

## **Reading Guide to Charles W. Hedrick, *Many Things in Parables***

### **Preface and Introduction (vii-xvi)**

What do you think is the most important focus when studying the parables?

- the 'original' parable told by Jesus
- the parable as it is now preserved in the Gospel
- the parable as it is reflected in modern scholarly and homiletical work

### **Chapter 1**

Hedrick (p. 9) writes: "In this book, a parable is construed as a brief, feely invented, narrative fiction, comprised of beginning, middle, and end, dramatizing a comon human experience or some incident from nature."

What points is he making with this definition? I.e., how is he differing from the definitions of parables offered by others?

### **Chapter 2**

How does Hedrick answer the questions he uses to organize this chapter?

- Do literary settings and interpretations in the Gospels provide information about how Jesus used the parables?
- Does an interpreter's summary truth or moral conclusion to a parable actually capture the irreducible essence of the parable, or does it represent a particular reader's response?
- What is the value of noncanoncial parables?
- Did Jesus use allegory and symbol as it appears in the Hebrew Bible and rabbinic literature?
- Are the comparative frames to parables originally from Jesus, or do the dervie from early Christian hermeneutics?

### **Chapter 3**

"In one sense, it really doesn't matter what Jesus intended; what really matters is the parable, the product of his creative mind." (p26) What is Hedrick's point here? Do you agree?

### **Chapter 4**

"The bottom line on why Jesus used parables is this: No one knows." (p35) Do you have a working theory on why Jesus used parables?

### **Chapter 5**

Hedrick emphasizes the realism of the parables. Others, such as Dodd, note the element of surprise created by an unrealistic detail in the parable. How do you read the parables: as thoroughly realistic or challengingly unrealistic?

### **Chapter 6**

Hedrick affirms that parables have the potential of multiple readings, and "no *one* reading can claim to be the single authoritative reading to the exclusion of all others." (p46) Even if no single reading is authoritative, ought we choose one that is best or ones that are better than others?

### Chapter 7

Hedrick argues that the parables of Jesus do not reference the dominion of God? Do you agree? Do you think they reference anything?

### Chapter 8

It is perhaps easy to critique Jülicher's moral readings of the parables, but do you agree or not in principle with Herzog's socioeconomic reading of the parables?

### Chapter 9

Hedrick argues, following Via's claim that the parables are aesthetic objects, that the parables are poetic fictions. With this in mind, how successful or persuasive do you find Hedrick's reading of the fig tree parable to be?

### Chapter 10

Hedrick argues that it is an absolutely essential first step in reading the parables to divest one's self of all Christian history. Is this true? Is it possible? Does it mean that every Gospel framework for a parable is to be rejected?

### Chapter 11

"No 'right' interpretations of the parables of Jesus ever existed. By 'right' I mean interpretations that capture Jesus' intent." (p102) What do you think?

"The parables mean exactly what they say—and maybe more." (p104) What is a legitimate "more"?