

SEMINARI THEOLOJI MALAYSIA – CTEE, Luther Centre

Course: The Parables of Jesus

Semester 1, 2016

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Course Description

This course offers an in-depth study of selected parables of Jesus, including a survey of the history of their interpretation, their function in the ministry of Jesus, their purpose in the narrative of the Synoptic Gospels, and reflection upon their challenge for NT theology and interpretation. This course will also explore the use of parables in contemporary teaching and preaching ministry where students will attempt to understand the parables of Jesus in light of their First-Century environment, and to bridge the gap between *then* and *now* in applying the parables to their present situations in life and ministry.

Course Objectives

1. To examine the history of research on the parables and its scholarly contribution to our understanding of the nature and meaning of parable, past and present.
2. To explore the list of parables found in the Synoptic Gospels with an in-depth study of selected parables.
3. To investigate the historical, literary, social, cultural, and religious contexts of the parables.
4. To appreciate the place of the parable in the life and ministry of Jesus and the narrative of the Synoptic Gospels and to come to a fuller understanding of the “kingdom of God” as the central motif of Jesus’ teaching in parables.
5. To explore creative ways of teaching and preaching the parables of Jesus in contemporary context. Participation from students will be expected.

Text Books

This course will employ the following books as primary texts. These books are available at good local Christian bookstores or online book retailers such as Amazon, Bookdepository, and Dovebook, amongst others:

1. Klyne Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.
2. Craig L. Blomberg, *Preaching the Parables: From Responsible Interpretation to Powerful Proclamation*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004.
3. Lim Kar Yong, *Jesus the Storyteller: Hearing the Parables Afresh*. Singapore: Armour, 2015.

Graded Course Requirements

1. Research Paper on a Parable of Jesus (60%)

Utilizing a selection of the books reflected in the bibliography and found in STM library, relevant online scholarly journals (such as ALTAS) and works of comparable detail and quality, prepare an essay on a parable of Jesus of your

choice. The length of your essay is in accordance with the academic requirement of the programme that you are currently enrolled in. The parable for this assignment must be different than the parable used for the second assignment (see below). Within the paper you may want to include the following six points, although the order of their presentation is up to you.

1. Evaluate several approaches to interpreting the parable and defend the approach that you deem best.
2. Note which parts of the parable have been questioned by scholars who do not assign its entirety to the historical Jesus and assess their objections.
3. Place the parable into the historical and social context of Jesus' life and into the literary context of the Gospels, noting especially any differences if the parable appears in more than one Gospel. Make note of any other biblical referents.
4. Decide what the central truth (or truths) of the parable is (or are).
5. Note any controversial points of interpretation within the parable and determine which interpretation you favour.
6. Suggest relevant and legitimate applications of the parable for contemporary Christian living.

Deadline for the submission of the assignment is the final day of the first semester of 2016, **Friday, May 13, 2016, 5pm**. Please note that no extension is allowed. **Any submission after the deadline will automatically attract a 1/3-grade penalty for every 48-hour period until the assignment is submitted.**

Electronic submission of the assignment is accepted, but will not be returned. If you would like to receive feedback or comments from the instructor, please submit a hard copy to the office.

2. Class Teaching/Preaching Presentation (30%)

Create a 12-15-minute teaching/preaching presentation based on a parable of your choice. This parable must be different from the parable used for your research paper above. The presentation should include your interpretation of the parable in the form of sermon, teaching lesson, drama, Sunday school material, bible study, movie clip, music, or any other creative form which demonstrates a clear indication of your understanding of how the parable functioned in the ministry of Jesus and how the parable is relevant to your current audience. You will be evaluated based on your creativity, clarity, and the effectiveness of conveying the message of the parable to your contemporary audience. You may also elect to do this as a group project, with the maximum number of 3 persons per group.

The class presentation will be scheduled towards the last few weeks of classes, depending on number of students enrolled for the course. A sign up sheet and further instructions will be provided in the first or second week of class.

3. Grade for Reading (10%)

Students will be requested to indicate, at the end of the course, that they have completed reading the required number of pages from the required text and/or the recommended text. Please follow the academic regulations for the reading requirement according to the programme you are enrolled in.

Methods of Instruction

There will be lectures, screening of DVD clips, group discussions and presentation involved in this course.

Class Dates & Course Outline

This course will meet over 10 weekly classes on Wednesdays, 745-1030pm at Luther Centre, Petaling Jaya. The tentative course outline to be covered is stipulated in the following table.

Date	Tentative Contents of Lecture
Jan 13	Introduction to Parables; Survey of the history of interpretation; Principles of interpreting the parables
Jan 20	Parables of the Kingdom
Jan 27	Parables of Warnings and Preparedness
Feb 3	Parables of the Revelation of God
Feb 10	CNY – No class
Feb 17	CNY – No class
Feb 24	Parables of the Revelation of God
Mar 2	Parables of Discipleship and the Christian Life
Mar 9	Parables of Discipleship and the Christian Life
Mar 16	Teaching and Preaching the Parables of Jesus
Mar 23	Semester break/Holy week – No class
Mar 30	Class Presentation
April 6	Class Presentation

Select Bibliography

Bailey, Kenneth E. *Poet and Peasant: A Literary Cultural Approach to the Parables in Luke*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976.

_____. *Through Peasant Eyes: More Lucan Parables, Their Culture and Style*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980.

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Blomberg, Craig L. *Interpreting the Parables*. 2nd ed. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2012.

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- Donahue, John R., SJ. *The Gospel in Parable: Metaphor, Narrative, and Theology in the Synoptic Gospels*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988.
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- Hedrick, Charles. *Parables as Poetic Fictions: The Creative Voice of Jesus*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994.
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- McArthur, Harvey K. and Robert M. Johnston. *They Also Taught in Parables: Parables from the First Centuries of the Christian Era*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990.
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- Schottroff, Luise. *The Parables of Jesus*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006.
- Scott, Bernard Brandon. *Hear Then the Parable: A Commentary on the Parables of Jesus*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989.
- Shillington, V. George, ed. *Jesus and His Parables*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997.
- Stein, Robert. *An Introduction to the Parables of Jesus*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981.
- Stern, David. *Parables in Midrash: Narrative and Exegesis in Rabbinic Literature*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994.
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- Westermann, Claus. *The Parables of Jesus in Light of the Old Testament*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990.
- Wright, Stephen I. *Jesus the Storyteller*. London: SPCK, 2014.
- Young, Brad H. *The Parables: Jewish Tradition and Christian Interpretation*. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998.