

ACTS

SEMINARIES

Associated Canadian Theological Schools BNT 637A: Exposition of Jesus' Parables – Prophetic Tales of Kingdom Values

Dr. Larry Perkins, Professor of Biblical
Studies
Summer 2019
3 semester hours of credit
Prerequisite: BIE 500 Hermeneutics or
equivalent

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Course Dates: May 21 – August 2, 2019
Class days and time: June 3 – 7, 2019. 8:30am
– 12:30pm.

Course Description: Jesus' parables form a major portion of his teaching and express his prophetic role as Messiah. His parables give us our most direct contact with his voice and the response of his contemporaries to these stories help us understand the mixed evaluation he received. They define his relationship with Yahweh, his role in forming the new people of the Kingdom, the decision that every person has to make regarding his claims, and how he intends people to live as part of his Kingdom. In other words Jesus' theology emerges especially in his parables.

It is also the case that the interpretation of Jesus' parables remains a singular challenge for the contemporary church. If the parables were intended to challenge the first century Jewish audience in Galilee, then how are they relevant today? Given their setting within the Gospel narratives of Mark, Matthew and Luke, how should we discern the early church's appropriation of these stories? Are they moral tales, spiritual illustrations, prophetic analogs, or theological allegories – or all or none of the above? How do Jesus' parables relate to the parables we find in later, rabbinic writings? Is Jesus following an already established teaching tradition in Judaism, or is he innovative, creating a new teaching medium that was formative for later rabbinic Judaism? To what degree are the parables intended to be commentary on Israel's spiritual condition?

In the course we will consider the parables as they occur in the triple tradition, in two of the Gospels, and then those that are unique to a single Gospel. We will also inquire as to why John's Gospel lacks parables, at least in the form we find them in the other three Gospels.

The intent in all of this is to enable Christian leaders to interpret Gospel parables as fully as possible, understand their role in Jesus' mission, appropriate the message of Jesus' parables for themselves, and to articulate it effectively to others.

Course Outcomes: as a result of this course the student will be able to:

1. Explain the general history of the interpretation of parables within the Christian tradition, particularly as this relates to the issue of allegory, possible Jewish precedents, and the reason why Jesus employed this genre;
2. Interpret parables as they occur in the narrative contexts of the Synoptic Gospels and discern key elements of Jesus' theology expressed within them;
3. Explain the relationship between parables, prophecy and apocalyptic as they occur within the canonical context;
4. Articulate a method for reading and interpreting parables contextually today.

Course Resources:

Craig Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1990). Klyne Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent. A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008). Extensive bibliography is provided in this volume.

An earlier volume by Warren Kissinger, *The Parables of Jesus. A History of Interpretation and Bibliography*, ATLA Bibliography Series, No. 4 (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1979) is still a very valuable resource and should be consulted as available.

See also Richard N. Longenecker (ed.), *The Challenge of Jesus' Parables*, Grand Rapids, Mi.: Eerdmans, 2000. This is a collection of essays that consider key issues related to our interpretation of parables in the New Testament.

The student should have access to a Synopsis of the Gospels, either in English or in Greek.

Faculty Expertise: Dr. Perkins has taught Expositions of Mark's Gospel and Matthew's Gospel for several years. As well, he has taught 1 Peter which uses metaphors in much the same way that Jesus used parables. He has expertise in the use of the OT in the NT, which is a necessary competence for interpreting the parables. His primary research interest is the Septuagint translation of Exodus.

Course Assignments:

1. **In class presentation: Students will select one parable from the list provided in the course outline. They will develop a 10 minute (no longer) presentation in which they discuss the following:**
 - a. **The context for the parable in Jesus' teaching.**
 - b. **How the context helps us understand the purpose for the parable and Jesus' key idea in its presentation.**
 - c. **Suggestions as to the application of this parable's "message" to our context today.**

Work done on this assignment could contribute to your 4th assignment. This is worth 5 % of your final course grade.

2. Methodology paper #1: Parables and allegory. We know that within the history of the interpretation of parables the issue of allegory looms large. Explain the issues and reach your own conclusion, suitably argued and supported with appropriate data, about whether Jesus spoke parables that were allegories and what the implications of this would be as applied to a particular parable. This paper is due **June 5** at 5pm. It should be no longer than 10 pages, with title page, outline and bibliography. It is worth 20% of the final grade. It should be prepared in 11 or 12 point font, using 1.5 spacing.
3. Methodology paper #2: Parables and Synoptic Context. Often in the course of parable interpretation there is an attempt to discern the meaning of a parable as spoken originally by Jesus (form criticism), how it was shaped by the oral tradition in the early church, and finally how a particular Gospel author shaped it for inclusion in his narrative (redaction criticism). Today many of these issues are ignored because commentators are working with narrative criticism. In your paper seek to discern whether we can determine the original context of a particular parable of Jesus, apart from what information the narrative context of a Gospel provides. Discuss whether or not we can 'trust' the contexts that Gospel writers provide for these parables. This paper is due **June 28**, 5pm. It should be no longer than 10 pages, with title page, outline and bibliography. It is worth 25% of the final grade. It should be prepared in 11 or 12 point font, using 1.5 spacing.

4. Major paper: the student will select a parable (of the kingdom) that occurs in the “triple tradition” and define, articulate and defend an interpretation of that parable that is consistent with the Gospel narrative contexts, that explains variations that occur in the parable as it is reiterated in various Gospel narratives, that defines the contribution of this parable to our understanding of Jesus’ theology, and articulates an application of this parable and its message to an appropriate 21st century context (last 2 pages). The paper will be footnoted and have an appropriate bibliography, along with title page and outline. This paper should not exceed 20 pages, be presented in 11 or 12 point font, using 1.5 line spacing. It is due **August 2** at 5pm. This paper is worth 40% of the final grade.
5. Reading Report. Each student will complete the reading report. Along with this report, students will submit a short reflection paper in which they indicate key ideas that each required text (Blomberg and Snodgrass) generated for them. Three to four paragraphs for each text would be the norm. This is due **August 2** and is worth 10% of the final grade.

All assignments can be submitted by email to the professor (perkins@twu.ca).

Course Outline:

- 2 weeks before class (May 21)– Begin reading for the course and develop ideas for completing the first assignment.
- 1 week of class sessions (June 3 – 7). First assignment due June 5.
- 3 weeks of reading, research and writing of the second assignment June 28.
- 2 weeks of research paper research
- 2 weeks of research paper writing August 2
- Reading report August 2

In class presentation assignment	5%	
First Methodology Paper	20%	June 5
Second Methodology Paper	25%	June 28
Fourth Assignment	40%	August 2
Reading Report	10%	August 2

Course Days Outline:

- June 3 Session One: History of the interpretation of Parables – overview, summary and evaluative comments.
 The word ‘parable’ and its OT setting.
 Parables in the ancient world, particularly as used within Israel.
- June 3 Session Two: Prophecy, Apocalyptic, Parables and Canon.
 Classification of parables – similitudes, interrogative parables, double narrative parables, juridical parables, single narrative parables, “how much more” parables (Snodgrass); three, two and single character parables (Blomberg)
 Parables and Jesus’ Theology.
 Why did Jesus use parables?
 Parables and kingdom concepts
 Parables and Israel
 Proposed Method of Interpretation
 Parables as we encounter them in the Gospel narrative.
- June 4 Session Three: Parables in Galilee #1

Good tree, Good fruit (Matt. 7)
Wise and Foolish Builders (Matt. 7:24-27; Luke 6:47-49)
New Patch, New Wine (Mark 2:21-22; Matt. 9:14-17; Luke 5:33-39)
The Strong Man (Mark 3:27; Matt. 12:29; Luke 11:21-22)
The Sower: a fourfold Similitude (Mark 4:1-20; Matt. 13:1-23; Luke 8:4-15)

June 4 Session Four: Parables in Galilee #2
The Sower: a fourfold Similitude
The Lamp (Mark 4:21-23; Luke 8:16-18)
The Growing Seed (Mark 4:26-29)
The Mustard Seed (Mark 4:30-32; Matt. 13:31-32; Luke 13:18-19)
Leaven (Matt. 13:33; Luke 13:20-21)

June 5 Session Five: Parables in Galilee #3 (**Assignment #1 is due**)
The Wheat and the Weeds (Matt 13:24-30, 36-43)
Treasure in the Field (Matt. 13:44)
Pearl of Great Price (Matt. 13:45-46)
The Net (Matt. 13:47-50)
The Two Debtors (Luke 7:41-43)

June 5 Session Six: Parables on the Way to Jerusalem #1
The Unforgiving Servant (Matt. 18:23-25)
Light and the Eye (Luke 11:33-36)
The Lost Sheep (Matt. 18:12-14; Luke 15:4-7)
The Lost Coin (Luke 15:8-10)
The Compassionate Father and his Two Sons (Luke 15:11-32)

June 6 Session Seven: Parables on the Way to Jerusalem #2
The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-27)
The Unforgiving Servant (Matt. 18:23-35)
Friend at Midnight (Luke 11:5-8)
The Rich Fool (Luke 12:16-21)
The Barren Fig Tree (Luke 13:6-9)
The Workers in the Vineyard (Matt. 20:1-16)

June 6 Session Eight: Parables on the Way to Jerusalem #3
The Tower Builder and the Warring King (Luke 14:28-32)
The Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1-13)
The Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31)
The Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Luke 18:9-14)

June 7 Session Nine: Parables in Jerusalem #1
The Two Sons (Matt. 21:28-32)
The Wicked Tenants (Mark 12:1-12; Matt. 21:33-46; Luke 20:9-19; G.Thom. 65-66)
The Wedding Banquet and the Feast (Matt. 22:1-14; Luke 14:15-24; G. Thom. 64)
The Ten Virgins (Matt. 25:1-13)

June 7 Session Ten: Parables in Jerusalem #2
The Talents and the Minas (Matt. 25:14-30; Luke 19:11-27)
The Sheep and the Goats (Matt. 25:31-46)
The Fig Tree and Absent Landlord (Mark 13:28-36)

Conclusion

Grading Scale:

Letter Grade	Percentage	Grade Point
A+	Superior	4.30
A	Excellent	4.00
A-	Very Good	3.70
B+	Proficient	3.30
B	Good	3.00
B-	Average	2.70
C+	Adequate	2.30
C	Acceptable	2.00
C-	Needs Work	1.70
F	Below Standard	0.00

Supplement: Important Academic Notes from ACTS

Web Support – Student Portal <https://students.twu.ca>

All students at TWU have a TWUPass username and password. This is determined at the time of an online application or can be managed through the computing services help desk or the link on the student portal. Your student email account is also available through this student portal and is vital for communication about grades, account statements, lost passwords, sign-up instructions, etc. If you do not know your account or password, there is a link at the login area called “I forgot my password.” When you click on that link, you will be walked through the process of retrieving your account information.

Campus Closure

In the event of deteriorating weather conditions or other emergency situations, every effort will be made to communicate information regarding the cancellation of classes to the following radio stations: CKNW (980 AM), CKWX (1130 AM), STAR FM (107.1 FM), PRAISE (106.5 FM) and KARI (550 AM). As well, an announcement will be placed on the University’s campus closure notification message box (604.513.2147) and on the front page of the University’s website (<http://www.twu.ca> – also see <http://www.twu.ca/conditions> for more details).

An initial announcement regarding the status of the campus and cancellation of classes will be made at 6:00 a.m. and will cover all classes that begin before 1:00 p.m. A second announcement pertaining to classes that begin between 1:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. will be

made at 11:00 a.m. A third announcement pertaining to classes that begin after 5:00 p.m. will be made at 3:00 p.m.

Paper Formatting

Students need to adhere to Turabian Notes (Bibliography) format except in counselling courses, for which APA format is used, and in CanIL courses.

Students are strongly encouraged to use EndNote Basic/Web (to create an account or log in, go to: <http://libguides.twu.ca/EndNote/>) as their bibliographical manager and as a tool for formatting bibliographies. It is free. The link to EndNote from the library home page provides detailed instructions. Students will need to be aware that it is necessary to “clean up” most bibliographies generated by this program. Students are encouraged to view the documents on the following websites for format samples:

http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html or

www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/. In EndNote Basic/Web the available formatting styles are those of Turabian Bibliography, and APA 6th edition. For Turabian, there are two formats – Notes (Bibliography) and Reference List (a short format citation style). ACTS uses the Notes (Bibliography) format, not Reference List.

Counselling students are expected to purchase the APA Publications Manual. More information may be found at the following website: <http://www.apastyle.org/pubmanual.html>.

For free online programs that will enable students to create properly formatted bibliography citations, go to <http://www.eturabian.com/turabian/index.html> or

<http://www.calvin.edu/library/knightcite/> (“Chicago” stands for “Turabian”).

CANIL students should consult with their own faculty on specific requirements.

Please check with your professor to find out which style he/she recommends you use!!

Course Evaluations

Course evaluations are important for improving teaching outcomes, faculty professional development, and the student learning context. Completion of course evaluations is, therefore, considered to be a course expectation. Professors will schedule time for students to fill out online course evaluations (20-30 minutes) on their personal laptops or a collegium computer during the last scheduled class of the semester. Students who are absent that day or who are otherwise unable to complete the online course evaluation during the last class will be expected to make every effort to do so by the last day of exams. Information about how to access online evaluation forms will be provided to the faculty and students prior to the last week of classes by the ACTS Administration.

Research Ethics

Please note that all research projects involving human participants undertaken by members of the TWU university community (including projects done by ACTS students to satisfy course or degree requirements) **MUST** be approved by the Trinity Western University Research Ethics Board. Information and forms may be found at <http://www.twu.ca/research/research/research-ethics/default.html>. Those needing additional clarification may contact the ACTS Academic Dean’s office. Please allow at least three (3) weeks from the date of submission for a review of the application.

Academic Integrity and Avoiding Plagiarism at TWU

Christian scholars at TWU regard academic integrity to be a core value. Students are invited into this scholarly culture and are required to abide by the principles of sound academic scholarship. This means that all members of the TWU academic community must avoid all forms of plagiarism and cheating in scholarly work. ACTS uses the TWU Student Handbook as a guide for our seminary students. Though some features in the handbook are focused on the university’s

undergraduate population, it provides the essential student life information for ACTS students as well. It can be found online at: <http://www.twu.ca/studenthandbook/>.

Learning what constitutes plagiarism and avoiding it is the student's responsibility. An excellent resource in this regard has been prepared by TWU Librarian William Badke and is freely available for download (PPT file) or can be viewed in flash (self-running) tutorials of different lengths:

<http://williambadke.com/plagiarism.ppt>

<http://williambadke.com/Plagiarism.swf> (14 minute flash tutorial)

http://williambadke.com/Plagiarism_Short.swf (8 minute flash tutorial)

Equity of Access

Students with disabilities who need assistance are encouraged to contact the Equity of Access Office upon admission to TWU to discuss their specific needs. All disabilities must be recently documented by an appropriately certified professional and such documentation should include a statement regarding the educational impact of the disability along with recommended accommodations. Within the first two weeks of the semester, students must meet with their professors to agree on accommodations appropriate to each class. Students should follow the steps detailed by the Equity of Access Office outlined on the TWU website at <http://twu.ca/life/wellness/learningresources/disabilities-and-equity-of-access/steps-to-attaining-disability-services.html>.

Policy Information and Student Concerns

Information on academic and community life policies and procedures that affect students can be found in the ACTS *Academic Catalogue*, which is available on the ACTS website (www.actsseminaries.com) under the *Academics* tab. Students who wish to communicate concerns or to lodge academic appeals are welcome to contact the appropriate faculty or staff member directly, or to fill out and submit the relevant Concerns & Grievances or Appeals form found on the *Files & Forms* page of the *Current Students* section of the ACTS Website.

Appendix: Live-Streamed Courses

A live-streamed course makes it possible for students at a distance to observe and also to participate interactively with an on-campus class in real time. Those who attend a class by live-streaming see and hear the instructor. They can watch class media presentations (e.g. PowerPoint) on their computer screens. They can follow class discussions, posing questions and making comments of their own. They can join in group discussions with other learners when the class breaks into smaller groups. Through internet-based simulcast, they are able to share all the essential elements of the formal class experience with those who attend class in person. Unless otherwise stated in the syllabus, live-streaming students will do the same course assignments and follow the same course schedule as on-campus students.

Requirements for Participating in a Live-streamed Course

- Because the number of live-stream participants to a course is limited, ***students must receive faculty permission prior to the beginning of the course*** in order to participate through live-streaming.
- ***Students must participate in classes in real-time***, as they would if they were attending class in person. For example, those who take a live-streamed course that meets on Thursday mornings will be expected to be in that class virtually, or physically, when that class meets. (A live-streaming student who is in the area and able may attend class in person when possible if he/she wishes.)

ACTS has the capacity to record live-streamed courses for later viewing, but we do not record them as a matter of routine. If it is difficult for students to participate in a class session, they may ask the instructor for permission to watch recorded versions of the class. This will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

- Participation in a course through live-streaming ***requires a fast and consistent internet connection (ADSL or cable), a reasonably up-to-date computer system, a webcam, and a quality headset with a microphone***. Students must familiarize themselves with the live-streaming software platform and ensure that their link, webcam, and headset are working properly before the first class session.

Please arrange for a practice run on the system with the instructor prior to class, especially if this is your first live-stream course. This can be arranged by email.

- As much as possible, ***be sure you are fully ready for each class session before the class begins***. To the degree that logging in and connecting with the system can be done from your end, there is some flexibility for you to “arrive” as you are able. But testing the system and other logistics that require faculty assistance should be done before class starts. The instructor will do his/her best to ensure that everything is in place for the live-stream session; but he/she cannot allow live-stream setup to significantly delay or interfere with the smooth flow of the class session for other students once class begins.
- Arrange a backup plan with your instructor in case of system failure. ACTS uses high-caliber, current equipment and communication platforms for live-streaming, but hardware and internet connections are not infallible and do occasionally fail. Your instructor cannot stop class in order to troubleshoot and resolve technical problems in the unlikely event that these occur. To minimize possible disruption in the case of a loss of connection:

- Provide email, text, or phone contact information so that he/she can contact you at the next natural break in the class.
- Discuss the possibility of a back-up link to the class in case of system failure. (E.g.: a skype or phone link if the Webex link fails.)
- Have a plan for follow-up contact with the instructor and/or with a fellow student to fill any gaps in your interaction with the class (as you would if you had to miss a class for other reasons).

Note that under the policy guidelines of our accrediting body, the Association of Theological Schools, live-stream courses are classified as “distance” education and are subject to the normal policies, limitations, and expectations that apply to distance courses. See the ACTS academic catalogue, or consult with the Academic Program Advisor or your Program Chair if you have any questions about the way that distance courses operate within your degree program.