

# PARABLES, “THROUGH PEASANTS EYES!”

## Study 7, The Parable of The Two Debtors, Part III. Luke 7:36-50

1. 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.

### **A DIAGOGUE SIMON JUDGES WRONGLY: (Scene 3)**

1. Scene 1 characters are introduced; The Pharisees, Jesus and the woman. The drama is shown in the same order. The Pharisee, he is not a humble host, but a spiritual critic of the validity of the young’s rabbi prophetic claim and the woman’s moving drama of thankfulness, have passed him by.
2. All He sees is an immoral woman who has let her hair down and who is by her touch, defiling one of her guests and a guest not perceptive enough to know it. The next scene is telling, Shakespeare would see it an ‘aside’, indeed it is a ‘soliloquy,’ and very revealing, we can see his real intent. He refers to Jesus as “this,” and the key word is “touching,” or “to light a fire.” The Bible uses this terminology for sexual intercourse. (See Genesis 20:6, Proverbs 9:29, and 1 Cor. 7:1). Obvious this is not intended here, but there are clear sexual overtones. Simon indicates that if Jesus truly were a prophet, He would refuse her attention.
3. Simon has completely misjudged what is happening before him, Jesus does know this woman, they are not the caress of an immoral woman, but the outpouring of love from a repentant woman. Simon does not rejoice at this the evidence of her repentance and feels no remorse as she compensates

his deficiencies and failures. Simon also knows who she is! Jesus' knowledge of her is more evident than the story assumes at the initial contact between them takes place. Simon sees her only as an immoral woman. This is not necessarily immoral on his part, in a ME, Oriental village, immoral women are known and identified by all in the community. This scene is about SIMON'S INDIFFERENCE TOWARD HER RESTITUTION!

4. Ibn-al-Tayyib makes this observation that Jesus accepts Simon's invitation as He hoped Simon would be accepting of her repentance. Ibn-al Tayyib also states that she has had previous contact with Jesus and is showing gratitude for the gift of repentance. He suggests that this woman has talked to the woman of Samaria, recorded in John 4. The woman is making a dramatic turn in her life's orientation as Ibn-al Tayyib makes his point. The story shows us the AUTHENTICITY of her repentance. We hear that she is a resident of the same city as Simon and Simon is familiar with her. If Simon and his religious friends do not accept her repentance, she cannot be restored to the community. Hence, the LOST SHEEP is brought back to the fold and the PRODIGAL SON is returned to his family! Zacchaeus is "also a son of Abraham," and according to Luke 19:9, can no longer be seen as an outsider. Simon needs to see the authenticity of her repentance so she can be RESTORED fellowship in the community. Ibn-al-Tayyib's point may not be true for the first part of this scene, but is spot on here!

Next class; Simon's injustice of still calling her a sinner!

5. At this point Simon makes an affirmation crucial to the story and our understanding of it. He rejects the validity of her repentance, "She is still a sinner." The grim faces around the room in spite of her moving demonstration of sincerity is still rejected as a sinner. What is to be done? The purpose of this parable and the dialogue that follows is a deliberate attempt to break the stylized attitudes towards sinners and righteous dominance in that society and make it possible for this woman to be welcomed back into a loving, caring community.
6. The dialogue turns back to Jesus. A typical "righteous" teacher of any age could be expected to reject the woman. Jesus accepts her full devotion of love even as they are misinterpreted by Simon and his friends. As the dialogue moves to its climax in this brief parable. Jesus says, "Simon, I have something to say to you." Plummer believes Jesus is asking for permission to speak. However, this exact phrase is used in the ME to introduce blunt talk that the listener may not want to hear. This is precisely the idiom and

fits perfectly into the dialogue. Simon indirectly confesses his error as host by addressing Jesus with the title of Rabbi/Teacher. If he is worthy of that title by Simon, he is worthy of that same honor. Jesus' carefully chosen words are a brief parable whose structure we can now examine;

## **A PARABLE (Scene 4)**

*And Jesus said,*

*Two debtors were there*

THE DEBTORS

*Is a certain money lender*

THE MONEY LENDER

*The one owed fifty denarii*

ONE DEBTOR

*The other five hundred*

THE OTHER DEBTOR

*Not being able to pay*

THE DEBTORS

*He freely forgave them*

THE MONEY LENDER

7. As noted in Luke 18:18-30, it's an extended dialogue with a brief parable in the very center. Debtors and money lender appear in the first two lines and again in the last two with a difference. It's very clear. It's simple, and is unintentional and contributes to the overall artistry of the entire passage. The verb to 'freely forgive,' is the Pauline verb 'to offer grace.' The two debtors are level in the need and neither can pay. The same grace is extended to each. The difference between them is set forth in the middle. But in their indebtedness (at the beginning) in the ability to pay and in their need for grace at the end of the parable they stand together.
8. Wordplay here heightens and uses language and gives the dramatic impact. And it's not unique to this passage. At the center is Luke 16:9-13. In the original Aramaic of the 1<sup>st</sup> century, there is a similar word play, the woman is a sinner and the parable is about debtors and creditors. However, the discussion turns on "sin and love." In Aramaic debt and sin are identical. We see this with the Lord's Prayer in Luke 13:2 and Matthew 6:12 and Luke 11:4. Jesus now uses wordplay to compare Simon who is socially in debt and refuses to love and the comparison, both sinners, and the contrast, one loves and the other does not is now the focus of the continuing dialogue.

## **A DIALOGUE SIMON JUDGES RIGHTLY: (Scene 5)**

9. With a form of Socratic method, Simon is led to reason out the conclusion Jesus desires Him to have. Being questioned and Simon realizing he's trapped, can only lamely try to escape with "I suppose." Marshall notes, "Simon is in a trap." While Simon misunderstood the human scene, the

logic presented to him is inescapable. Love in the p is a response to an unmerited favor, indeed a response to pure grace. Having established this principal from the p Jesus now applies it to the actions of the woman and shocks the guest (and the reader) with its boldness. (Remember, a p is an iron fist inside a velvet glove!)

## **IN THE HOUSE OF THE PHARISEE A WOMAN ACTS: (Scene 6)**

10. See verses 7:44ff. Throughout Luke there are series of pairs involving one man and one woman; Luke 4:25-17, they respond to faith differently, Luke 13:10-17, a woman healed on the Sabbath, then in Luke 14:1-6, the same thing happens to a man. The same is seen in Luke 15:3-10, they search for what is lost, a man and a woman. In these parables both are noble examples. But in this example the woman is the noble person (In spite of what the man thought) and the man is ignoble (In spite of his high opinion of himself). In the ME still dominated by men, such dramatic scenes are and were a profound statement about the worth of a woman in a man's society according to Bailey. The shock of praising a woman in male company is bad enough, yet the sharp edge of criticism can be fully understood only in the light of the cultural expectations of the scene. The guest in any society is expected to show appreciation for the hospitality extended to him regardless show meager.
11. In the ME these expectations are solidified in unwritten law. The host is to downgrade the quality of his offerings as inadequate for the rank and nobility of the guest. No matter what is set before him, the guest must say that what is extended to him, he is unworthy. Burton, a 19<sup>th</sup> century traveler and Orientalist, writes the following in his record of his famous trip to Mecca; "Shame is a passage in the East." Your host would blush to point out to you the indecorum of your conduct, and the laws of hospitality oblige him to supply every want of the guest, no matter he bet a '*detenu.*' Burton doesn't even mention a guest pointing out the indecorum of a host's action. Yet in this passage it happens! Edersheim, documents for us the traditional expectations of a noble guest, a guest will acknowledge the trouble the host went through for them. An evil will remark sarcastically, "What trouble he has taken!"