Tell It Slant: Parables as Spiritual Direction

Session 7

**Spirituality of Prudence—****The Parable of the Shrewd Manager. Lk 16**

*Introduction*

* Spiritual Direction and the Evangelical Tradition
* Broad and informal in a way of speaking and being (Gospel of Luke and this course)
* Formal when two persons deliberately meet to pay attention to matters of the soul (you and God)

**The Parable of the Shrewd Manager. Luke 16**

* Prudence is being careful and cautious in what one does.

**Observations**

1. The main character is a bad person.

* He is not “accidentally” bad but bad before and after the story.
* Spirituality is not morality.
* Morality is reductionist in spirituality.
  + Morality focuses on rules (on good behavior).
  + Rules that are nothing specifically Christian about.
  + They focus on *my* behavior.
  + They blunt my sensitivity to *God’s* behavior.
* Spirituality is concerned with what and how God is doing in us.
* The “bad man” in the parable detaches us from moralism.

1. There is a recurring danger of fuzziness in spirituality.

* People who want to grow as a Christian begin to see things differently; after a while they become complacent.
* They need sharp definitions: focus
* The steward focuses on one thing: saving his own life under the pressure of the master.
* That one thing requires detailed works (from 800 to 400; 1000 to 800) that he is good at.

*God is in the details.*

1. The crooked Manager does the thing he is good at in saving his own life.

* Spiritual life is not different from non-spiritual life.
* He rework with his same set of skills.
* Prudence means to be smart with your life.
* We have accumulated wisdom [ḫokma] which means how to get things done.

1. Jesus confront us with the presence of God.

* Confrontation: turn in the account of his stewardship.
* We are paralyzed by matters of justices in the world, resulting in catching the “nothing-can-be-done” disease.’
* This parable shocks us into action—“There is something I can so.”

1. The parable has an incident that follows it—the response of the Pharisees.

* Pharisees: prosperous if you are good, therefore, they find the parable offensive or irrelevant.
* In the parable, the steward is prosperous but bad.
* The focus of parable is on the moral but on the disposition: the way in which the steward responds in crisis.
* We are trained to believe that clear communication would lead to understanding and belief.
* This parable leads to rejecting attention from the Pharisees.
* True spirituality means attention of intensity, decision, crisis, and prudence.

Question: Do parables works in Evangelism?

* Evangelism is not the primary field in parables.
* Parables presuppose conversion, knowledge, and built up defences, etc.
* Flannery O’Connor: evangelism in her parabolic writings.
* Jesus uses parables a lot, we are trying to learn how Jesus does what he does.