

# PARABLES, “THROUGH PEASANTS EYES!”

Study 11, The Fox, The Funeral and the Furrow, Part I. Luke 9:57-62

1. Read the text, Luke 9:57-62. These three dialogues are often overlooked in discussion of p as they do not fit the story of p as an extended story. Yet Jesus communicates His views by means of concrete comparisons. 2 p/proverbs occur in these dialogues. Each is a ‘mashal’ as defined by 1<sup>st</sup> century Palestinian usage. We choose to include this trilogy under the umbrella of p usage in Jesus’ speech.
2. We interpret Jesus response to the first brash volunteer as a classical use of the p method of communication. These three cameos need to be considered together because of the literary structure of the three forms of a single unit and similar subject matter. We turn our attention to the structure.
3. Louw views this structure as phrase structure and on the traditional exposition of the individual’s words. This is too strong, both are needed, Louw’s explanation needs to consider the culture informs the text, but this does draw attention to the literary structure in the text as is and it is helpful. The analyses above allow a number of interlocking features worthy of not to surface.
4. Very often in the Bible we work with three stanzas (Bailey). Typical, the first and third stanza are linked in a number of special ways. In this case there are four clear points of comparison that establish such linkage. In the first and third stanza the person is a volunteer. He offers to follow. The second person in the middle dialogue is a recruit, he is called by Jesus to follow. Secondly, in the first and third stanza Jesus answers with imagery from the outdoor world. The first is nature and the second is farming practices in the Palestinian countryside. The dialogue in the second one has no p, in its place is a direct command. The imagery here is in the customs of the society, not from nature. Third in the case of the first and third, there is only one statement by each party. The second dialogue has three speeches. Finally, the literary dialogue in the first and third is identical. The ideas follow +Go + a p. By contrast the 2<sup>nd</sup> one is inverted

parallelism, with the themes of Go-Cost +Cost-Go-follow/Proclaim. We see this same structure of the three stanzas as a step parallelism tying the outside stanzas together and the central stanza breaking into inverted parallelism in Luke 15:4-7 (Bailey).

5. In addition to the features that link the first and third dialogues, a number of semantic links tie the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> together. Each ends with a reference to the Kingdom of God. Each person pleads that they are willing, "But first.....". Some features tie all three together. Obviously the themes of Follow+Go+Cost are the focal points in each dialogue. The first is willing to Go and Follow, but has NOT considered the cost. The second is asked to follow. He wants to go home, but is told to go and proclaim the Kingdom. The cost of discipleship is put in the form of a command. The third wants to follow and like the second, wants to go home first. (The old Syriac version has the verb "go" in this text and we suggest that it may be original. In any case it is implied). He, like the first is challenged to consider the cost. At the same time, the first and third are not identical. There is a progression. The first man offers to follow unconditionally and is challenged to consider the cost. The last volunteer seems to have done so. He offers to follow, but with a very specific condition. With all three interlocking parallelism in mind, we examine each dialogue in turn.

#### THE FIRST DIALOGUE: (Luke 9:57-58)

A man said to him,	
'I will follow you	FOLLOW
Where every you go.'	GO
And Jesus said to him,	COST TOO HIGH
"Foxes have hole,	
And the birds of the air have roosts.	
But the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."	

6. The p has no cultural riddles, and it may have two levels of meaning. The first would be disciple represents the force of the mission. He is drawn in to join the community of disciples, no one draws him. Yet his understanding appears shallow. Sa'id notes, "He does not understand that 'follows' means Gethsemane , Golgotha, and the tomb." The idea of following a

rejected, suffering Son of man would come as a jarring shock to any first century Jew. In Daniel, 7:14, "The Son of man is to have dominion, glory and kingdom and, all 'nations, peoples, and languages shall serve him!" The reader of Luke in Luke 9:22 reads that "The Son of Man must suffer." Here the volunteer is not given details, but only a graphic picture of total rejection. The point is not only "You, too may have to suffer privation, and have you considered this? You also, must consider your motives, remember that you are offering to follow a 'rejected leader!" "Roosts," is a better translation than nests, the birds always have roosts, but build nests only at a certain times of the year. The point is (partially) that even the animals and birds have some place to rest, but the Son of man has none.

7. Aside from the obvious level of meaning drawn from the nature of foxes and birds, a political symbol may be involved. T.W. Manson points out that the 'birds of the air,' were an apocalyptic symbol in the intertestamental period referring to gentile nations. The 'fox' was a symbol for the Ammonites, who as Manson says, were a people racially akin to but politically enemies of Israel. In similar fashion, Herod's family (Due to Herod's Idumean parentage was racially mixed and was always seen by the Jewish population of 1<sup>st</sup> century Palestine as being foreign (Stern). Jesus calls Herod Antipas, "that fox," Luke 13:32, Manson writes, "The sense of saying is that everybody is at home in Israel's land, except true Israel. The birds of the air, (Roman overlords) the foxes (Edomite interlopers) have made their position secure. The true Israel is disinherited by them, and if you cast your lot with me and mine with you, you will join the ranks of the dispossessed and must be prepared to serve God under those conditions."
8. In the author's view, the political overtones of the sayings of Jesus are often overlooked. If one lives in the ME where every religious breath has political overtones is obliged to consider some rarely asked questions of the text. The extensive use of p with their somewhat veiled symbols, the cryptic phrase, "Those who have ears, let them hear." So the resisted pressure to make him into a king, the need to cross to the north on various occasions out of a Galilee into non-Jewish provinces and many other passages indicate that a political dimension was constantly a part of the world in which Jesus lived (Manson). Even so here, the oppressed people are seldom allowed to declare publically that they are oppressed.