

BOOK REVIEW

PARABLES FOR PREACHERS - YEAR C, THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

by Barbara Reid, O.P., Liturgical Press, 2000, paperback, 368 pp. \$11.95

PARABLES FOR PREACHERS joins a number of other very helpful scriptural resources available to Preachers now. The most recent catalog I received from The Liturgical Press alone lists this work along with: PREACHING THE NEW LECTIONARY (D. Bergant and R. Fragomeni), LET THE SCRIPTURES SPEAK (D. Hamm, S.J.) and THE CULTURAL WORLD OF JESUS (John Pilch). All of these feature a separate volume for each of the three Sunday Cycles. Each set has a different approach. I have seen all but the Hamm series. Does a Preacher need to buy 16 books?! I would suggest any of the three first sets (or even the now venerable series by C. Stuhlmueller, C.P.) PLUS Pilch's work. But here is a review of PARABLES FOR PREACHERS.

The approach chosen by Barbara Reid is to devote a volume each to the parables of the three synoptic gospels as they appear in the three Sunday Cycles (A=Matthew, B=Mark, C=Luke). Reid takes a broad approach to the meaning of "parable." She writes:

"Included in this volume are all passages in the Gospel of Luke in which the term *parabole* ("parable") occurs with the exception of the parable of the vineyard and the tenants (20:9-19), which does not appear in the Lectionary. Also included are similes with variations of the phrase *homoios estin*, '[such] is like....' and *houtos*, 'in the same way' or 'so should it be with you'. [refs. omitted]. Included as well are Lukan stories such as: The Two Debtors (7:40-42), The Good Samaritan (10:25-37), The Friend at Midnight (11:5-8), The Dishonest Steward (16:1-13), The Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19-31), and The Great Feast (14:15-24). These are clearly parabolic, though the term is not used of them in the gospel itself." [Reid, p. 2]

Thus, this approach includes some scripture that this reviewer might not have considered a parable and some that this reader would have been surprised to see excluded because the word "parable" is not attached to them in the text!!! Chapter Six on Luke 4:21-30, entitled THE UNACCEPTABLE PROPHET is an example. Jesus' address in the synagogue includes the word, "proverb," which appears in the Greek as *parabole*. Anyone not looking at the Greek text might be puzzled at first by the inclusion of this gospel reading as a "parable." However, Reid takes care to explain her inclusion in the exegesis that follows.

The first three chapters are given to an analysis and treatment of "Preaching Parabolically," "Interpreting Parables," and "An Overview of the Gospel of Luke." I found all of this material very helpful in understanding the author's approach. Each of the subsequent chapters immediately gives a "title," a scriptural citation, and the Sunday [and weekday] location of the "parable." The text of the passage follows. Then Reid treats us to a very rich exegetical treatment of the passage. The footnotes show that she has been thorough in her research of the various resources. I suspect this particular volume on Luke (Cycle C) received some special treatment since Reid is a "Luke-Acts" scholar! Her analysis includes a section on "Lukan literary context," a verse by verse consideration of the text, and finally a section called "preaching possibilities." The latter section does help with some pitfalls to be avoided and Reid makes a strong pitch throughout for the social justice and feminist possibilities of the text. Once in awhile I felt a suggestion was a bit tenuous or anachronistic, such as her comments about "master-servant" imagery in Chapter 18. The danger and reality of domination and oppression are true enough, but a good preacher can make necessary adjustments without "bowdlerizing" the text for modern day sensitivities, especially when the text per se is not about "master-servant" relationships.

The Table of Contents is adequate and is followed by a handy section entitled, "Lukan Parables in the Lectionary", which indicates each parable's place in the lectionary. The bibliography at the end is wonderful. I found the book to be not only very useful for understanding a particular passage ["parable"], but good spiritual reading as well. Whether or not a Preacher will want to buy a three volume set of books which treat only this material, as compared with one that looks at all the readings on a particular day, will really depend on individual need. I would still recommend getting Pilch's THE CULTURAL WORLD OF JESUS to temper and enrich whatever interpretative enthusiasms that may arise from using any of the other new resources mentioned earlier. Barbara Reid's work is a very useful one and I'll probably get the other two volumes.

---R. B. Williams, O.P.