

## Tuesday Bible Study: The Parable Known as the Prodigal Son

Dingmans Ferry UMC (Pastor Sung)

### 1. Opening Prayer

### 2. Intro: Interpreting the Parable

#### a. Allegory

“God is a king and a human is a servant.”

This method intends to keep the biblical interpretation sacred.

The Old Testament is the signifier and the New Testament is the signified.

More mystical than literal interpretations.

Ex) Augustine interpreted the debtor with 1,000 talents as the sinner with 1,000 sins.

Martin Luther interpreted the Good Samaritan as Jesus

#### b. Historical Criticism

Focused on the eschatology (the arrival of the Kingdom of God)

The parables describe the real life of Jesus, the people, or the churches

#### c. Literature Criticism

Focused on the universal humanism

Signs, language, and similes make images of revelation

#### d. Metaphor

God is like a king and a human is like a servant.

Parables are the new language showing various meanings

More than an ethical teaching.

Speaking the language of the truth

Question: can you find out any parable that fits any of those above?

### 3. Components of Parables

Figurative speech: “The Kingdom of heaven is like...”

Contemporary custom in speech: “Master, I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed.” (Matt. 25:24)

Repetition and simplicity: Matt 20:1-16

Conflicts with mythical thoughts and surprises

Question: can you find out a good example of each

#### 4. Let us read Luke 15:11-32

- a. What do you think the main topic of this story?
- b. Do you think the topic is similar to the previous parables in this chapter?
- c. Can you tell some differences between this parable and the two previous ones?
- d. How do you think the first audience of this parable would respond to this parable?  
Do you think they would consider themselves as the first son in this parable?
- e. Is there anything that surprises you in this story?
- f. Sirach 33:20-21, the Jewish book of wisdom, says, “Let neither son nor wife, neither brother nor friend, have power over you as long as you live. While breath of life is still in you, let no one take your place. Do not give your wealth to another, lest you must plead for support yourself.” Regarding this, how do you see the father in this parable?
- g. What do you think made the younger son decide to go back to the father’s house?
- h. Reading verses 18 and 19, how do you think the son imagined his father? And do you see any irony in these verses?
- i. In this entire story, how do you think the readers would imagine the father?
- j. Compare the old and the young sons. What are different and similar?
- k. Can you interpret this story regarding the kingdom of God?

#### 5. Closing Prayer