



Parables Unplugged: Reading the Lukan Parables in Their Rhetorical Context

Lauri Thuren

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For far too long, Lauri Thuren argues, the parables of Jesus have been read either as allegories encoding Christian theology—including the theological message of one or another Gospel writer—or as tantalizing clues to the authentic voice of Jesus. Thuren proposes instead to read the parables “unplugged” from any assumptions beyond those given in the narrative situation in the text, on the common-sense premise that the very form of the parable works to propose a (sometimes startling) resolution to a particular problem. Thuren applies his method to the parables in Luke with some surprising results involving the Evangelist’s overall narrative purposes and the discrete purposes of individual parables in supporting the authority of Jesus, proclaiming God’s love, exhorting steadfastness, and so on. Eschatological and allegorical readings are equally unlikely, according to Thuren’s results. This study is sure to spark learned discussion among scholars, preachers, and students for years to come.

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