BTS-5085S
Parables of Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes [B/C]

(draft copy)

Steinbach Bible College
and
The Graduate School of Theology and Ministry
Canadian Mennonite University

Three Credit Hours

Course Syllabus

Semester: Spring, 2014
Time: April 28 – May 2, 2014, 9:00 to 5 pm.
Professor: Arley Loewen (Ph.D. University of Toronto)
Contact Information: al@pamteam.org or 204-320-9825
Location: Steinbach Bible College
Course Description

Jesus lived in a world very different from ours. Without an appreciation of ancient Middle Eastern culture – much of which is similar with traditional Middle Eastern society today – we easily formulate a Jesus according to our western mindset. The course, The Parables of Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes, will help the student of the New Testament to gain a richer and more thorough appreciation of Jesus’ life and teaching.

Course Objectives

- Understand ancient Judean and traditional Middle Eastern cultures / societies
- Interpret Jesus’ parables in light of ancient Judean and traditional Middle Eastern cultures.
- Draw out themes and theological truths from Jesus’ parables.
- Relate the themes and theological truths from the parables to our present-day setting.
- Appreciate how Jesus addresses Israel’s hope and explains God’s kingdom through stories.
- Develop a deeper appreciation of the good news of Jesus as reflected in the parables.

Textbooks – Grad Students


Supplementary Reading Material:


**Daily Schedule:**

**Monday, April 28 … Overview of Culture and Lost Sheep and Lost Sons**
- Introduction – Society, Culture, Judaism … and Parables
- The Lost Sheep – time to rejoice (Lk. 15:1-7)
- Overview of Shame and Honor Worldview
- The Prodigal Sons – From Shame to Honor (Lk. 15:11-32)

**Reading Assignment**

**Tuesday, April 29 … Women, Family, Tribes and Jesus**
- Overview of Gender and Family in 1st Century Palestine
- The Two Debtors - Dignity for Women (Lk. 7:36-50)
- Stories along the Road – Hating Family (Lk. 9:57-62)
- The Good Samaritan – My Tribe and Neighbors (Lk. 10:25-37)

**Reading Assignment:**
Ken Bailey, *Poet and Peasant* and *Through Peasant Eyes*, pp. 27-43, and any three chapters on Bailey's exegesis of the parables. He discusses three parables in *Poet and Peasant* and ten parables in *Through Peasant Eyes*.

**Wednesday, April 20 … Hospitality, Bread and Purity**
- The Great Banquet – From Hostility to Hospitality (Lk. 14:15-24)
- The Bread of Life – Which Patron? (John 6)
- Food, Pollution, and Purity – Kosher Foods (Mark 7:1-23)

**Reading Assignment:**
David deSilva, Honor, *Patronage, Kinship and Purity – Unlocking New Testament Culture*. Submit reflections from one of the three sections: 1) pp. 95-156; 2) 157-240 or 3) 241-316. or

**Thursday, May 1 … Kingdom and Judgment Stories**

- Part One: The Story of Israel
- Part Two: The Story of Jesus
- Part Three: Stories of Jesus, kingdom and judgment stories

**Reading Assignment:**

**Friday, May 2 … Money and Performance**

- The Rich Fool – Wealth and greed (Lk. 12:13-21)
- The Pharisee and Tax Collector – Humility and Public Performance (Lk. 18:9-14)
- Class Presentations

**Reading Assignment:**

For the rest of the required reading, select from the primary or supplementary reading list. This can be completed after the week of classes, due June 10.

**ASSIGNMENTS**

1. **Class attendance and participation (10%):** The student will attend class and participate in class discussion. Each morning and afternoon class is considered one absence. Student participation is based on attendance, group interaction, and general attitude in class.

2. **Daily Reading Reports (25%):** Total required reading of 1,200 pages from the primary reading list to be completed by June 10. During the week of classes, the student is expected to read 50-60 pages per day and submit reading reports. Besides presenting brief summaries of the texts, the student will note observations, reflections, and questions arising from the readings. The student’s reports should reflect thoughtful interaction with the text. The student will submit 1-2 page double-spaced journals to the professor at the beginning of each of the five days of classes. The sixth 1-2 page reflection, due June 10, 2014, will include a statement of all material read. All six reflections will be graded.
3. **Bible Study or Sermon outline (25%)**: The student should choose any parable from the Gospels and prepare a Bible study or sermon notes, ready for presentation. The parable should not be the same one as the one developed in the essay, but it can be one of the parables discussed in class. The study should include an interesting introduction, cultural / situational context of the parable, key theological truths and application.
   a) **Oral Presentation (10%)**: The student will give a five to ten minute presentation on the parable Due: May 2.
   b) **Written Presentation (15%)** Due: June 6, 2014.

4. **Essay (40%)**: The student will choose one of the two topics for their essay:
   a) **Parable Project**: Select a parable(s) of Jesus not discussed in class. Discuss the parable in light of the 1st century situation, the parable’s scriptural context, as well as Middle Eastern cultural and social themes.
      - How does this parable fit into its chapter and the Gospels?
      - How does the parable relate to the religio-political situation of 1st century Judaism?
      - How do Middle Eastern cultural and social themes shed light on this parable?
      - Why did Jesus tell this story? To whom? What was Jesus’ message in the parable?
      - What are some theological and ethical lessons we can learn from this parable?
   b) **Research Project**: Compare and critique N.T. Wright and Ken Bailey’s interpretations of Jesus’ parables. You may want to focus specifically on one parable, notably the prodigal sons or the parables in general.

      Preliminary essay overview due **May 16** (5% of final grade). Final essay due: **July 22, 2014**.
      Length: Approx. 4,000.

**GRADING**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Attendance and Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading Reports</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parable Bible Study (oral and written presentation)</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preliminary Essay Overview</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Essay</td>
<td>35%</td>
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**ACADEMIC POLICIES**

Students should acquaint themselves with the academic regulations of Graduate School of Theology and Ministry at Canadian Mennonite University.

Grading will be marked according to CMU Standard B

A+  95-100
A    88-94
B+   81-81
B    74-80
C+   67-73
C  60-66
D  50-59
F  0-49