



For the Lover of God
A DEEP DIVE INTO THE GOSPEL OF LUKE.

WEEK 5
 CLASS BY PASTOR GLYN NORMAN

Jesus as Teacher

Individual Work:

On the handout, compare Matthew's Sermon on the Mount, Luke's Sermon on the Plain and Isaiah 61. Note similar wording with underlining. Note similar concepts with a circle around the idea, drawing a link line between them.

The Sermon on the Plain

1. Read v20-21 Why are you blessed if you are poor? Why do the poor have the kingdom of God? What does that mean? Is it more spiritual to be poor than rich? What does contemporary America think of that? What does TBN (Trinity Broadcasting Network) think of that? Why does Matthew "spiritualize" these verses to "poor in Spirit"? Does that change make it better or worse as a verse? Do we lose anything if we choose one version over the other?

2. Read v22-23 What does this mean? Define "blessed". How can you be blessed by exclusion, revulsion and defamation (character assassination)? Is v23 to be taken literally? If so, why? If not, why not? What type of reward is being spoken of here? What can possibly make up for this exclusion and social embarrassment? Have you ever been ridiculed for being a Christian? Was your response that of v23? Can Jesus be serious here?

3. Read v24-26 Is it spiritually hazardous to be rich? What does James 2:5,6 add to your understanding. Why do you think Luke includes these "woes" but Matthew does not? If the better version is Matthew's and "poor" really means "poor in Spirit" why would it be a "woe" to be rich (in Spirit). Does this mean that Matthew has spiritualized a verse that was intended literally, as a comment on the people's economic state? Why might he do that?

4. Read v27-29 What does it mean to "love your enemies"? In the contemporary situation, what would it mean to love Saddam Hussein, or Osama bin Laden? How do

we interpret such a command in the light of such real-life gritty realities as terrorism and weapons of mass destruction? Can going to war against someone really be defined as “loving your enemy”?

Parables

Types of Parable

Short

- proverb (Lk 4:23; Lk 6:39)
- metaphor (Lk 5:36-38)
- similitude (Lk 13:18-19)

Longer

- story (Lk 16:19-31)
- example (Lk 12:16-21)
- allegory (Lk 8:4-15)

Why did Jesus use Parables?

Luke 8:10

He said, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God; but to others I speak in parables, so that

looking they may not perceive
and listening they may not understand."

Mark 4:10-12

When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables.

He told them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables so that, 'they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!'"

Ask: What is the point of telling a parable that people will not understand?

Is it to illustrate? To conceal? To disarm? To poke?

Interpreting the parables

The problem of distance:

distance in time - 20 centuries

distance in culture (agricultural vs production, rural vs urban, East vs West...)

distance in language (Greek/Aramaic vs English)

Trends in Interpretation

Origen - allegorical (everything is symbolic e.g: Good Samaritan is Jesus who binds up our wounds (sin), pays the price for us (pays the innkeeper etc.) Discredited by Jülicher.

Dodd - all about the kingdom

Jeremias - about conflict, vindicating the gospel

Kenneth Bailey - a literary-cultural approach

His method:

- discussing the cultural aspects of the parable with Middle Easterners (in remote villages where the culture is not much different today than 200 years ago; unchangingness is a high value. Highest compliment is to be called “preserver of customs” “If this had happened in your grandfather’s village, what...”

- examining pertinent ancient literature

- consulting the oriental versions of the gospels
see how Ancient near-easterns interpreted the parable

- trying to find out the “point” of the parable (one point or many??)
- theological cluster

The Three Basic Elements of a Parable

1) **Referents** - points of contact within the real world of the listener (symbols)

2) **Response** - the response the hearer is expected to make to the original telling of the story (see The Wedge Theory diagram)

3) **Theological cluster** - combination of theological motifs that “press” the hearer to make a single response.

Examples of these three elements:

Old Testament parable that Nathan told to David:

- 1) A ewe lamb stolen by a rich man - like David's real world
- 2) Response "I am a sinner" elicited from David
- 3) Theological cluster - he and Uriah are brothers under one covenant, awareness of the holiness of God who expects righteousness from his anointed king.

In the parable of the Sower:

- 1) sowing seed, some falling on bad ground, some falling on good ground
- 2) response - "I should hear the word of the kingdom and bear fruit.
- 3) Theological cluster:
 - a) the kingdom is like a seed growing slowly; it is not an apocalyptic revolutionary disruption
 - b) the parable speaks of grace. The sower sows liberally even in potentially unfruitful ground
 - c) fruit-bearing is an essential mark of the kingdom
 - d) the parable offers the listener hope. There is assurance of a harvest in spite of difficulties

EXERCISE - Luke 14:15-24 Identify the three basic elements of this parable.

1) Referents - symbols of ordinary life...

2) Response required...

3) Theological cluster...

Luke 14:15-24

- 1) Referents - rich man inviting people to banquet, excuses, inviting the “riff-raff”
- 2) Response - you are invited into the kingdom, be grateful and invite others
- 3) Theological cluster:
 - a) the kingdom is like a banquet, full, plentiful and satisfying
 - b) the value of it will not be recognized by all
 - c) God is angry with those who reject his invitation (rebellious Jews refusing to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah, the “chief inviter”)
 - d) Because these first guests (the Jews) are not interested, the invitation is offered to the most unlikely (Gentiles) because they are not too proud, and they recognize their need
 - e) there is enough for everybody, so invite!

Keys to understanding:

- 1) **Attitude** - what is the attitude expected of the people in the parable?

eg, how is the Levite priest supposed to react to the wounded man in the Good Samaritan story?

- 2) **Relationship** - what is the relationship between the characters?

e.g. how should an older son speak to his father in the Prodigal Son story?

- 3) **Response** - what is the expected response of the characters to the events in the story?

e.g. how should a father react when a son asks for his inheritance?

- 4) **Value judgment** - what value judgment arises from the events?

e.g. how should the characters view the steward who reduces their rents when he finds out he is going to lose his job?

Quote:

“I discovered that the Oriental storyteller has a “grand piano” on which he plays. The piano is built of the attitudes, relationships, responses and value judgments that are known and stylized in Middle Eastern peasant society. Everybody knows how everybody is expected to act in any given situation. The storyteller interrupts the established pattern of behavior to introduce his irony, his surprises, his humor and his climaxes. If we are not attuned to those same attitudes, relationships, responses and value judgments, we do not hear the music of the piano.”

Kenneth Bailey, Poet and Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes, p.76