, Q, Matthew, and Luke in that order. Read each of these texts straight through in one sitting so that you can appreciate the full scope and impact of the work. The contents of Q are attached to this syllabus. It is usually easiest and best to read Q as recorded by Luke, although if you have a Synopsis you might want to read Matthew and Luke in parallel. If you are reading in an English translation, use the NIV, RSV, or NRSV.
2. Write three papers of at least five pages, one on each of the following topics:
 - 1) Dodd presents a classic historical-critical reading of the parables. Donahue relates the parables to the evangelists' theological agendas, Carlston offers a redaction-critical perspective, and Via argues that historical context does not much matter. Interact with these four scholars, giving explicit examples from their works. Which method, if any, makes the most sense for interpreting the parables? Which yields the best results for teaching and preaching them?
 - 2) Hultgren interprets the parables within their canonical context, using a theological paradigm to categorize them. Blomberg prefers a more structural paradigm, and Nouwen offers a kind of reader-response to one parable. Interact with these three scholars, giving explicit examples from their works. Which method yields the most compelling interpretation of the parables? Which yields the best results for teaching and preaching them?
 - 3) Write this paper on any topic directly related to the required books. You might choose to interact in more depth with one of them, to compare and evaluate interpretations of one parable from several of them, or to address an issue that occurred to you as you read. Whatever topic you choose, be sure to address it in a systematic, reflective, academically rigorous fashion. All three papers will be due at the beginning of the first class session.

In-Seminar

Attend and participate in all class sessions from January 15-19. This includes attendance at morning chapel services as well as dinner on Monday, January 15, from 6-9 PM at the Thompsons' house. Bring an English Bible (NIV, RSV, or NRSV) to class. You might also find it helpful to bring a Greek Bible and a Gospel Synopsis.

| | <u>Morning – 9:00-12:00</u> | <u>Afternoon – 1:00-5:00</u> |
|-----------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Monday | Methods of Interpretation | Practicum |
| Tuesday | The Parables in Mark | Practicum |
| Wednesday | The Parables in Q | Practicum |
| Thursday | The Parables in Matthew | Practicum |
| Friday | The Parables in Luke | Practicum |

Post-Seminar

For a final project, submit four lectures or sermons, one on a parable from each of the four texts studied in class (Mark, Q, Matthew, and Luke). For Matthew and Luke, choose a parable unique to that Gospel. Preface your project with a brief introduction outlining the principles of exegesis that you have chosen to apply, and explaining why you chose these principles.

For all papers, please use 12-point Times New Roman font and 1-inch margins, and MLA format. MLA format is required; therefore, if you have not already purchased and read the style manual included in the course bibliography, please do so now.

Your final project should be at least twenty pages long. Mail it to me at the address listed on the front page of this syllabus. It should be post-marked no later than April 19, 2008. If you would like me to return your papers with comments, you must include a self-addressed stamped envelope.

IV. COURSE EVALUATION

Class attendance and participation: 10%

Pre-Seminar papers: 30%

Final project: 60%

Attached to this syllabus is a list of standards that I generally use to grade undergraduate papers. At the graduate level, I am not going to use a formal checklist as I do with my college students. Still, this should give you some idea of what I look for in an essay. And, yes, spelling and grammar do count!

V. COURSE TEXTS

Required:

Blomberg, Craig L. *Interpreting the Parables*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1990. 314 pages. ISBN-13: 978-0830812714

Carlston, Charles E. *The Parables of the Triple Tradition*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975. 210 pages.

Dodd, C. H. *The Parables of the Kingdom*. Rev. Ed. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961. 169 pages. ISBN-13: 978-0006211129

Donahue, John R. *The Gospel in Parable*. Fortress, 1988. 216 pages. ISBN-13: 978-0800624804

Hultgren, Arland J. *The Parables of Jesus: A Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002. Pp. 1-179. (Feel free to finish this book if you can.) 179 pages. ISBN 0-8028-6077-X

Nouwen, Henri. *The Return of the Prodigal Son*. Image, 1994. 130 pages. ISBN-13: 978-0385473071

Reddish, Mitchell G. *An Introduction to the Gospels*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1997. Pp. 73-179. 106 pages. ISBN 0-687-00448-9

Via, Dan O., Jr. *The Parables: Their Literary and Existential Dimension*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967. 205 pages. ISBN-13: 978-1556351198

If you have already read any of these books, please contact me as soon as possible so that I can assign an appropriate substitute.

Also Required:

Gibaldi, Joseph. MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1998. Second Edition. 343 pages. ISBN 0-87352-699-6

Recommended:

Gowler, David B. *What Are They Saying About the Parables?* New York: Paulist, 2000. 103 pages. ISBN 0-8091-3962-6

General Bibliography

Bailey, Kenneth E. *The Cross and the Prodigal: Luke 15 through the Eyes of Middle Eastern Peasants*. Downer's Grove: InterVarsity, 2005.

_____. *Poet and Peasant: A Literary-Cultural Approach to the Parables of Jesus*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976.

_____. *Through Peasant Eyes: More Lucan Parables*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980.

Beasley-Murray, G. R. *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986.

Boucher, Madeleine. *The Parables*. Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1981.

Borsch, Frederick H. *Many Things in Parables*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988.

Crossan, John Dominic. *In Parables: The Challenge of the Historical Jesus*. New York: Harper & Row, 1973.

Drury, John. *The Parables in the Gospels*. London: SPCK, 1985.

Hendrickx, Hermann. *The Parables of Jesus*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986.

Hunter, A. M. *Interpreting the Parables*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960.

Jeremias, Joachim. *The Parables of Jesus*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972.

Jones, Peter R. *The Teaching of the Parables*. Nashville: Broadman, 1982.

Jülicher, Adolph. *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1969.

- Kirk, Andrew. *The Good News of the Kingdom Coming*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1983.
- Kissinger, Warren S. *The Parables of Jesus: A History of Interpretation and Bibliography*. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1979.
- Kistemaker, Simon. *The Parables: Understanding the Stories Jesus Told*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980.
- Linnemann, Eta. *The Parables of Jesus: Introduction and Exposition*. London: SPCK, 1966.
- Longenecker, Richard N., ed. *The Challenge of Jesus' Parables*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.
- McArthur, Harvey K., and Robert M. Johnston. *They Also Taught in Parables*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990.
- Perrin, Norman. *Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976.
- Scott, Bernard B. *Hear Then the Parable: A Commentary on the Parables of Jesus*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989.
- _____. *Re-Imagine the World: An Introduction to the Parables of Jesus*. Polebridge, 2001.
- Sider, John W. *Interpreting the Parables: A Hermeneutical Guide to Their Meaning*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995.
- Stein, Robert H. *Introduction to the Parables of Jesus*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981.
- Stern, David. *Parables and Midrash*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991.
- Tolbert, Mary Ann. *Perspectives on the Parables*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979.
- Wenham, David. *The Parables of Jesus*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1989.
- Westermann, Klaus. *The Parables of Jesus in Light of the Old Testament*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990.
- Young, Brad H. *Jesus and His Jewish Parables*. New York: Paulist, 1989.

V. COURSE INSTRUCTOR

In 1991, I earned an MAR from Trinity School for Ministry. I went on to do doctoral work in New Testament studies at Princeton Theological Seminary, where I received my PhD in 2002. After four years as Visiting Assistant Professor of Theology at Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia, I now serve as Assistant Professor of Religious Studies at Albion College in Albion, Michigan. My dissertation, *The Bridegroom-Messiah and the People of God*, has just been published by Cambridge University Press.

Contents of Q

*John's preaching of the Coming One**

Luke 3:7-9/Matt 3:7-10 – John warns Israel

Luke 3:17/ Matt 3:12 – John prophesies an eschatological reaper

The temptation of Jesus

Luke 4:1-13/Matt 4:1-11 – the temptation of Jesus

Jesus' inaugural sermon

Luke 6:20-23/Matt 5:3-12 – The Beatitudes

Luke 6:27-30, 32-36/Matt 5:38-48 – on love of enemies

Luke 6:31/Matt 7:12 – The Golden Rule

Luke 6:37-42/Matt 7:1-5; 10:24-25 – on judging

Luke 6:43-45/Matt 7:15-20 – people known by their fruits

Luke 6:46-49/Matt 7:21-27 – the house built on a rock

John, Jesus, and "this generation"

Luke 7:1-10/Matt 8:5-13 – the centurion of Capernaum

Luke 7:18-23/Matt 11:2-6 – Jesus answers John the Baptist

Luke 7:24-28/Matt 11:7-11 – Jesus praises John the Baptist

Luke 7:31-35/Matt 11:16-19 – "this generation" responds to Jesus and John the Baptist

Discipleship and mission

Luke 9:57-60/Matt 8:18-22 – would-be followers of Jesus

Luke 10:2-12/Matt 9:37-38; 10:14-16 – instructions for apostles

Luke 10:13-15/Matt 11:20-24 – woes on Galilean cities

Luke 10:16/Matt 10:40 – receiving the apostles and receiving Jesus

Luke 10:21-22/Matt 11:25-27 – Jesus thanks the Father

Luke 10:23-24/Matt 13:16-17 – what the disciples see and hear

On prayer

Luke 11:2-4/Matt 6:7-15 – The Lord's Prayer

Luke 11:9-13/Matt 7:7-11 – that God answers prayer

Controversies with Israel

Luke 11:24-26/Matt 12:43-45 – the return of the unclean spirit

Luke 11:29-32/Matt 12:39-42 – the sign of Jonah

Luke 11:34-36/Matt 6:22-23 – the healthy eye

Luke 11:39-52/Matt 23:1-4, 13, 23-36 – woe to Pharisees and scribes/lawyers

On fearless preaching

Luke 12:2-3/Matt 16:5-6 – secrets will become known

Luke 12:4-9/Matt 10:26-33 – exhortation to fearless confession

On anxiety over material needs

Luke 12:22-31/Matt 6:25-34 – God's provision of food and clothing

Luke 12:33-34/Matt 6:19-21 – treasures in heaven

Preparedness for the end

Luke 12:39-46/Matt 24:43-51 – readiness for the master's coming

Luke 12:51-53/Matt 10:34-36 – division in households

Luke 12:54-56/Matt 16:2-3 – on interpreting the present time

Luke 12:57-59/Matt 5:25-26 – on settling with one's accuser

Two parables of growth

Luke 13:18-19/Matt 13:31-32 – the parable of the mustard seed

Luke 13:20-21/Matt 13:33 – the parable of the yeast

The two ways

Luke 13:24-27/Matt 7:13-14, 22-23 – the narrow door

Luke 13:28-29/Matt 8:11-12 – the patriarchs in the kingdom of God

Luke 13:30/Matt 20:16 – the last will be first and the first will be last

Luke 13:34-35/Matt 13:34-39 – the lament for Jerusalem

Luke 14:16-24/Matt 22:1-14 – the parable of the banquet

Luke 14:26-27/Matt 10:37-38 – on the costs of discipleship

Luke 14:34-35/Matt 5:13 – the parable of salt

Various parables and sayings

Luke 15:4-7/Matt 18:12-14 – the parable of the lost sheep

Luke 16:13/Matt 6:24 – on serving two masters

Luke 16:16-17/Matt 11:12-13; 5:18 – concerning the law

Luke 16:18/Matt 19:9 – concerning divorce

Luke 17:3-4/Matt 18:15, 21-22 – on forgiveness

Luke 17:6/Matt 17:20 – on faith

The eschatological discourse

Luke 17:23-24, 26-27, 34-37/Matt 10:39; 24:26-28, 37-41 – the coming of the Son of Man

Luke 19:12-27/Matt 25:14-29 – the parable of the talents/pounds

Luke 22:28-30/Matt 19:28 – faithful followers to judge the twelve tribes of Israel

Jocelyn McWhirter

March 15, 2002

* Subtitles in italics are taken from of *An Introduction to the Gospels* by Mitchell G. Reddish (Nashville: Abingdon, 1997), p. 31.

Standards for Grading Essays

1. Form

- a. Your main idea, or thesis, is stated
_____ at the beginning of the essay
_____ clearly
_____ in sufficient detail
- b. The succeeding paragraphs develop your idea
_____ clearly
_____ consistently
_____ in a logical progression
- c. You generally adhere to conventions of Standard Written English in the areas of
_____ spelling
_____ grammar and style
- d. You document your sources
_____ adequately
_____ using a consistent format

2. Content

- a. Your ideas
_____ address issues pertinent to the assigned topic
_____ can be defended using relevant historical and literary evidence
_____ can be adequately discussed in a five-page essay
- b. You explain your ideas
_____ using citations to relate them to the Gospels
_____ in sufficient detail
- c. You defend your ideas with historical and literary evidence that is
_____ appropriate
_____ adequate
- d. You support your ideas by
_____ citing the assigned reading or your class notes where relevant
_____ clarifying whether you agree with any scholarly opinions you cite