

PARABLES, “THROUGH PEASANTS EYES!”

Study 5, The Parable of The Two Debtors, Part I. Luke 7:36-50

1. The simple, but artistically and theologically complex p has much to offer the careful interpreter. This is a short p set in the middle of a theological dialogue. Culture and drama overlap and heighten to inform the theology, and the p is to be viewed like this. There are 7 scenes;
 - a. Introduction
 - b. Outpouring of woman’s love. (in action)
 - c. Dialogue. Simon judges wrongly.
 - d. A parable.
 - e. A Dialogue. Simon judges rightly.
 - f. The outpouring of the woman’s love (in retrospect).
 - g. Conclusion. The woman/Jesus/Pharisees).
2. This is classical inversion principal, themes repeat themselves and the p occurs in the climatic center.

INTRODUCTION: Scene 1

3. We are initially introduced to the first three characters by name. Jesus accepts the invite, the woman, ‘sinner in the city,’ and The Pharisee-Simon. Relate this to Luke 15:1-2a and Luke 15:11.
4. Suggestions: Jesus preaches, Invite given and He accepts. The scene is a banquet. The Pharisee is isolated and did not eat the meal. All meals require purity. *Note purity rules and food-restrictions are crucial as they set apart the Pharisees from the people especially when the sit down to eat. *Note, Jesus enters in this environment.
5. Religion in 1st century Palestine involves groups of interested people who form religious societies, and held common meals for theological study. (This is true for the study of the Torah and went late into the night with occasion of a visiting sage or teacher). Jesus may have been this visiting sage with these ‘intellectuals.’ Spirited discussion is key, but no one could have predicted the dramatic surprises in for them. Reclining at an indoor meal

meant a banquet, precise rolls are followed and this is a formal occasion. The scholar Tristram notes that there are low couches, guests sit in order of their rank, they lean on the tables with sandals or slippers left at the door. Servants wash guest's feet, to omit this meant inferior rank. Behind the servants may be others, this may be referred to also as 'at his feet.'

6. The same could be said of this of Greek society. Iraqi sources and The Talmud confirms this as well. Other scholars may understand that standing behind means to be ashamed to approach his face for he knows her sin and out of respect for this person.
7. Feet are placed behind the person reclining; unclean feet are seen as offensive in Oriental Culture. The OT says to "Triumph is to make one an enemy as a footstool," See Psalm 110:1. Moses in Exodus 3:5, is told to take off unclean shoes at the burning bush. John The Baptist is unworthy to untie Jesus sandals in Luke 3:16.
8. The exterior setting is clear. Jesus is known, the community has heard him. Doors are left open and uninvited are set free to wander. Jesus is reclining low with other guests, but there is something dynamic missing.
9. In this p, Jesus' feet aren't washed and He isn't given a kiss of greeting. Tristram shares to not kiss a person in this culture is a marked sign of contempt, or at least a claim to a much higher social position. Tristram learned this at a banquet in Tunis, where he was being entertained and the guest next to him, told him not to trust the host as he had not been kissed. In this society to greet is the same as to embrace, and well as the embrace of love. The Scholar Windisch, notes that all pious Jews desired a kiss from their Rabbi. Jesus is a Rabbi, hence the lack of the kiss is a glaring omission. The omission of anointing with oil didn't take place either, but was less of an omission even though it's common. See Psalm 23:5 and Deut. 28:40. In this p, the accepted rituals of accepting guests was not only overlooked but callously omitted by a judgmental host.
10. Even in our (Modern Western) homes, there are traditional pleasantries observed at guest's homes. These include;
 - Remarks with invitation to enter.
 - Taking coats and placing them in prepared place.
 - Extend invitation to sit down.

11. However, for Jesus these being omitted for this guest of honor, the insult is unmistakable. Scherer, a longtime resident of the ME in the 1800's stated Simon violated these common customs. The significance will become clear as we continue this study.
12. "The woman of the city, who was a sinner," Many translations are grammatically correct. We can see how Christian ME scholars view this text. Arabic translations note her as actively engaged as a 'sinner' in the city. This gives the story an extra cutting edge. We are given crucial information about her lifestyle, actively engaged in plying her trade in the city. Simon (as we will observe) knows precisely who she is. She is part of a that community (an outcast from its religions groupings). Her identification will come in play later in this p.

IN THE HOUSE OF THE PHARISEE: WOMAN ACTS, SCENE 2

13. There is an inverted action with the three actions of the woman; Read it. now let's describe the action this way;

"She enters, stands at his feet and begins to wet them
 With her tears, and to wipe them with her hair,
 Kisses them, and anoints them with perfume she had brought.

There are 6 actions, let's compare them with Simon's action, 1) Kiss upon entering the house, 2) Washing of feet, 3) Anointing the head with oil.
14. There is reason for inverted parallelism, the first three lines are 3 Greek present tense action and the that last three are past tenses, (Wiped, kissed and anointed). The scholar Ehlen notes inverted parallelism in the Hymn Scroll of the Dead Sea scrolls, and are an important part of the poetry of hymns. Jesus' description of the woman's actions is poetic parallelism. The point is more than artistic interest, when a Biblical author uses parallel lines deliberately, the climax is at the center. The feature here is the woman let down her hair and wept. We will focus on that now.
15. We know that people freely enter and leave at such banquets. When this woman heard of Jesus location, she enters the house. We know from the verb that the woman entered with Jesus or before Him, we know this from the wording, "From the time I came in." The story enables us to know that she knew where Jesus was to be entertained. She bears gifts proceeding w/Him or before Him as she knows Jesus is dining at the Pharisees' house.

16. Her gifts are an expression of devotion in a sacrament of thanksgiving. The anointing of the feet is intentional. She has come prepared. The washing of the feet is not planned as she has nothing to dry them with so she uses her hair. When we accept that she was present at the time of Jesus arrival, it's easy to reconstruct what has triggered her startling action. Jesus is accepted by the community as "Rabbi." Simon addresses him as teacher, which is Luke's word for Rabbi. All guests are treated with great deference in the ME and have always been. We need only to recall the hospitality given by Abraham to the three visitors. Levison, a Hebrew Christian Palestinian describes the meaning;

"One has to ask in the way Simon treated Jesus, What was his motive to do so? When any guest is invited, they expect the same amenities of hospitality. When the guest is a Rabbi, the duty of offering hospitality in its very best manner is easily recognized. But Simon invited Jesus and broke every rule of hospitality. In the East when a person is invited they're given a kiss. In the case of a Rabbi, all the male members wait and kiss their hands. In the house, the first thing given attention is the washing of the guest's feet. None of these civilities were given to Jesus."

17. To think about; What does the woman's treatment, hospitality to Jesus reflect about the desire of her heart? Why do you think that?