

Lecture 18 – Parables (cont.)

“I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.” Luke 15:7 (NIV)

Key Terms

Prodigal

Objectives

- *To continue the study of Jesus’ association parables
- *To analyze lessons and application to Christian life and service in the parable of the prodigal son

Lead Questions

*What is the main point(s) of the parable of the prodigal son? What does the parable of the prodigal son teach us about religious authorities?

Parables (Cont.)**III. Jesus Defends His Associations with a Series of Parables**

- A. Context: Pharisees criticize Jesus for associations again (tax collectors and sinners). Not ludicrous. Jesus’ associations are not what the Jews expected of a holy man.
- B. Jesus’ replies: Parables answer Pharisees’ objections, in appealing terms
 1. Wouldn’t a shepherd seek a lost sheep? (15:3-7)
 2. Wouldn’t a woman search for a lost coin?
 3. Wouldn’t a gracious father seek lost sons?

Jesus was constantly criticized for His personal associations. In what ways are you or your church criticized concerning the people with whom you associate? Should Christians expect to be criticized for their associations? Why or why not?

IV. Portrait of the Unrighteous Son, cf. Derrett, “Law in the NT,” *NT Studies* 14 (1967)

- A. His offensive request and limited rights. Money still belongs to family. v 12 η ουσια, ο βιος (*he ousia, ho bios*); “property/money/wealth, life/well-being”)
- B. His journey and decline
 1. Sinful abuse of the inheritance
 2. His physical needs (note imperfect tense in v 16) and spiritual needs (swineherder, v 15)
 3. His repentance (a model)
- C. The father’s love and welcome for the unrighteous son
 1. Breaking social customs with undignified behavior: running, display of affection.
 2. Absence of rebuke. Son’s speech begins, cut short.
 3. Father’s acceptance and joy: meaning of sandals, calf, and ring.
- D. This completes answer to Scribes & Pharisees. Story could end here. But Jesus intends > self defense...

V. The Self Righteous Son

- A. Older brother’s speech: understandable or repugnant?
 1. Does he deserve sympathy or not?
 2. But, rude –v. 29, ιδου (*idou*, “look here!”), not πατηρ, (*pater*, “father”). Bitter, thankless. “All these many years I am slaving” - δουλευω (*douleuo*, “I am slaving”). Self-righteous, “Not once did I transgress your command.” Self-pitying, heartless.
- B. Father ignores the offenses, gently corrects his son
 1. “Child, - τεκνον (*teknon*, “child”), not υιον (*huion*, ‘son’), for perhaps he is being childish.

2. "You are always with me" (not a slave). "All I have is yours" (you are not deprived).
3. "It was necessary to rejoice" (even though you did not).
4. "For this your brother" (not just my son) "was dead and has come to life".

C. What happens?

VI. Analysis

A. Representations: Who stands for what in story?

1. Younger brother
2. Father
3. Older brother

B. Reader-response

1. Would anyone identify himself with the older brother?
2. This brother fits the mold of jealous older brother (Derrett, 68-71) Pharisees are to sinners as older brother is to younger brother in that they refuse to welcome sinner who has come home.
3. Parable encourages the Pharisees to both see and not see themselves as older brother.

C. Jesus performs the role of the father in the parable.

1. Jesus is to the Pharisees as the father is to the older brother in that He ignores their offenses and warmly invites them to join the party.
2. Jesus more than answers the Pharisees. He corrects, invites, waits. All ends with an invitation. The older brother and the Pharisee must finish the story.

VII. Application

A. To prodigals

B. To church folk. Recognize self in story, and repudiate it.

C. To everyman: God's club and the conditions for entry.

Note on Christ in the parables:

*The father is a Christ figure. Jesus, by the parable, does precisely what father does in the parable. The younger brother is any flagrant sinner. The older brother = the self righteous.

*Jesus is to sinners as the father is to the younger son, in that He welcomes them unconditionally when they return to Him. Jesus is to the Pharisees as the father is to the older son, in that He gently corrects them and invites them to join the party too.