Tell It Slant: Parables as Spiritual Direction

Session 2

Introduction to Lukan Parables

**The Gospel of Luke**

* The structure:
  + The first third of the Gospel (1-9:51) is a rework of Mt and Mk—focusing on Jesus’ Galilean ministry—the foundation of what Jesus did.
  + The last third of the Gospel (19-24) is like Mt and Mk, focusing on Jesus’ ministry in Jerusalem; the consummation of what Jesus did.
  + The middle third (10-18), the transition between the Galilean and Jerusalem ministries, is to prepare the disciples how they are to behave to reflect their true identity.
* Luke uses 10 chapters for the two to three days Jesus took to travel from Galilee to Jerusalem (in Mt and Mk).
* Luke came about 50 years after Jesus’ ascension—about a generation after Mt and Mk, when eyewitnesses (with their lively oral traditions) were no longer available to him.
* Luke observed something deficient in the style of the believers after the Gospels of Mt and Mk were written: they do what they had heard but they lose the spirit of their Master. That is why Luke wrote his Gospel.
* He uses prominently the form of parable, most unique to the Gospel.

**Parables**

* Parable is a way of saying something that requires the hearer to participate in the message.
* Parable, or “throw down”: something thrown down to the context of the hearer in an unexpected way so that they can start relating or noticing something that they have overlooked or dismissed before.
* Parable is not an illustration. It is for those who know the word, are busy doing and arranging others to follow the commands which cease to be personal to them. Their life style is out of touch with the content of the Gospel.
* We stumble over a parable which gets our attention so that we have to participate in it. If it works, we value it and change our life.
* Direction confrontation does not work for those of us who are protected by wall of steel by means of the “fig leaves” of urgent things, defending ourselves against love, etc. Only parables can get to us from the side (thus, the title “Tell it Slant”.)
* Soren Kierkegaard of Denmark uses parabolic writing to get to the country of nominal Christianity in 19th century.
* Walker Percy did the same thing in the 20th century.

Questions for Discussion: Sessions 1 & 2

1. What is Spiritual Direction? In what sense it forms a “quartet” with preaching, teaching, and witnessing?
2. As you ponder your spiritual life, who have been “spiritual directors” for you? Often times, these people have functioned in this role informally and quietly, sometimes without realizing it themselves.
3. After listening to Dr. Eugene Peterson’s explanation of spiritual direction, which aspects of “soul caring” ministry impresses you most?
4. What are the “fig leaves” that Eugene Peterson referred to? What are your “fig leaves?”
5. From your observation of your church today, what indications are there which indicate a need to recover the art of listening for God in the ordinary?