

Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg –Fall 2009
1.270 - PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL IN THE PARABLES OF JESUS

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SYLLABUS

Course Rationale

The parables of Jesus are among the best known memories of Jesus. The parables of Jesus are also among the most controversial aspects of our understanding of Jesus' message. This course will provide a survey of the interpretation of parables, but the main focus will be on the study of specific parables of Jesus considering both how they were experienced in the context of Jesus' ministry and in the life of the Church today.

Course Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Describe the variety of approaches used and issues involved in the interpretation of parables
- Exhibit competence and confidence in analyzing and interpreting parables, demonstrating an awareness of both historical and hermeneutical aspects
- Demonstrate proficiency in re-imagining and re-presenting parables for preaching or teaching

Course Learning Strategies

Part of my goal for this course is to teach you about the parables of Jesus. A more important goal, however, is to have you experience the parables and help you be able to interpret and re-present the parables for yourselves. Information about the parables will, therefore, be conveyed through lectures and readings, but the learning will occur through discussion, collaboration, and your own involvement in leading the class. With this goal in mind, the following items will be the components of the learning strategy.

▪ **Course Project**

- **Discussion Leading:** At our first meeting, you will select a parable from a listing of those which are available for consideration. Working in groups of three, you will be responsible for leading the class discussion on that parable on the appropriate day. Provide any background information necessary for understanding the parable and identify interpretive issues or significant translation or text-critical matters. Think of this as a 'first reading' for the class where your goal is to generate discussion to help you come to some conclusions about this parable that will be reflected in your subsequent paper. You are encouraged to supply a study guide handout (2 page maximum) and listing of resources (including web sites). You will have about 35 minutes to present the parable and lead the discussion.
- **Exegetical Paper:** The paper will be 5-7 pages long, double-spaced, 1" margins, and properly annotated. It should *not* be a running commentary on the text. Instead, it should start with a clear thesis that is the basis for the structure, logic, and details included in the paper. (A thesis may be about how the parable is intended to be experienced, or how it is understood differently in various traditions, or how it fits into the overall scheme of the gospel, or ...) They will be due 2 weeks following your discussion leading date.
- **Parable Re-Presentation:** Demonstrate how you might 're-present' the parable or at least describe plans for how you would do so. This re-presentation might take the form of a poem, short story, song, PowerPoint, video, sermon, interactive Bible study, dramatization or skit artistic work, etc. The goal is to find an appropriate way for the parable to be experienced by a particular

audience. Your group will have about 15 minutes to re-present (or describe the planned re-presentation of) the parable and solicit feedback from the class. Each class member will also supply an informal written response.

- **Class Participation:** The relatively high percentage of your grade allotted to this component reflects my commitment to this class as a forum not simply for information but especially for reflection, questioning, and discussion. We will learn together!
 - You must check the course home page at www.gettysburgseminary.org/mhoffman for the latest schedule, additional readings, and reading assignments!
 - Participants are expected to attend class regularly. If you know in advance that you will be absent, please notify me and turn in any assignments by the due date. Please contact me about any other absences to work out satisfactory arrangements. Unexcused absences may negatively affect the final course grade.
 - Participants are to come to class prepared to discuss, having read the assigned materials, and having translated the texts we will be examining. I encourage you to work with others in preparing for the class.
 - Diversity of experience and opinion are to be expected, invited, and respected in class. With a working knowledge of the information, resources, and methodologies presented in the class, each participant is encouraged to ask questions, disagree, provide extending confirmation, or provide reasoned alternative perspectives.

Course Requirements and Assessments

Grading will be based on the following factors:

- **Discussion Leading Project: 20%** - scheduled during first week of course
- **Parable Re-Presentation: 25%**- scheduled during second week of course
- **Exegetical Paper: 30%**
- **Class and Online Participation: 25%** - throughout course

Grading scale:

- 93%-100%: A (excellent)
- 80%-92%: B (very good)
- 70%-79%: C (sufficient)
- Below 70%: F (fail)

Course Books

Required Texts:

ONE of the following:

(These books are primarily intended as providing reference and background. You will not be expected to read the whole book, but they do provide the resources we will use in discussing any particular parable.)

- *The Parables of Jesus: A Commentary* by Arland J. Hultgren (Eerdmans)
- *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus* by Klyne R. Snodgrass (Eerdmans)

and:

(This book will provide a survey of the history of interpretation of the parables. You will read the whole book.)

- *What Are They Saying about the Parables?* by David B. Gowler (Paulist)

and *ONE* of the following:

(These books are intended to provide 'strong' readings of the parables reflecting a particular perspective. You will not necessarily be reading the whole book, but you will want to grasp the author's perspective and share that perspective in class as we discuss individual parables.)

- *Re-Imagine the World: An Introduction to the Parables of Jesus* by Bernard Brandon Scott (Polebridge)
- *Kingdom, Grace, Judgment: Paradox, Outrage, and Vindication in the Parables of Jesus* by Robert Farrar Capon (Eerdmans)
- *Speaking Parables: A Homiletic Guide* by David Buttrick
- *Parables as Subversive Speech: Jesus as Pedagogue of the Oppressed* by William R., II Herzog (Westminster John Knox)
- *The Parables of Jesus* by Luise Schottroff (Author); Linda M. Maloney (Translator) (Augsburg Fortress)

and in addition,

- Other articles or selected readings may also be assigned

Secondary Bibliography:

- *Many Things in Parables: Jesus and His Modern Critics* by Charles W. Hedrick (Westminster John Knox) - Another good introduction similar to the Gowler book above.
- *The Parables of Jesus* by Joachim Jeremias – One of the landmarks in the modern study of the parables.
- *In Parables: The Challenge of the Historical Jesus* by John Dominic Crossan - A scholarly study but an artistic, reflective work as well.
- *Hear Then the Parable* by Bernard Brandon Scott – An earlier and more comprehensive version of his *Re-Imagine the World* cited above. Introductory material is somewhat technical, but his exposition is fascinating and provocative.
- *The Challenge of Jesus' Parables* – Collection of essays edited by Richard N. Longenecker.
- *Interpretation* 56.3, July 2002 – Journal theme is on the parables.
- *Matthew's Parables: Audience-Oriented Perspectives* by Warren Carter and John Paul Heil – Provides good attention to both the social and literary contexts of the parables.

Course Schedule

Cf. online listing for definitive schedule

Parables/Topics I will be teaching in class:

Mustard Seed
Parables introduction
Good Samaritan
Lost & Found of Luke 15 (Lost Sheep, Lost Coin, Lost Sons)
Unjust Judge
Unjust Steward
Bridesmaids
Great Supper
Pharisee and Publican
Tenants
Talents
Ten Lepers
What does this mean?

Fillers: (Rich man & Lazarus), (Laborers in Vineyard), Leaven, Seed Growing Secretly, Woman with Jar, Assassin

Parables available for student work:

Rich man & Lazarus
Laborers in Vineyard
Rich Fool
Unforgiving Servant
Tares (Wheat & Weeds)
Campaign Planner
Tower Builder
Leaven
Seed Growing Secretly
Net
Pearl
Hidden Treasure
Sower and Seed
Barren Fig Tree
Friend at Midnight
House Built on Rock/Sand
Two Sons
Doorkeeper

Another parable may be selected in consultation with instructor