The purpose of this course is to develop a critical acquaintance with the parables of the synoptic tradition and to examine ways in which these parables may serve as a model for contemporary preaching. The focus of the course is to examine the history of the interpretation of the parables and contemporary methodology for interpreting the parables towards the goal of becoming responsible, critical interpreters.

Equal attention will be given to methodological rigor and to imaginative development. It is expected that the student will refine both exegetical and hermeneutical skills and that rigor and imagination will be manifest in both.

Grades

1. Regular participation is assumed. Each unexcused absence will reduce one's grade by one-third of a grade point. A student who would have received an A would receive an A-. Absences may be excused for illness, pastoral emergency or extraordinary cause.

2. Grades will be computed as follows:
   a. Exegetical presentation: 20% of course grade
   b. Sermon: 20% of course grade
   c. Parable 10% of course grade
   d. Exegesis Paper 40% of course grade
   e. Class participation 10% of course grade
   f. Completion of all assignments In order to pass the course, all assignments must be completed, even those which are not graded.

3. Please contact the instructor if you have concerns about the class.

4. Required texts:
   (# indicates book available in reference section of library)
   Kurt Aland, Ed., Synopsis of the Four Gospels
   Ronald J. Allen and Clark M. Williamson, Preaching the Gospels without Blaming the Jews
   Barbara E. Reid, Parables for Preachers: Year A
   Barbara E. Reid, Parables for Preachers: Year C
   The Storyteller’s Companion to the Bible: The Parables (vol. 11)
   Eugene L. Lowry, How to Preach a Parable
   Ronald J. Allen, Preaching: An Essential Guide
Monographs (on reserve)
Kenneth Bailey, Poet and Peasant
Kenneth Bailey, Through Peasant Eyes
Madeleine Boucher, The Parables
Philip Culbertson, A Word Fitly Spoken: Context, Transmission, and Adoption of the Parables of Jesus
David Buttrick, Speaking Parables: A Homiletic Guide
John Drury, The Parables in the Gospels
William R. Herzog, Parables as Subversive Speech
Charles Hedrick, Parables as Poetic Fiction
Ivor H. Jones, The Matthean Parables: A Literary and Historical Commentary
Jan Lambrecht, Once More Astonished
Andrew R. Parker, Painfully Clear: The Parables of Jesus
Susan Praeder, The Word in Women’s Worlds
Bernard Brandon Scott, Hear Then the Parable: A Commentary on the Parables of Jesus
David Stern, Parables in Midrash: Narrative and Exegesis in Rabbinic Literature
Clemens Thoma and Michael Wyschogrod, Parable and Story in Judaism and Christianity
Jeffrey T. Tucker, Example Stories: Perspectives on Four Parables in the Gospel of Luke
Dan O. Via, The Parables; their Literary and Existential Dimension
David Wenham, The Parables of Jesus
Claus Westermann, The Parables of Jesus in the Light of the Old Testament
Brad Young, Jesus and His Jewish Parables

One Volume Commentaries with special foci
# Brian Blount, Cain Hope Felder, Clarice Martin, and Emerson B. Powery, eds., True to Our Native Land: An African American New Testament Commentary
Cain H. Felder, Ed., The Original African American Heritage Study Bible
# Deryn Guest, ed., The Queer Bible Commentary
Bruce Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, A Social Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels
Ann Nyland, Study New Testament for Gays, Lesbians, Bi and Transgender
# Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Ed., Searching the Scripture: A Feminist Commentary, Vol. 2
# Carol Newsome and Sharon Ring, Eds., The Women’s Bible Commentary
# Daniel Patte, ed, The Global Bible Commentary
Samuel L. Lachs, A Rabbinic Commentary on the NT

Commentaries on Matthew:
# W.D. Davies and Dale Allison (ICC) # Douglas Hare (Interp.) John Meier (NT Message)
# M. Eugene Boring (NIB) # Daniel Harrington (Sacra Pagina) J.A. Overman (NT in context)
Warren Carter # William Hill (NCB) # Donald Senior (Abingdon NTC)
* Robert Gundry # Thomas Long (WBC)
* Donald Hagner (Word) # Ulrich Luz

Commentaries on Luke:
# Fred Craddock (Interp.) # I. Howard Marshall (NICG NT)
# R. Alan Culpepper (NIB) * John Nolland (Word)
Frederick Danker # Sharon Ringe (NBC)
C.F. Evans (TPI NT Com) Charles Talbert
# Joseph Fitzmyer (Anchor) # Robert Tannehill (Abingdon NTC)
# Luke Timothy Johnson (Sacra Pagina)
Tuesday, May 19

Snack: __ Ron Allen ________________

Prayer
Welcome to the course
Each student will please introduce himself or herself by telling:
   a. Your name
   b. How far along you are in your degree program
   c. Your denomination or Christian movement
   d. Your congregation or
   e. A little bit about your prior life (where you grew up, major influences on you)
   f. An association you have with the parables
   g. A hope you bring to this course
Overview of the course and selection of assignments and snacks

Wednesday, May 20

Snack: ____________________________

Discussion of Exegetical Method for Interpreting Parables
   Read: Russell L. Pregeant, Engaging the New Testament, “Some Ways of Reading the
          Bible,” 13-42.
   Read Appendixes 1 and 2, “Possible Outline for Studying a Parable”
   Visit to Library to get acquainted with bibliographical resources
   Library Time: you will have some time to look for resources in the library.

Thursday, May 21

The history of the interpretation of the parables. (Read the materials listed below)

1. The meaning of parabole, mashal and nimshal.
   Read: The Storyteller’s Companion to the Bible, vol. 11, pp. 13-18

2. Parables in the Hebrew Bible
   II Samuel 12:1-9
   Isaiah 5:1-73.

3. Parables in the apocalyptic tradition
   II Esdras 4, esp. 13-21 (in the Apocrypha section of the Harper Collins Study Bible)
   II Baruch 22-23
   I Enoch 38-434.

4. Parables in the Rabbinic Traditions
   Tractate Shabbath 153a
   Tractate Sanhedrin 91a-b
   Tractate Berakoth 61b
   Midrash on Exodus 43:7
   Midrash on Exodus 48:15.
5. Parables in the synoptic tradition (Gospel Parallels)
   The triple tradition: the mustard seed (Mark 4:30-32/ Matt. 13:31-32/
   Q:  The great supper (Matt. 22:1-10/Lk. 14:16-24/Gospel of Thomas
       92:10-35) (par. 90)
   Q:  The lost sheep (Matt. 18:12-14/Lk. 15:3-7/Gospel of Thomas
       98:22-27) (par. 133)
   M:  The great fish (Matt. 13:47-50/Gospel of Thomas 81:28-82:3 (par. 102)
   L:  The rich fool (Luke. 12:16-20/Gospel of Thomas 92:3-10) (par. 156)

6. The allegorical tradition of the early church
   Augustine, *Quaestiones Evangeliorum* II 19

   The parables and their interpretation in the modern era.

1. The break with the allegorical tradition
   Adolf Juelicher

2. The search for the setting of the parables in the life of the historical Jesus
   Joachim Jeremias
   C.H. Dodd (read his definition of the parable, *The Parables of the Kingdom*, pp. 16-17)

3. The revolution in our understanding of language

4. The contemporary "aesthetic approach" to the parables through literary criticism and other
   contemporary approaches
   Amos Wilder
   Read: Paul Ricoeur, "Listening to the Parables of Jesus"
   Read: Walter Wink, Appendix Two, "On Parables"

5. The interpretation of the parables in the light of their canonical context

Friday, May 22

**Note: Class meets from 9:00 am to 10:30 am today**

Snack:  **No Snack Today**

Case studies:  The Parables in Mark
   Read:  Mark 4:1-34, 12:1-12;
   Read:  *The Storyteller’s Companion to the Bible*, pp. 21-41

Tuesday, May 26: Preaching from the Parables

Snack:  

Read: Ronald Allen, *Preaching: An Essential Guide*

Review: Eugene Lowery, *Preaching the Parables*
The sermon as parabolic in character
   Read: Ronald Allen, "Form Criticism"
   Read: Thomas G. Long, "Preaching on the Parables of Jesus"
   Read: Paul Scott Wilson, "The Story and the Sermon"
   Read: Fred B. Craddock, "The Storyteller" (pay very careful attention to this)

Theological considerations that must be taken into account in the movement from the text to sermon (criteria of appropriateness, intelligibility, and moral credibility)

Other uses of the parables in the life of the church
   Read: Mary C. Boys, "Parabolic Ways of Teaching"

Wednesday, May 27

Snack: ______________________________________

Exegetical presentations with responses and discussion
   Each presentation should be about 20 minutes.

1. Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43, the wheat and the tares
   Read: Reid, Year A, 91-118; The Storyteller’s Companion to the Bible, pp. 42-47; Allen and Williamson, pp. 59-61
   Presentation: _____________________________________________

2. Matthew 13:31-33, the leaven
   Read: The Storyteller’s Companion to the Bible, pp. 48-51; Allen and Williamson; pp. 61-62.
   Reid, Year A, 91-118.
   P: _____________________________________________

3. Matthew 13:44-46, the treasure and the pearl
   Read: The Storyteller’s Companion to the Bible, pp. 53-56; Allen and Williamson; pp. 61-62; Reid, Year A, 119-130.
   P: _____________________________________________

4. Matthew 13:47-50, the great fish
   Read: The Storyteller’s Companion to the Bible, pp. 58-61; Reid, Year A, 119-130.
   P: _____________________________________________

5. Matthew 18:12-14, the Matthean lost sheep
   Read: The Storyteller’s Companion to the Bible, pp. 62-65; Reid, Year A, 247-255.
   P: _____________________________________________

6. Matthew 18:23-25, the unforgiving servant
   Read: The Storyteller’s Companion to the Bible, pp. 67-72; Allen and Williamson, pp. 71-72; Reid, Year A, 131-143.
   P: _____________________________________________
7. Matthew 20:1-16, the laborers in the vineyard
   Read: The Storyteller’s Companion to the Bible, pp. 73-79; Allen and Williamson, pp. 72-74; Reid, Year A, 143-154.
P: ____________________________________________________

Thursday, May 28

Snack: ________________________________

Exegetical presentations with responses and discussion
Each presentation should be about 20 minutes.

8. Matthew 22:1-14, Dressed for the feast
   Read: The Storyteller’s Companion to the Bible, pp. 8-93; Allen and Williamson, pp. 76-78; Reid, Year A, 177-188.
P: ____________________________________________________

9. Matthew 25:1-13, the ten maidens
   Read: The Storyteller’s Companion to the Bible, pp. 100-106; Allen and Williamson, pp. 82-83; Reid, Year A, 189-200.
P: ____________________________________________________

10. Matthew 25:14-30, the talents
    Read: The Storyteller’s Companion to the Bible, pp. 107-112; Allen and Williamson, pp. 83-85; Reid, Year A, 201-222
    P: ____________________________________________________

11. Matthew 25:31-46, the sheep and the goats
    Read: The Storyteller’s Companion to the Bible, pp. 113-120; Allen and Williamson, pp. 85-86; Red, Year A, pp. 223-245.

12. Luke 12:13-21, the rich fool
    Read: Allen and Williamson, pp. 225-227; Reid, Year C, 133-144.
P: ____________________________________________________

13. Luke 14:15-24, the great banquet
    Read: Allen and Williamson, pp. 225-227; Reid, Year C, 309-318.
P: ____________________________________________________

Friday, May 29

Exegetical presentations, responses and discussion
Each presentation should be about 20- minutes.

Class will meet in B-29 Today

Snack: ________________________________
14. Luke 14:28-32, the tower builder and the campaign planner
   Read: Allen and Williamson pp. 233-234; Reid, 167-176.
P: ____________________________________________________

15. Luke 11:5-8, the friend at midnight
   Read: The Storyteller’s Companion to the Bible, pp. 127-132; Allen and Williamson, pp. 224-225; Reid, Year C, 119-132.
P: ____________________________________________________

16. Luke 15:8-10, the woman and the lost coin
   Read: The Storyteller’s Companion to the Bible, pp. 133-138; Allen and Williamson, pp. 234-235; Reid, Year C, 177-193.
P: ____________________________________________________

17. Luke 15:11-32 the parent and the two children
   Read: The Storyteller’s Companion to the Bible, pp. 139-145; Allen and Williamson, pp. 197-198; 70-90, 468-471; Reid, Year C, 177-192; Beavis, 98-120.
P: ____________________________________________________

18. Luke 16:19-31, the rich person and Lazarus
P: ____________________________________________________

19. Luke 18:1-8, the widow and the unjust judge
   Read: The Storyteller’s Companion to the Bible, pp. 158-163; Allen and Williamson, pp. 241-242; Reid, Year C, 227-236.
P: ____________________________________________________

20. Luke 18:9-14, the Pharisee and the tax collector
   Read: The Storyteller’s Companion to the Bible, pp. 164-170; Reid, Year C, 237-248.
P: ____________________________________________________

Monday, June 1

Each preacher needs to email her or his sermon to other class members by 7:00 pm on the evening before the sermon is discussed in class.

7:00 PM: Preachers for Tuesday, put their sermons into email.

Tuesday, June 2

Snack: ____________________________________________

Sermons or Bible Study Outlines

Each student will prepare a written sermon or a written Bible study outline. Please photocopy it in sufficient numbers for each person in the class to have a copy. Bring copies to class on the day you are assigned below. We do not have time to preach the sermons aloud or to engage in a Bible
study. We will have the opportunity to read the material and to discuss it. You will prepare your sermon or your study on the text on which you did your exegesis.

One class member is assigned to respond to each sermon. The respondent should be prepared to speak for about five minutes using the questions in *Preaching: An Essential Guide*, pp. 118-119 as a guide.

1. ____________________________
   Respondent: ____________________________

2. ____________________________
   Respondent: ____________________________

3. ____________________________
   Respondent: ____________________________

4. ____________________________
   Respondent: ____________________________

5. ____________________________
   Respondent: ____________________________

6. ____________________________
   Respondent: ____________________________

7. ____________________________
   Respondent: ____________________________

7:00 PM Preachers for Wednesday put their sermons into email.

**Wednesday, June 3**

Snack: ____________________________

8. ____________________________
   Respondent: ____________________________
7:00 PM: Preachers for Thursday, put their sermons into email.

Thursday, June 4

Snack: ________________________________.

14. _______________________________________

Respondent: _______________________________________

15. _______________________________________

Respondent: _______________________________________

16. _______________________________________

Respondent: _______________________________________

17. _______________________________________

Respondent: _______________________________________

18. _______________________________________

Respondent: _______________________________________
Friday, June 5

Each person needs to write an original parable. The parable should be designed to help the class (or a congregation) encounter some aspect of the gospel in a parabolic way. Each student will read her or his parable. Please bring photocopies of your parable in sufficient numbers for each person to have a copy.

Perhaps we could bring food for a pot luck lunch (Luke 14:16-24; Matthew 22:1-14) to conclude our reading of the parables.

Friday, June 8, 12:00 noon

Exegetical papers due in Ron Allen’s office or in Ron Allen’s email.

Please write no more than twelve pages of double spaced type, in the twelve point font, and with normal margins. The paper can be prepared according to any standard format (e.g. Turabian or MLA Style Sheet).

The paper will be returned to you within one week.
Appendix 1

POSSIBLE OUTLINE FOR STUDying A PARABLE, ORGANizing A CLASS PRESENTATION AND WRITING A PAPER

NB: you must be concise. Approximate times of various parts in parentheses ( ).

This outline could probably also serve as an outline for your twelve page paper. Approximate number of pages in brackets [].

You want to help us recognize what the parable asked its hearers in the worlds of Matthew and Luke to believe and do, and, through conversation with the parable and our own convictions and contexts, what we can believe and do.

Please read:
Barbara E. Reid, Parables or Preachers, Year A, 14-26.

For the in-class presentation of 10 minutes, you are asked to give the instructor an outline of your remarks and a bibliography. The bibliography should include at least the following:
2 articles from scholarly journals,
References from the books required for course (The Storyteller’s Companion to the Bible, ; Allen and Williamson, Reid),
3 articles from Bible dictionaries,
2 monographs on the parable,
1 of the one-volume commentaries with special foci,
2 commentaries from the list of commentaries on Matthew and Luke.

This outline is provided to you as a "place to start' and not as a formula to be rigidly followed in the preparation of your exegesis.

Remember two things: first, we are interested in your own analysis of the parable. We can read the observations of noted (and unnoted) scholars. Do not neglect the guild of Biblical Interpreters, of course, but give priority to your own interaction with the text. Second, the goal of the exegesis is to determine the meaning of the passage in the gospel in which it is found and to make a theological assessment of the passage and its significance (or nonsignificance) for the contemporary world.

The instructor wants to see a fully developed outline of the report with a bibliography. I particularly recommend that you look at the volumes in the Word Biblical Commentary for review of scholarship and attention to detail. You will also be helped by New Testament Abstracts (available in the Library's periodical collection), by the ATLA database on the computer in the library, as well as by Guenter Wagner, An Exegetical Bibliography of the NT: Matthew and Mark.

Although the issues below are listed sequentially, they will mutually inform each other. It will not be possible to prepare one's report simply by engaging each of the issues suggested here, one after another. One must synthesize the discoveries and the data.
Phase One: Exegesis of Social Location of you as Interpreter and of the Text in its Larger Social and Literary Contexts

1. Why did you become interested in this parable? (30 secs) [1 short par]

2. Describe your social, theological, ideological location and how that orients you to receive the parable. (1 min) [1 par]

3. Summarize your preassociations with the parable. Naïve questions, memories, expectations for what it means, etc. (1 min) [1 short par]

Phase Two: Exegesis of the Larger Historical and Literary Setting of the Text

4. What do you understand as the historical and social situation for which Matthew or Luke told this story? What was going on in the Matthean or Lukan communities and in the larger world that helps you understand this story. (Concentrate on social dynamics and not on date, authorship, etc). Apocalyptic expectation often plays a role here, along with community conflict. (1 min) 3/4 page]

5. How does the preceding literary context set the stage for your parable? Does it suggest a theme or motif on which to focus in the parable (1 min) (3/4 page)

Phase Three: Detailed Exegesis of the Parable

*Throughout this part of the presentation, draw on materials from the First Testament, apocalyptic Jewish texts (and other second temple texts) and on material from the rabbis (Mishnah, Tosefta, Talmud, Midrash, etc.) and on cultural associations particular to world of first century.

You may need to do word-studies of elements of the setting, the characters or their words and actions, key words in the plot, etc.

6. Alert us to associations first century listeners would have had to the setting. (1 min) [one-half page]

7. Go through the parable segment by segment telling us how people in antiquity would have responded to the characters and the plot. This is the heart of the presentation and will usually call for word studies that draw from the First Testament, other Jewish literature (often, especially, apocalypticism), and other cultural associations, and that connect the characters and actions to other passages and themes in either the gospel of Matthew or of Luke (10 mins) [5-7 pages]. Pay attention to what the characters say and do and to how these actions are intended to affect the reader/listener. This is the heart of the assignment.

8. Pay particular attention in no. 7 above to social science criticism and to points at which it may help us recognize ancient cultural assumptions (1 min) [1/2 to 1 page].

9. Pay particular attention in no. 7 above to how Jewish sources and themes illumine the story. Are there rabbinc parallels, or rabbinc associations with the characters, plot, or symbols? (1 min) [1/2 to 1 page].
10. Identify issues raised by ideology criticism (1/2 min to 1 min) [1/2 to 1 page]. For example, how does the text portray Jewish people, practices, and institutions?

11. Make a summary statement of what the parables invites its hearers to believe and do from the perspective of the historical context of the community of Matthew or Luke. (30 secs) [1/4 page]

Phase Four: Theological Analysis and Hermeneutical Possibilities

12. Ask the following questions of what the parable asks the community to believe and do. (2 mins) [1 page]

   a. Is what the parable asks the reader to believe and appropriate to your understanding of the gospel? (i.e. is it consistent with your deepest believes about God and God’s purposes).
   b. Is what the parable asks the reader to believe intelligible? (i) understandable, can you get the point? (ii) consistent with other things you believe? (iii) seriously believable? (NB: many of the parables seek to prompt people to witness faithfully in preparation for the second coming. You need to be clear about what you “seriously believe” about this event.
   c. Is what the parable asks the reader to believe morally plausible, that is, does it ask you treat everyone in its world with love and justice?

13. Based on your theological analysis of the parable, name your hermeneutical relationship.

   a. When appropriate, intelligible, morally plausible, you can ask how the parable instructs the church today. Can you identify a good analogy between the world of the parable and our world?
   b. When the parable contains elements that are inappropriate to the gospel or (more likely) unintelligible or partially intelligible, you may need to criticize some elements but then probe for the deeper intention of the story as a whole. You may be able to identify an analogy between the world of the parable and our world, or/and the function of the parable may serve as a lure for our world.
   c. If the parable is largely inappropriate to the gospel, unintelligible, and morally implausible, you need to state why and offer a positive theological alternative.

13. Suggest a possible idea for developing a sermon or Bible study.
Appendix 2

FULLER OUTLINE OF STEPS

This is a slightly fuller outline of the steps for preparing the in-class presentation and exegesis paper.

Phase One: Exegesis of You as Interpreter (your social location)

1. Pray over the parable and your interaction with the parable.
2. Make a commitment with yourself to listen to the text, to the world, to your theological convictions, to your heart. Note how your theological and social locations predisposes you towards the parable.
3. Read the text quickly to yourself.
4. By free association, jot down things sparked by this text: memories, ideas, questions, experiences, insights, naive musings. Keep a record of these things.

Phase Two: Exegesis of the Historical and Literary Settings

5. Read the text again.
6. Read it aloud. Read it aloud from the different points of view represented in the text, e.g. from the perspectives of the different characters, the audience named in the text, the actual audience. How does your hearing of the text seem to change with each change of perspective?
7. Be sure that you are dealing with a meaningful unit of interpretation, knowing where the parable starts and where it ends.
8. Review what can be hypothesized about the historical situation of the community to which the gospel was written. What was happening in that community that the parable addressed?
9. Take note of the literary context in which the parable is found.
   a. What is happening in the preceding context?
   b. What is happening in the following context?
   c. Where does the parable fit into this context?
      (NB: This question is important for all parables, especially for the Lukan parables.)

Phase Two: Detailed Study of the Parable

10. Go through the parable word by word and make sure that you understand the meanings of the words in the Biblical world generally and specifically in the literary corpus in which the parable is found (e.g. Matthew, Mark, Luke-Acts). What would these words evoke in the minds and feelings of the listeners? Valuable resources: Harper's Bible Dictionary, the Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (especially the Supplementary Volume), Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (often warped by anti-Semitism), the commentaries.
11. Consider how Social science criticism alerts you to cultural mores and forces that may have been at work in the first century that we may not notice so easily today. Of particular help here: Malina and Rohrbaugh, Social Science Commentary on the Gospels.

12. Identify the setting in the story. Does this setting have a representative/symbolic function in the gospel in which the parable is found? Are similar settings found elsewhere in the gospel?

13. Identify the characters in the story. How do the characters appear in the parable? Do similar characters or motifs appear elsewhere in the gospel? Do these characters have representative/symbolic function in the gospel?

Questions 14 and 15 investigate the plot of the parable:

14. What is the situation at the beginning of the story? What is the setting? The circumstance? Who are the characters "onstage"? What do we know about each of these things? Given this information, what does the listener naively expect to happen, given the assumptions of her or his world?

15. What is the situation at the end of the story? What is the setting? The circumstance? Who are the characters onstage? What has happened to bring about this situation? In other words, how has the plot of the parable unfolded?

16. In the process of the parable, what has happened to the listener's expectation? Often a "twist" has occurred, a reversal or other change of expectation.

17. What effect would this parable have had on the listeners in the communities of Matthew and Luke? What did the gospel writers hope would happen? As you read the parable, what do you:
   a. see?
   b. hear?
   c. smell?
   d. touch?
   e. taste?
   f. feel emotionally?

18. Note possible stories from Jewish literature that might be similar to your parable. What are points of similarity and difference? Does awareness of the Jewish story(ies) enhance your interpretation?

19. Pay careful attention to how Jewish people appear in the setting of your parable, how Jewish characters appear in the story itself. If your parable deals with Jewish people or practices, what attitude does it manifest? Pay careful attention to whether Matthew or Luke may be grinding an ideological axe against Jewish people.

Phase Three: Theological Analysis and Hermeneutical Appropriation

20. Make a theological analysis of the parable. For preaching, this is utterly crucial, for it establishes the preacher's relationship to the text and determines the hermeneutic to be employed in the sermon.
   a. What does the parable ask you to believe concerning God, human beings, and the world?
   b. Is what the parable asks you to believe appropriate to the gospel?
c. Is what the parable asks you to believe intelligible?
   i. Can you understand it easily?
   ii. Is it logically consistent with other things Christians believe and do?
   iii. Does it make sense from the perspective of the way in which the congregation understands the world today?

d. Is what the parable asks you to believe and do morally plausible?
e. Can the preacher preach the gospel through the text? Can the preacher preach the gospel through some parts of the text but not others? Does the preacher need to preach the gospel against the text?

Note: Many of the standard works in homiletics assume that the text can be preached. This proposal does not make that assumption but rather assumes that the parables themselves (once understood) must be subjected to theological analysis.

21. If the theological analysis of the text ends on a negative note, namely that the text is inappropriate to the gospel and that the preacher must preach the gospel against the parable, then the preacher's hermeneutical responsibility in the sermon will be to show why this is the case and then to figure out a way to move from that analysis to the actual preaching of the good news of the gospel itself.

22. If the theological analysis of the text ends on a positive note, namely showing that the text is appropriate to the gospel and that the gospel can be preached through the text, then the preacher's hermeneutical responsibility is to find points of contact between the world addressed by the text and the world of the modern listeners. The hermeneutic of analogy is especially useful here: in what ways is our "world" similar to the world that is addressed by the parable? What aspects of our world might be addressed by the parable?

23. Does the movement of the parable (its shape, design, plot, logic) suggest a movement for the sermon?

Remember two things:
   a. In this class, the purpose of preaching on a parable is not to "explain the parable" per se but to let the parable happen again to the class listeners. We want the modern listeners to have an experience in the process of hearing the sermon that is akin to that of the original listeners. If the parable is one of a reversal of expectations that comes to a conclusion that was very surprising, we would like for something similar to happen to the modern listener in the course of hearing the sermon.
   b. There is no single "patented" way for this to happen. It can happen in any number of ways.

24. Toward this end, the following steps may be useful:
   a. State very clearly what you hope will happen to the listener as a result of hearing the sermon. Write this down.
   b. Make a "plot" of the sermon that will enable the sermon to develop in such a way as to achieve what you hope will happen.
      1. Where will the sermon start?
      2. Where will the sermon end?
      3. What needs to happen as the sermon moves from start to finish, and what will you include in the sermon (e.g., rhetorical devices, literary devices, metaphors, images, stories, questions, etc.) to help that movement take place.

25. As you are designing and constructing the sermon, always ask "how will this be received in the consciousness of the hearer?"