

Advent Study of Jesus' Parables

Thursday Evening 7:00 on Zoom. Use the Sunday Service login on the St. David's Events page.

A little bit of homework will make the class go better. Read the parables in advance, and download and read through the weekly lesson sheet. Each session will start with a brief introduction, then a video featuring Professor Amy-Jill Levine, and then a follow-up discussion. We will conclude with Compline, using the form posted on the Events page. Each session should take about an hour.

Sessions will be on Thursday, December 3, December 10, and December 17

December 3 Please read Luke Chapter 15 and the Week 1 participation guide.

December 10 Please read Luke 10: 25-37 and the Week 2 participation guide.

December 17 Please read Matthew 29: 1-16 and the Week 3 participation guide.

Please feel free to bring questions, comments and concerns to the session.

Parables

Parables in the O.T., as well as N.T. are a common part of Jewish culture. Jesus did not invent them. The people who heard them are forced to make a decision - what would we do? Parables require no external key to explain them, while an allegory does. Often we find that the Church Fathers in their preaching turned the parables into allegories by telling us what they mean, rather than allowing them to speak to us. The trick is to determine what is surprising in the parable and what is not.

Because so many of the parables describe ordinary situations in first century life, CONTEXT is imperative - the more we know about the original contexts of the parables, the richer our understanding becomes and the greater our appreciation for those who created them.

Levine claims that it requires several leaps of faith in hearing NT parables;

We don't know with certainty if Jesus actually told the parables recorded

If he did, we do not know with certainty the composition of his audience, or their reaction

If he did compose them, it is unlikely that he only told them once or in exactly the same way each time.

She also reminds us that Jesus' listeners would have Old Testament models in mind, and would be keenly aware of Jewish customs and practices to shape their attitudes toward the situations Jesus described. Jesus seems to want his listeners to challenge their attitudes. She says: "Jesus was requiring that his disciples do more than listen; he was asking them to think as well.... What makes the parables mysterious or difficult, is that they challenge us to look into the hidden aspects of our own values, our own lives. They bring to the surface unasked questions, and they reveal the answers we have always known, but refused to acknowledge. Our reaction to them should be one of resistance rather than acceptance...."