

# PARABLES, “THROUGH PEASANTS EYES!”

Study 14, The Fox, The Funeral & the Furrow, Part IV. Luke 9:57-62

1. Part of the tension of the dialogue is the assumption of a close relationship between a disciple and his teacher. In the ME this is deep and binding. The Talmud sees the relationship between a father and his son and a master and his disciple as being one. Becoming a student/sage is more than signing up for the course, for the purpose of acquiring information. It is the cementing of a lifelong relationship to a person. With this starting point, Jesus is asserting his authority (the demands of the Kingdom) to take precedence over all other relationships.
2. The person who cannot resolve the tension of conflicting loyalties and keeps turning back to see what the family is ordering is judged “useless” for the Kingdom of God. In summary, the observation that the symbol of plowing is aptly chosen. (Bultmann) The distracted ploughman might catch it on a rock and perhaps break the wooden point, or he might unnecessarily tire the oxen pulling futilely against the plow caught on the rock. Or the plow point will cut back into the previously plowed furrows and destroy previous efforts, or may cut aimlessly into unplowed ground and make the next few furrows difficult. Or he will ruin drainage systems, or damage potential for water absorption or leave the newly planted seeds to birds, etc..
3. Thus the ploughman plows in harmony with work done, work to be accomplished and in teamwork with plow and ox. It’s not too much to say that past, present and future are kept in delicate harmony in the immediate task at hand. A ploughman distracted by divided loyalty will not maintain that harmony. He will not only be non-productive, but destructive in this context. The dialogue is open ended. Pressed with clear-cut yet painful alternatives the 2<sup>nd</sup> volunteer must decide. He volunteered with the apparent confidence that loyalty to the kingdom will be accepted as secondary to his family. The parable of the plow wipes out that assumption. What will he do? We are not told. Each listener/reader must respond.

4. In conclusion and summary it is appropriate to try to focus on what specific decision/response the original listener is pressed to make and what theological motifs comprise the impact of each dialogue.

A. THE FIRST DIALOGUE:

The Original listener/participant of the dialogue is pressed to consider something like the following;

- a. The son of man is not the victorious figure you expect. He walks the way of sorrows. Are you willing to walk that way with him?
- b. The theological cluster of motifs includes the following;
  1. Would-be disciples of Jesus at times fail to consider the serious cost of discipleship.
  2. Jesus is the son of man, he does not fulfill his ministry in power and acclaim, but in rejection and humiliation. (Theology of the Cross!)
  3. Would-be disciples are not accepted until they have consciously decided to pay the price of following a rejected leader.
  4. There is a centripetal force in mission. Some disciples are attracted into the company of the faithful.

B. THE SECOND DIALOGUE:

- a. The recruit is challenged with something like the following;
- b. Loyalty to Jesus and the kingdom He inaugurates is more important to cultural norms of your society.
- c. The theological clusters of the 2<sup>nd</sup> dialogue has the following themes;
  1. Jesus accepts NO authority, but His own.
  2. The cultural demands of the community are not accepted excuses for failure of discipleship (irrespective of how long standing and sacred those demands are).
  3. The "follow me," of Jesus is defined by the command. "Participate in and proclaim the Kingdom of God." Thus Jesus is the unique agent of God through whom obedience to the Kingdom of God is expressed).
  4. There is a centrifugal force in mission. This person is a recruit, not a volunteer. Jesus reaches out to call him.

### C. THE THIRD DIALOGUE:

- a. Jesus challenged this volunteer with the intent of the following.
- b. "My authority is absolute. The authority of your own family (if it conflicts with my authority) is merely a distraction to be avoided if you would be of any use to me/the kingdom."
- c. The theological clusters of the 3<sup>rd</sup> dialogue involves these motives.
  1. The call of the kingdom of God takes precedence over other authority.
  2. The disciple with divided loyalties is a disruptive force in the work the kingdom is unfit for participation in it.
  3. To follow Jesus is not defined as the feeling of a glow of inner light, or perceiving an intellectual insight, but is compared to taking up a strenuous, creative, consuming task like putting one's hand to a plow and joining a team of oxen. (C.S. Lewis, "Mere Christianity.")
  4. Service in the Kingdom of God is synonymous with following Jesus. Thus Jesus is the unique agent of God through whom loyalty to God is expressed. That is to serve/follow Jesus is to serve/follow God.

\*Thus an examination of the literary structure and underlying cultural assumptions that help unlock at least a part of the meaning of these carefully constructed dialogues for the original participants and listeners and for the reader/listener of today.