

McMaster Divinity College  
Winter Semester 2015

STORIES OF THE KINGDOM: PREACHING THE PARABLES OF JESUS

MS 2XN3 Professional Degree (Greek Credit)

MS 3XN3 Professional Degree (non-Greek Credit)

MS 6XN6 Research Degree

Saturdays 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

January 10, January 24,

February 7, March 21

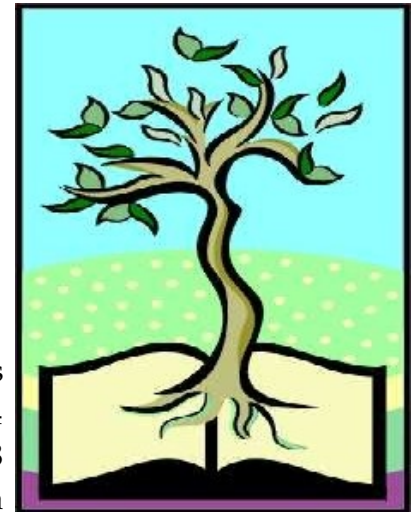
Location: **TBA**

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Divinity College Room 214

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## Course Description

For two thousand years, the parables of Jesus have captured the imagination of his disciples, enticing us with their vision of God's reign and beguiling us with their combination of outward simplicity and provocative inner complexity. For Christian preachers, teachers, and evangelists, as well as for their audiences, the parables reveal the mind of Christ; for postmodern hearers in particular, Jesus' parables present his teaching in an accessible and narrative form, engaging us and inviting our response. This course will offer an intensive literary and theological exploration of the parables as resources for the teaching and preaching ministry of the Christian church. Together we will seek to discover their meaning both for Jesus' day and for today, listening to the voice of Jesus in the gospels and to each other's voices as class members present and discuss their own sermons.

**Specializations:**    Biblical Studies        Christian Worldview        Pastoral Studies

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## Course Objectives

*KNOWING:*

- ▶ To provide an overview of parables as a literary genre.
- ▶ To examine individual parables within their respective social, historical, theological, and literary contexts.
- ▶ To explore appropriate methods and contexts for preaching the parables of Jesus, and their impact on style and presentation.

*BEING:*

- ▶ To reflect on spiritual and ministerial identity in relation to the parables of Jesus and their presentation of God's reign.
- ▶ To help students identify their preferred style or styles of preaching, and gain confidence in public presentation.
- ▶ To be formed as a community of learning, discipleship, and mutual accountability.

*DOING:*

- ▶ To develop evaluative skills through peer evaluation.
- ▶ To offer practice in scriptural exegesis (using the Greek text as appropriate).
- ▶ To develop facility in the composition and delivery of sermons.

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**Course Schedule:**

Saturday, January 10

9:00 Proclamation and Covert Meaning

*Reading:* Gowler, *What Are They Saying*, 1–103

*Supplementary:* Longenecker, *Challenge*, 3–75

10:30 Jesus' Use of Parables and its Background

1:00 Parables of God's Present Reign

*Reading:* Longenecker, *Challenge*, 79–147

*Parables:* Sower and Seed (Matt 13:1–9, 18–23//Mark 4:1–9, 13–20 //Luke 8:4–8, 11–15)

The Growing Seed (Mark 4:26–29)

The Mustard Seed (Matt 13:31–32//Mark 4:30–32//Luke 13:18–19)

The Wheat and the Weeds (Matt 13:24–30, 36–43)

The Leaven (Matt 13:33//Luke 13:20–21)

Treasure in a Field (Matt 13:44)

The Pearl (Matt 13:45–46)

The Fishnet (Matt 13:47–50)

Saturday, January 24

*Exegesis Essay due*

9:00 Parables of Grace and Mercy

*Reading:* Longenecker, *Challenge*, 199–216

*Parables:* The Prodigal (Luke 15:11–32)  
The Two Debtors (Luke 7:41–43)  
The Lost Sheep (Luke 15:1–7)  
The Lost Coin (Luke 15:8–10)

1:00 Parables on Discipleship and Prayer

*Reading:* Longenecker, *Challenge*, 240–262; 286–305

*Parables:* The Two Builders (Matt 7:24–27//Luke 6:47–49)  
The Tower Builder and the Warring King (Luke 14:28–33)  
The Unworthy Servant (Luke 17:7–10)  
The Labourers in the Vineyard (Matt 20:1–16)  
The Friend at Midnight (Luke 11:5–8)  
The Widow and the Judge (Luke 18:1–8)  
The Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Luke 18:9–14)

Saturday, February 7

*History of Interpretation Essay due*

9:00 Parables on Wealth and Social Responsibility

*Reading:* Longenecker, *Challenge*, 217–239; 263–285

*Parables:* The Ungenerous Debtor (Matt 18:21–35)  
The Rich Fool (Luke 12:13–21)  
The Wedding Guests (Luke 14:7–14)  
The Compassionate Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37)  
The Crafty Manager (Luke 16:1–13)  
Lazarus at the Gate (Luke 16:19–31)

1:00 Parables of Judgement and Final Judgement

*Reading:* Longenecker, *Challenge*, 151–195

*Parables:* The Two Sons (Matt 21:28–32)  
The Wicked Tenants (Matt 21:33–46//Mark 12:1–12//Luke 20:9–19)  
The Wedding Banquet (Matt 22:1–14//Luke 14:15–24)  
The Barren Fig Tree (Luke 13:6–9)  
Wise and Foolish Bridesmaids (Matt 25:1–13)

The Talents/Pounds (Matt 25:14–30//?Luke 19:11–27//Mark  
13:33–37)  
The Sheep and Goats (Matt 25:31–46)

Saturday, March 21

*Sermon Series due*

Student Sermons (sign-up sheet distributed on first day of class)

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## Course Requirements

### A. Resources

#### 1. Textbooks (on reserve at Mills Memorial Library)

David B. Gowler, *What Are They Saying About the Parables?* New York: Paulist, 2000.  
Mills Reserve BT 375.2 .G69 2000

Richard N. Longenecker, ed. *The Challenge of Jesus' Parables*. McMaster New  
Testament Studies. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.  
Mills Reserve BT 375.2 .C45 2000

Required textbooks for this class are available from the College's book service, READ On Bookstore (MDC Room 145). Texts may be purchased on the first day of class. Other book services may also carry the texts. For advance purchase, you may contact:

READ On Bookstore	E-mail: <a href="mailto:books@readon.ca">books@readon.ca</a>
304 The East Mall, Suite 100	<a href="http://www.readon.ca">http://www.readon.ca</a>
Etobicoke, ON	Tel: (416) 620-2934
M9B 6E2	FAX: (416) 622-2308

Students should bring to class a parallel text of the Gospels, e.g.:

Aland, Kurt, ed. *Synopsis of the Four Gospels: Greek-English Edition of the Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum*. New York: United Bible Societies, 1982.  
[Recommended for students enrolled for advanced Greek credit and mandatory for research degree students]

Funk, Robert W., ed. *New Gospel Parallels: Volume One, The Synoptic Gospels*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985.

Throckmorton, Burton H., ed. *Gospel Parallels: A Comparison of the Synoptic Gospels/New Revised Standard Version*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1992.

2. Additional resources available on reserve

Blomberg, Craig L. *Preaching the Parables: From Responsible Interpretation to Powerful Preaching*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004. MILLS BT 375.3 .B57 2004

Buttrick, David. *Speaking Parables: A Homiletic Guide*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000. MILLS BT 375.2 .B89 2000

Duke, Paul Simpson. *Parables: A Preaching Commentary*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2005. MILLS BT 375.3 .D85 2005

Hultgren, Arland J. *The Parables of Jesus: A Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000. MILLS BT 375.2 .H78 2000

Kissinger, Warren S. *The Parables of Jesus: A History of Interpretation and Bibliography*. Metuchen, NJ; London: Scarecrow, 1979. MILLS BT 375.2 .K56

Lischer, Richard. *Reading the Parables*. Interpretation. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2014. (On order)

Snodgrass, Klyne. *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008. MILLS BT 375.3 .S66 2008

Stiller, Brian C. *Preaching Parables to Postmoderns*. Fortress Resources for Preaching. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005. MILLS BT 375.3 .S75 2005

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B. Assignments % of Final Grade

1. Attendance and Peer Evaluation

Due to the scheduling of this course into four Saturday sessions, attendance on the part of all participants is critical to the formation of a functional learning community. Attendance is a course requirement for the whole of March 21, since presentation and peer-evaluation of student sermons is scheduled for that day. All students are responsible for evaluating sermons preached in class, using a standard evaluation form and set of criteria (see below).

## 2. Reading

Written assignments submitted for grading must give evidence of the following minimum number of pages of reading review and research:

- a. Professional Degree students: 1,000 pages
- b. Research Degree students: 2,500 pages

## 3. Essays 2 × 25 = 50%

- a. Exegesis *Due:* January 24

This essay will outline the literary and theological dynamics of a specific parable (in its various Synoptic and extra-canonical forms, as applicable). Identify relevant biblical, social, and/or historical referents, and discuss the significance of the parable in question for teaching and preaching in the context of Christian ministry today. Be sure to identify the specific ministry situation that you intend to address. In the course of their exegesis, professional degree students enrolled for advanced Greek credit and research degree students will also provide an original translation of their chosen parable, accompanied by an explanation of the translation itself.

- b. History of Interpretation *Due:* February 7

This essay will examine the history of interpretation of a given parable, either within a limited historical period or from the early church to the present day. As far as you are able, try to account for particular interpretations within their respective theological and historical settings.

In the appended bibliography for each paper, indicate the extent of your reading in each of the resources that you cite.

Length: Professional Degree students 2,000 words each  
Research Degree students 5,000 words each

#### 4. Sermon Preparation

2 × 25 = 50%

##### a. Sermon series

*Due:* March 21

You are the pastor of a small congregation that consists entirely of new converts. Construct a six-week preaching series based on parables that concern a specific topic (the reign of God, social responsibility, final judgement, etc.). Explain 1) what these parables have to say about Christian discipleship, 2) why it is important for your congregation to learn this aspect of Jesus' teaching, 3) what kind of practical response(s) you envisage, and 4) how you plan to preach this material. Do not include the sermons themselves.

Research degree students will incorporate a discussion of hermeneutical considerations (citing relevant secondary literature where appropriate): how do parables communicate their intended meaning, and what implications does this have for the theory and practice of preaching?

Length: Professional Degree students 2,000 words  
Research Degree students 5,000 words

##### b. Sermon for peer evaluation

*Due:* March 21

Compose and preach a sermon (maximum 15 minutes) based on a specific parable to other members of the class (see sign-up sheet below).

For each of the assignments outlined above, students must select different parables (so that no two essays/sermons cover the same material). For the final assignment, students are asked to select different texts from one another, so that no two sermons are on the same parable.

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#### C. Style

All stylistic considerations (including but not limited to questions of formatting, footnotes, and bibliographic references) must conform to the McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses: <http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/sites/default/files/documents/MDCStyleGuide.pdf>. To assist with prose composition, students are encouraged to make use of [grammarly.com](https://ed.grammarly.com/) (<https://ed.grammarly.com/>)

register/signup/features/?edu=true), which is funded by the university, along with the Writing Support Services provided by McMaster's Student Success Centre (<http://studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca/students/academic-skills/writing-support-services.html>). Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions. See also "CRITERIA FOR GRADING OF WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS," below. All course assignments are to be submitted in hard copy; no form of electronic submission (whether via email, fax, or cloud) is permitted (feel free to ask why).

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#### D. Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty is a serious offence that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one's own or for which previous credit has been obtained, and/or unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g., failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on one's academic transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College. Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty: <http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations>

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#### E. Gender Inclusive Language

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all of its publications. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected. The NRSV and TNIV are examples of the use of inclusive language for human beings. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments.

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#### F. Cell Phone/Computer Policy

Students must refrain from conducting cell phone conversations while the class is in session. Should you need to maintain contact with family members and/or your church or ministry, please turn off the ringer so as to avoid disturbing others; upon receipt of an urgent call, you may discretely excuse yourself from the classroom. The



same policy applies to all computer-generated sound schemes, pagers, or other electronic annunciation systems.

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#### G. Deadlines and Late Submission Penalty

Assignments are due in class at 9:00 a.m. on the due date, after which they will be considered late and penalized accordingly. The penalty for late submission of assignments is 1% per calendar day (without limit).

Once classes have concluded, graded assignments will be available for retrieval from the Student Records Office (Room 210) for 30 days after the end of the semester (calculated as the day on which grades are due, which is April 21), following which they will be discarded.

***Final date for submission of all course assignments is the last day of classes, April 2  
Assignments received after this date will not be accepted for grading or credit***

#### Disclaimer:

This syllabus is the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make revisions up to and including the first day of class.

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CRITERIA FOR GRADING OF ASSIGNMENTS

Grade Range	Content		Argument		Presentation	
90–100 A+ 85–89 A 80–84 A–	Mastery of subject matter; creativity and individualized integration of insights and their relationships; exceeds required elements		Clear, logical structure; with comprehensive introduction, persuasive argumentation, and innovative conclusions		Detailed adherence to relevant style for formatting of text, notes, and bibliography; no errors of grammar or syntax; elegant presentation	
77–79 B+ 73–76 B 70–72 B–	Average to above-average grasp of relevant concepts; completion of all required elements		Coherent structure and consistent argumentation; well-stated introduction and conclusion		General adherence to relevant style and format; few errors of grammar or syntax	
67–69 C+ 63–66 C 60–62 C–	Basic understanding of theoretical foundations; minimal completion of required elements		Rudimentary structure; minimal or incomplete introductory and concluding statements		Significant errors of grammar, syntax, or style	
57–59 D+ 53–56 D 50–52 D–	Low level of comprehension; required elements incomplete or missing		Lack of coherence or structure in argumentation; no introduction or conclusion		Abundant grammatical, syntactical, and stylistic errors	
0–49% F	Inability to grasp basic concepts; required elements missing		Incomprehensible or illogical structure and argumentation		Failure to follow stylistic guidelines; incomprehensible syntax	
Comments						

STORIES OF THE KINGDOM: PREACHING THE PARABLES OF JESUS  
SERMON EVALUATION FORM

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Start time: \_\_\_\_\_ End time: \_\_\_\_\_

Preacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_

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Text: \_\_\_\_\_

Thesis: The main point this sermon makes is...

Purpose: As a result of this sermon, the hearers should...

Outline: What are the main points of this sermon? (List on reverse side)

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Structure: Was the sermon clearly structured and developed? Easy to follow?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10      \_\_\_\_\_

Exegesis: How clearly did the sermon interpret and present the parable?

3      6      9      12      15      18      21      24      27      30      \_\_\_\_\_

Contextualization: How well did the sermon relate to contemporary culture/the audience?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10      \_\_\_\_\_

Illustration: How creative/effective were the illustrations in relation to the text and theme?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10      \_\_\_\_\_

Application: How concrete, specific, and relevant to this audience was the application?

2      4      6      8      10      12      14      16      18      20      \_\_\_\_\_

Delivery: How effectively did the speaker use voice and body movements?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10      \_\_\_\_\_

Summary: How effective was the sermon in accomplishing its intended purpose?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10      \_\_\_\_\_

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Additional comments and observations: \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL \_\_\_\_\_