Lecture 19 – Preaching or Teaching the Parables

"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" Luke 10:36 (NIV)

Key Terms
Samaritan, Levite, Blomberg's principle of proportional allegory

Objectives
*To explore methodologies for communicating parables to a modern audience
*To begin a discussion on the training of the disciples

Lead Question
Should parables be used to communicate truths of the Gospel today? How?

Preaching or Teaching the Parables
I. Telling the Parables and the Parable of the Good Samaritan
        Issue: Should we explain parables, so people understand customs behind them, yet lose the surprise
        factor? Or retell them, keep surprise, and lose precision. Good Samaritan as test case.
        A. Context for Luke 10 (a people parable, maybe disarming hostile listeners)
                1. Lawyer plans to test Jesus with a question.
                2. Jesus quickly turns tables, asks him a question and lawyer answers.
                3. Jesus says "Right!" But if he knew the answer, why did he ask?
                4. To justify himself, lawyer asks a harder question, "Who is my neighbor?"
                5. Jesus answers question with parable to help him forget his agenda.
        B. The Parable of the Good Samaritan
                1. The problem of the apparent familiarity of the story, loss of proper shock factor.
                2. Given regulations of day, the Jews' actions are defensible.
                        a. The road to Jericho
                        b. "Half-dead and naked"
                        c. The priest's dilemma: He had some respectable reasons for passing by; perhaps
                           unwitting victim of a system
                        d. A Levite
                        e. A Samaritan
                        f. His generosity
                3. Who was a neighbor? Lawyer: "I suppose the one…"
II. The Problem in Communication
        A. The parable would have shocked, even enraged first hearers. Today it sounds familiar, pleasant.
           Should we even try to recapture initial shock for modern hearer? If so, how?
                Option 1: Do your homework on backgrounds and explain the story.
                Option 2: Retell the story.
        B. The Good Person of Minority Status? Problems?
        C. The Good Homosexual? Problems?
                1. The Good Homosexual and the Traveling Pastor—Problems?
                2. Can any retelling fit perfectly? Trade-off between precision and impact.
        D. The goal in retelling
                To surprise, even shock the reader into hearing the thrust of the parable again. To transport
                the listener out of his critical mode, to disengage listener from agendas.
        E. The challenge in retelling: no perfect equivalence
                1. Retelling alters meaning. People get upset. But story lives again if you retell well.

        2. Suggestions: Minimize wild detail, humor. Keep story general, applicable to everyman.

        3. I partially retell on most occasions.

III. Preaching Christ from the Parables

    A. The challenge

        1. Allegorical excesses and critical overreaction: Julicher and the one point theory.

        2. Critical skepticism regarding Christology in parables.

        3. Evangelical ignorance: jumping to Paul and Peter.

        4. Parables on discipleship have potential to become almost legalistic. Form: "Jesus has redeemed you, and described life of a disciple. Now go do it!" This is also a type of legalism, a confidence in human power and a legal orientation to the faith.

    B. But all Scripture presents Christ (Luke 24)

    C. Jesus appears in parables two ways: through self-reference and through parables told in shadow of cross

IV. Christ in the Parables

    Self-reference seems intuitive in some parables (sower, lost sons) but the goal is demonstration. (Some of these will not be discussed.)

    A. Twin parables on seeds and growth

        1. The sower

        2. The wheat and the weeds

    B. The wicked tenant farmers

        1. In the story, it is clear to readers that the one beloved son is Jesus.

        2. By end of episode it is clear to original audience too.

    C. Matthew 24-25: The master, bridegroom, and judge in the parable act very much like Jesus.

Conclusion: These parables share the strategy of Jesus' inserting self into the story.

    D. Other parables following the pattern

        1. Lost sons

        2. Unforgiving servant

        3. Other kingdom parables proclaim the reign of Christ

        4. Questionable: Is He in parable of great banquet (Luke 14) or Good Samaritan (Luke 10)?

    E. Method of testing: Blomberg's principle of proportional allegory is best starting point.

        1. Formula: A is to B as a is to b with respect to x.

        2. First state the possible identification.

        3. Then evaluate it.

    F. Some parables are told under "shadow of the cross." Examples:

        1. Wicked tenant farmers

        2. Pharisee and publican

        3. Unforgiving servant

    G. Conclusion

Transition to Training of Disciples

I. Gospels Report a Season of Painful Transition

    Death of John the Baptist shows opposition

    A. Traits of the era: opposition from Jews, dullness from crowds, slow progress of the 12.

    B. Gospels' emphases (Four Gospels report matters quite differently here).

        1. Matthew 14-16, Opposition of Jews, incomprehension of crowds, slow progress of 12.

        2. Mark 8:27-10:52, Confession that Jesus is suffering Messiah dominates.

        3. Luke 9-18, Disciples have blunders and successes during "Journey to Jerusalem."

        4. John 6-10, Disappointment from Jesus' family. Leaders strong opposition, not calcified.

II. The Picture in Matthew 14-17

    A. The opposition of the Jews becomes more virulent.

       B. The crowds prove they are making no progress. Jesus turns to disciples.

       C. The disciples' evident need of instruction.

             1. The disciples are not as well grounded as they think (cf. 13:52).

             2. In their favor, they keep listening, understand a little.

III. Feeding of Five Thousand: Central in Each Scenario.

       A. Story in the synoptics (Only miracle, except resurrection, found in all four Gospels)

             1. Setting

             2. The desperate need for food. *You* give them something to eat.

             3. Are 5 loaves and 2 fish their personal supply? See Matt. 14:17, Mark 6:38, Luke 9:13.

             4. Materials are poor and few to feed so many. 5 barley loaves - horse food.

             5. Jesus breaks the bread, feeding all, with 12 huge full baskets left over.

             6. The crowd fails to comment. No one is impressed or learns anything.

       B. John's account

             1. Some want to make Jesus king by force. Jesus drives them away with hard teaching.

             2. The 12 remain, but partly because they have nowhere else to go.

The disciples have difficulty really understanding and applying Christ and His teachings. In what ways are you similar to the disciples in this regard? In what ways are you different?