CHAPTER 3: JESUS' PARABLES AS METAPHORICAL STORIES

3.1 What is a parable?

That there has been a great shift in parable research, has already been indicated in the introductory chapter (chapter 1). As within any paradigm shift, once the transition has been made from "scientific revolution" to "normal science", there is such an explosion of research material that it becomes almost impossible to note, even briefly, the vast amount of material available. It is, however, not our endeavour to develop new theories, but to refine those already existing - accentuating certain aspects, and applying them to our specific field of research, the Lukan parables.

There are different ways to approach the study of Jesus' parables today. Different modern scholars have made an elaborate study of parables, including a detailed historical overview of parable interpretation (see, inter alia, Perrin 1976:89-193; Weder 1978:11-57; Kissinger 1979; Scott 1990:7-62; Jones 1995:7-172; Blomberg 1990:13-170; Snodgrass 2000:3-29; Forbes 2000:16-51). Our focus here falls on one particular approach to parables, by which the parables are interpreted as *metaphors.* Based on the recently revised theories of metaphor in general (see chapter 2 above), biblical scholars have applied this revised concept of metaphor to Jesus' parables, using metaphor as a *model* for their interpretation. The word "model" is emphasised, as parable and metaphor should not simply be equated as if metaphor *represents* parable. Metaphor is used as the "lens" through which we intend to look at the parables of Jesus in general, and those in Luke's Gospel in particular.

There seems no better way to introduce the metaphorical view of Jesus' parables than with the well-known and eloquent definition provided by Dodd (1935) in *The parables of the kingdom.* Dodd, it seems, was one of the first modern biblical scholars to define a parable as, specifically, a metaphor. Initially, his definition did not make the headlines it deserved. Its rise to prominence can

be attributed to Robert Funk, who almost three decades later systematically explored the most important elements of this definition in an essay that since has become a classic in parable interpretation (Funk 1966:133-162; see also Patterson 1998:120-162). Dodd ([1935] 1961:5) defines the parable as follows: "At its simplest the parable is a metaphor or simile drawn from nature or common life, arresting the hearer by its vividness or strangeness, and leaving the mind in sufficient doubt about its precise application to tease it into active thought." Serving as a springboard for our analysis of parables, Dodd's definition is to form the structural basis of our discussion, opening the way to new insights that have since seen the light and ignited vivid discussion among contemporary scholars.

3.2 Parables as metaphors

The insight that Jesus' parables are metaphors has not always been the accepted position. The reasons for this are numerous, not least the use of parables within the synoptic Gospels themselves (cf Patterson 1998:121-123). One strategy employed by the gospel writers for interpreting the parables of Jesus was to see them as *allegories*. The classical example is the parable of "The Sower" in Mark 4:3-8, which is interpreted allegorically in Mark 4:14-20. The Gospel of Mark also provides the underlying theory: in order to understand the parable one needs a special key to unlock the code which provides the referent of each element hidden within the parable. This key is available only to those to whom the "secret of the reign of God" (Mk 4:11) is revealed. It was only natural to assume that other parables should be interpreted similarly. Accordingly, most of the Church Fathers, including Irenaeus, Tertullian of Alexandria, Origen, and Augustine understood the parables as detailed allegories. Augustine's interpretation of the parable of "The Good Samaritan" (Lk 10:30-37) provides the classical example: The man is Adam; Jerusalem is the heavenly city; Jericho is the moon, which stands for our mortality; the robbers are the devil and his angels; the priest and the Levite represent the Old Testament Law which can save no one; the good Samaritan who binds the

man's wounds is Christ, who forgives sin; the inn is the church; and the innkeeper is the apostle Paul (*Quaestiones Evangeliorum* 2.19; cf Snodgrass 2000:4).

The allegorical approach continued through the medieval period up to the Reformation, when it was, at least to some degree, denounced by Luther and Calvin (cf Kissinger 1979:41-46). The main problems with this kind of approach soon became apparent: (1) Two expositors rarely agreed on what the individual elements in the parables refer to. Furthermore, no expositor explained what "key" was used to unearth the hidden meanings and how access to that key was gained: the results were beyond verification. (2) Some of the meanings attributed to details in the parable were clearly anachronisms, that is, they reflected on a doctrine emanating from a later period. To name but one example of Augustine's exposition above, no one in Luke's original audience would have associated the innkeeper with the apostle Paul. (3) It seems highly improbable that Jesus would tell his parables with the intention that they should not be understood by all his listeners.

This view we owe primarily to Adolf Jülicher, who in his two-volume analysis of Jesus' parables, *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu*, first published at the end of the nineteenth century, argued that the allegorisation of parables was a *secondary* procedure. Jülicher ([1960] 1976:61) concludes: "Trotz der Autorität so viele Jahrhunderte, trotz der grösseren Autorität der Evangelisten, kann ich die Parabeln Jesu für Allegorien nicht halten. Es spricht nämlich nicht weniger als alles dagegen." The main premiss for Jülicher's argument is that parables do not disguise meaning, but by their simple and vivid pictures render the meaning self-evident to their listeners (Jülicher [1960] 1976:61-62). With the discovery of the *Gospel of Thomas*, Jülicher's rejection of Jesus' parables as allegories gained more support. Various parables in the synoptic Gospels with explicit allegorical interpretation occur in *Thomas* without it, confirming that the allegory is independent of the parable illustrating the ideology of the evangelists (see Scott 1990:44). In the light of the arguments above, even those scholars who do accept

that the allegorical interpretations of Jesus' parables form part of Jesus own words, insist that this type of interpretation is not the norm but the exception (Purdy 1985:93).

Another function attributed to the parables is that of exampling or illustrating moral behaviour. This is the main track followed by Jülicher. Jülicher ([1960] 1976:71) argued that instead of concealing "mysteries", the parable seeks to illustrate (*veranschaulichen*) a certain point in Jesus' teaching. Jülicher ([1960] 1976:71) understands a parable as an instrument of proof (*Beweismittel*) with the task of supporting and reinforcing previous knowledge. Parables are regarded primarily as *Vergleichung* or as *similes* (cf Ricoeur 1975:91). Two sentences, or two streams of thought, are compared with one another (evidenced by the word "like") by placing them side by side. The first part is literal (*die Sachhälfte)* and the second part is figurative (*die Bildhälfte*). The comparison calls up a "third" element (the *tertium comparationis*), which is the common factor between the subject matter (*Sache*) and the figure (*Bild*). This results in the *single* meaning of the parable, which inherently illustrates moral behaviour.

Again the parable of "The Good Samaritan" (Lk 10:30-37) is the classical example. The parable is interpreted as an example of impartial love culminating in the command: "Go and do likewise" (Lk.10:37). That the parable serves as an illustration of neighbourly love, is however called into question by what seem to be a number of inconsistencies (cf Funk 1966:199-222; Patterson 1998:122-123). Luke, it seems, uses the parable to complete a story originally found in Mark, which does *not* include the parable (see Mk 12:28-31). In Mark, Jesus and the lawyer agree that the greatest commandment is to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind and with all your strength;" and that the second greatest commandment is to "love your neighbour as yourself" (Mk 12:30-31). In Luke, however, the line of questioning is continued. The lawyer asks: "And who is my neighbour?" He wants to know to whom he should show love. Then follows the parable. The single point (the *tertium*

comparationis) made by the parable seems quite clear: Love should be shown to everybody who needs it, and you (the listener) should go out and love the way the Samaritan loved. But a closer reading of the parable reveals that Jesus' answer does not correspond exactly to the lawyer's question. The lawyer asked about someone to whom he should show love. But the Samaritan is not an example of such a person. He is the subject and not the object of love in the parable! As a result Jesus rephrases the lawyer's original question from "Who is my neighbour?" to "How shall I be a neighbour?" These "inconsistencies" disqualify any reading of the parable as a mere illustration. Historical Jesus scholars attribute these inconsistencies to Luke's efforts to grapple with the problem of giving meaning to a parable of Jesus in Luke's Gospel - originally told in a totally different context (see, inter alia, Patterson 1998:123). They maintain that *Luke* turns a "parable" of Jesus into an "example story". This view concerning Luke's use of the parable will be tested below and an alternative understanding will be presented (see chapter 5). At this point it suffices to note that Jülicher's "single point" methodology is a powerful tool to combat an allegorical interpretation of Jesus' parables, but it is based on the false assumption that a parable has per se only *one proper (correct) meaning* which by definition is *illustrative* of moral behaviour.

The rejection of Jesus' parables as allegories and example stories of moral behaviour, has paved the way for a new and a fresh approach. It has become the accepted position of most modern scholars that "parable" uses the language and the strategy of *metaphor* (see chapter 2). With the rejection of allegory as a notion for parable, one would have expected Jülicher himself to explore the avenue of the metaphor, but instead it is explicitly discarded by him. For Jülicher, ([1960] 1976:52-57) metaphor is purely the rhetorical device of allegory: They are akin. Metaphor is *die Vorstufe* of allegory, both of these figures of speech being *uneigentliche Rede* (cf Weder 1978:12). Metaphor as *uneigentliche Rede* (speaking of something in terms of another) burdens and obscures the task of interpretation and is, like the allegory, itself in need of interpretation (Jülicher

[1960] 1976:57). Jülicher therefore opts to construe the concept of *Vergleichung* in a non-metaphorical way. Ricoeur (1975:90) observes that Jülicher, instead of looking for a solution in Aristotle's *Poetics*, used Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, in particular Book II, concerning the "common means of conviction". Jülicher is clearly guided by the traditional view that poetic (figurative) language is not suitable for conveying matters of truth, and this complicated by his traditional, Aristotelean understanding of how a metaphor functions. The theory of metaphor implicitly assumed by him is a *substitution* theory. The close kinship established by Jülicher between metaphor and allegory, however, disappears if metaphor is not a substitutive process, but one of interaction (Ricoeur 1975:92).

Besides his misunderstanding as to what a metaphor is, Jülicher is further mistaken in his understanding of what a parable does. Ricoeur (1975:91) advocates that the initial mistake made by Jülicher ([1960] 1976:68) was to identify the *maschal* of Hebrew literature with the *parabole* of Greek rhetoric. The two may not be equated (cf Scott 1990:8-35). *Parabole* means literally to "set aside", "to throw beside" and as result functions "as a comparative term, indicating similarity or parallelism" (Scott 1990:19). *Parabole* is an *illustrative* parallel, which under the influence of Aristotle and the Greek rhetoric gained the subsidiary meaning of being a "sort of argument" (Scott 1990:20). The Hebraic *maschal*, on the other hand, is quite different. It "links directly the meaning of the saying and a corresponding disposition in the sphere of human existence, without the detour through a general ethical statement which the parable would illustrate" (Ricoeur 1975:91). The parable (*maschal*) in contrast to the *parabole* is therefore not an instrument of proof in need of persuasion, achieved by the use of figurative language. Although there might be something "figurative" in the parable, it is not figurative in the *rhetorical* sense, whereby one thing (a word or a thought) stands for something else (substitution and/or comparison theory) and in doing so acts as an auxiliary means of persuasion. Ricoeur (1975:92) maintains further that

> if the parable is figurative (*bildlich*), it is not as the rhetorical "figure" of a subject matter (*Sache*), but as a "figure" for a mode of being which can be displayed in human experience. The *Sache* – the *issue* – is not a "thought", not a "proposition", which could be written down in "juxtaposition" to the narrative. The "*Sache*" is the *referent* in human existence.

This insight has been overlooked by many scholars. Eckhard Rau (1990:11-26), for example, continues to make a case for a rhetorical approach to parable interpretation and advocates (in support of Jülicher) that the *Sachhälfte* forms just as much part of the parable as the *Bildhälfte*. Although the parable does reference an "issue", this issue does not form an inherent part of the parable itself, but is something, as Ricoeur pointed out, *beyond* the parable, in our human existence. The parable juxtaposes the figure (*Bild*) with this referent, which in turn leads to something new that was not there before. This in turn correlates with the *interaction* theory of metaphors and what a metaphor does (see Black 1981:72-77).

The seeds that opened the gateway to an understanding of Jesus' parables as metaphors were sown by the *New Hermeneutics* (cf Perrin 1976:110-126). The *New Hermeneutics* created awareness of the *performative* aspect of language. Language has the power to bring into being something that was not there before the words were spoken. Although the practitioners of the *New Hermeneutics* were not literary scholars and as a result gave little attention to *metaphor*, it was their insight that encouraged scholars to explore not only *what* is written, but also *why* something is written and the *affect* it has on its listeners. By juxtaposing not only similar (*epiphors*), but contrasting entities (*diaphors*) (Wheelwright [1962] 1973:72), both the metaphor and the parable have the power to create something new. The influence of the *New Hermeneutics* is clearly visible in Wolfang Harnisch's (1984:109) analysis of the distinction between *Bildwort* (figurative

language) and *Metapher* (metaphor). Applying these two notions to Jesus' parables, he writes:

> Entweder setzt die Parabel den Referenten, also das, wovon die Rede sein soll, bereits voraus. In diesem Fall steht die Erzählung (Bildhälfte) im Dienst einer ihr vorausliegenden Behauptung (Sachhälfte), deren Geltung strittig oder problematisch ist. Sie übernimmt dann rhetorische Funktion. Was erzählt wird, hat den Charakter eines Arguments, das eine bestimmte Position illustriert und derart einleuchtend macht. Oder aber die Parabel setzt das, wovon die Rede sein soll, allererst in Kraft. In diesem Fall hat die Erzählung performativen Sinn. Sie besitzt kreative Potenz. Dann vermittelt sie dem Adressaten im Medium des Erzählten selbst den Referent, und zwar als eine unerhörte Botschaft.

These two functions, to illustrate and to create something new, may not be confused, as may be the case in Dodd's definition, in which a parable is defined as being a metaphor *or* simile. Metaphor and simile are not the same. Funk (1966:136) makes the following literary distinction: "A *is* B" is a metaphor, whereas "A is *like* B" is a simile. But essential to an understanding of both the metaphor and the simile is not the literary difference (inclusion or omission of the word "like"), but the distinctive *function* of both literary forms, that is the *nature* of the metaphor and the simile (cf Funk 1966:136). The word "like" implies that a simile functions to *illustrate* an entity. A metaphor, however, does not illustrate but *represents* that entity. In a simile, a point already made is illustrated with the purpose of clarification. In a metaphor, a point is discovered.

The word "like" ("The kingdom of heaven is *like* ...") in many parables in the synoptic Gospels has misled scholars in continuing to interpret them solely as some kind of *Vergleichung,* that is, as a simile (see, inter alia, Blomberg 1990:279-

1821). But it has been argued convincingly that the introductory phrase in at least some cases is secondary (see Harnisch 1984:174). Confined to the parable corpus, Matthew, for example, repeatedly uses the phrase "the kingdom of heaven is like [ὥσπερ] ...", even in passages which could have Q as their source (cf Mt 18:23; 20:1; 22:2; 25:14). Luke however omits the phrase, indeed even in certain other parables whose literary context clearly has the kingdom of God as subject (eg Lk 14:15; 19:11). The literary phrase per se should therefore not determine the interpretational approach. Amos Wilder ([1964] 1971:xxi-xxv), a new Testament scholar as well as a poet and authority on general literary criticism, accentuated the value of interpreting a particular work (especially one of a narrative nature) as a self-sufficient aesthetic whole. As a poet Wilder knew that with all creative, poem-like texts, the whole is more than the sum of its parts. Before analysing the formal elements of a story, the readers or interpreters should allow the story to speak to them as a whole. This "holistic" approach to the parables of Jesus supports the general hypothesis that Jesus' parables *function* like metaphors. They have a life-challenging and life-changing *affect* on listeners. Jesus, like any gifted storyteller, had the ability not only to illustrate the material in hand, but to create worlds in which human events unfold and in which insight is gained about life which, without the stories' assistance, would have remained uncovered.

The view that parables are metaphors has not been without critique. More recently, scholars have again argued for the validity of Jesus' parables as allegories. This is reflected in Klyne Snodgrass's (2000:3-29) overview of the history of the interpretation of the parables of Jesus, entitled *From allegorizing to allegorizing*. One of the main proponents of the revised view on parables as allegories is Craig Blomberg (1990). A general survey of his views, which includes a sharp criticism of the parables of Jesus as metaphors, is presented in *Interpreting the parables* (Blomberg 1990:29-170). Blomberg's view of parables as allegories is based primarily on two arguments. First, he refutes an

understanding of metaphor which rejects the notion of allegory per se. Central to his understanding of allegory are the distinctions made by Hans-Josef Klauck (1978:91) between *Allegorie* (allegory), *Allegorese* (allegorising), and *Allegorisierung* (allegorisation). Allegory is defined as a rhetorical device applicable to many literary genres which gives a symbolic dimension to a text. Allegorising refers to the process of ascribing hidden, often anachronistic meanings, to a text never intended by the author. Allegorisation is the expansion of a text which originally was an allegory in some simpler form. Blomberg (1990:44) attests that the real problem is not allegory or allegorisation, but allegorising. Allegorising, equated with an anachronistic interpretation, is rejected; but not allegory.

Blomberg's view of allegory is of course largely a debate on semantics, that is, one of concerning the *meaning* of "allegory". If allegory is understood as figurative language through which one entity can stand for something other than itself, Blomberg's argument is legitimate. In such a case allegory and metaphor are not opposites but synonyms (semantically related). For Blomberg (1990:43) a parable is allegorical as long as the overall point it makes "transcends its literal meaning". This view however differs from the understanding attached to allegory by Jülicher, who perceived allegory primarily as a literary genre - a view that is rightly to be rejected. Indeed the whole scholarly debate to distinguish between an allegory and a metaphor is less critical if the view of Madeleine Boucher and John Sider (cited by Snodgrass 2000:16; cf Forbes 2000:27-28) is held that allegory is not a literary genre at all, but a "way of thinking", it is a "device" or "mode" of meaning, which applies equally to metaphor.

Blomberg's second rejection of the parables of Jesus as metaphors is largely directed against what seems to be a devaluation of propositional language. The *New Hermeneutics* argued that because parables (as metaphors) are in essence language events *impacting* on the listener (that is conveying *actions*), they in essence do not convey truth in *propositional* form (see Forbes 2000:35).

Blomberg (1990:143) however insists that every attempt to consistently apply a nonpropositonal approach to the parables fails. Invariably, the meaning of the parable, or the impact it causes on the listener, can be summarised in discursive speech. Similar sentiments are echoed by Robert Stein (2000:34-38). He fervently rejects any understanding of metaphor as an instrument creative of meaning which cannot be reduced to some form of propositional interpretation. For Stein (2000:36) the confusion rest on the failure to distinguish between the "referential" and the "commissive" dimensions of communication, which he defines as follows: "Whereas the former is primarily informative in nature, the latter is primarily affective. And whereas the former seeks mainly to convey information, the latter seeks to convey emotion and bring about decision." The parables as metaphors convey emotion in so far as they impact on the listener. This commissive dimension however does not exclude its referential dimension. Stein (2000:36) therefore argues for a balance between the informative and affective dimensions of language.

The positions of Blomberg and Stein are clearly reactions to an understanding of metaphor in which reference is totally suspended. This however does not coincide with our understanding of metaphor presented in chapter 2 above. It was argued there that the suspension of the "ordinary descriptive reference" does not lead to the abolition of reference altogether. Rejected is a reference that is fixed and one-dimensional (one which is in a one-to-one relationship between *Bild* and *Sache*). The paradox of metaphorical reference provides a multi-dimensional or ambiguous reference. The prodigal in the parable of "A Man Had Two Sons" (Lk 15:11-32), for example, refers intratextually both to the toll-collectors and sinners (cf Lk 15:1-2) as well to Jesus himself (cf Lk 7:34), and extratextually to all those "outsiders" who per se are excluded from the "people of God".

Vital for our understanding of metaphor, is not *what* it refers to, but *how* it refers (see 3.5 below). This *how* highlights the performative power of the

metaphor to *create* new meanings, foremost through the juxtaposition of dissimilar entities (cf Van der Watt 2000:23). Although the meaning(s) of a metaphor (and its referential meaning) can be summarised in propositional language, such a summary will inevitably be restrictive and fail to capture the impact of the metaphor. This metaphorical impact, and the power to make the audience see reality differently, constitute the very essence of Jesus' parables and confirms the first element of Dodd's definition: Jesus' parables are metaphors.

3.3 The everydayness of a parable

The everydayness of a parable reflects on the second element of Dodd's definition "... drawn from nature or common life ..." Jesus made extensive use of the "everyday" in his listeners life. His parables were drawn from the common experience of those he spoke to. They came from the world of a first-century agrarian society, a world of villages and small urban towns, of aristocrats and peasants, of agriculture, of landlords and tenants, of sowing and harvesting, of fishers, shepherds, and labourers (see Lenski, Lenski & Nolan 1991:169-201). The fictive events that Jesus created were typical of that world. They involved disputes on rent, family and social frictions, surprising discoveries, and dangerous journeys. In the history of parable research much indispensable work has been done to fill in the cultural and social world in which the parables of Jesus originally made sense. One of the most helpful historical studies is that of Joachim Jeremias ([1963] 1984), *Die Gleichnisse Jesu*. More recent works which take full cognisance of the social and anthropological insights of the first-century Mediterranean world, are those of Bernard B Scott (1990), *Hear, then the parable*, and William R Herzog II (1994), *Parables as subversive speech*. Events and scenes which might seem foreign to the modern reader were very familiar, everyday scenes for the original audience. Wilder ([1964] 1971:73) speaks of the "secularity of the parables". The parables hardly take up "religious" themes, but visualise a world known to the "human beings on the street".

This very important aspect of Jesus' parables has however also resulted in a most common fallacy in parable interpretation. Based on the everydayness of Jesus' parables, especially those scholars within the historical-critical paradigm, like Jeremias ([1963]1984:23) and others, have argued that Jesus' parables resemble the historical context of first-century Palestine. Scott (1990:41) however points out that whether a parable represents a historical event or not is beside the point and "mistakes verisimilitude for reality". In spite of the commonness of Jesus' parables, the parables are and remain stories in which "everyday events and people" are *fictionalised*. Failure to take cognisance of the fictional character of parables has led to further problems in parable interpretation. Hyperbole, for example, has often been seen as the one point at which the parables of Jesus diverge from realism: a camel simply cannot go through the eye of a needle (Lk 18:25), try as it may. In interpreting this aphorism, some scholars have made an attempt to find an actual event to which the aphorism could allude. It has been maintained that there indeed existed a small entry in the wall of Jerusalem through which a fully-laden camel could only squeeze with difficulty (eg Rienecker 1982:432). But hyperbole is not an actual event, nor is it the opposite of realism. Funk (1966:161) in studying the metaphorical nature of Jesus' parables, argues that hyperbole is "stepped-up" realism: it belongs to the nature of metaphorical language in general, and to Jesus' parables in particular, that everydayness is at certain points "intensified", or "dramatised" with the clear intention of heightening the *effect* of the story (see also Scott 1990:41).

Awareness of the fictional character of Jesus' parables also lays low the search for the one *Sitz im Leben* of a particular parable. Parables have freedom of context. Although initially being told to a particular audience at a fixed time in history, parables as "fictional stories" or as "aesthetic objects" can be used in different situations and fulfil a multi-functional purpose. This does not make them ahistorical. On the contrary. Juxtaposed within the parables of Jesus as metaphors are still two entities of which one is embedded within the everyday

context of first-century Palestinian society. Awareness of this context is imperative for the interpreter, not only to guard against another fallacy, that of "misdirected concreteness" (failure to bridge the gab between the world of the interpreter and that of an ancient text), but more importantly to understand the thrust of the metaphorical language (cf Van Aarde 1985:568).

Everydayness is clearly not an arbitrary ingredient in the parables of Jesus: it forms the locus of the parable's intentionality. By using common scenes, known to the listeners, and with which the listeners can immediately identify, Jesus was drawing his listeners into the world of the parable he was constructing. He was not merely telling them *about* a new world, but through the everydayness of his parables he was getting them "caught up" *in* this world. A parable cannot fulfil its function if it is being read or studied from a detached, uninvolved position. The parable is only completed when the listeners or readers enter the world of the parable and become part of the events and reality described. The everydayness of Jesus' parables *creates* this possibility. The world of the parable becomes their world.

Sharing the world of the parable has raised awareness of a listener's identification with characters. Whenever a story is told, a listener identifies with a particular character. Character identification may change as the story unfolds. The parable of "The Good Samaritan" (Lk 10:30-35) serves as an illustration. In listening to the story, a listener may initially identify with the priest or the Levite. When the expected help does not materialise, identification with the *good* Samaritan follows. It should be noted, however, how identification with the Samaritan depends on the audience's willingness to do so. Identification with the Samaritan seems plausible to Luke's Gentile audience, but not to an Israelite audience (probably the initial audience of the parable). The animosity between Israelites (especially, the Judeans) and Samaritans would disqualify such an identification (cf Funk 1996:176-178). For an Israelite audience, identification with the victim, the one person left without any description in the parable, seems the

more likely proposition. But identification with the victim changes the thrust of the story. The listener is now faced with an unexpected challenge - a challenge which he or she might never have faced up to if they had not been drawn into the story by its everydayness. Funk (1966:155) notes that the listener does not initially say, "Yes", to the reality portrayed in and through the parable, but to the commonness and realism of the events described. It is this very procedure which makes the metaphorical story so effective in changing the audience's views and creating a new vision of reality. The audience is confronted with something new, without having expected it. Harnisch (1984:144) writes: "Das Vertraute [the everydayness] wird von Nicht-Vertrauten *hintergangen*", this occurring indeed at a stage when the listener has already been drawn into the story.

The effect caused by the story on the listener accentuates the importance of "story". The story of a parable cannot simply be done away with, to be replaced by a set of ethical or moral statements; nor can individual words or phrases be substituted with literal equivalents (allegory) without cognitive loss. The temptation to do this is always there. But to accede to this temptation is to overlook an essential characteristic of metaphorical language. Funk (1966:158) likens the parable to a "picture puzzle" which prompts the question, What is wrong with the picture? The picture itself displays a familiar, everyday world. But the *everydayness* is distorted. The tension evoked by the parable relies on the "literal" within it (the everyday event or person) remaining "literal", and not being substituted with another meaning, or being converted into something else. Taking the pieces of the puzzle away, or by substituting the pieces with an already completed picture, destroys the puzzle and fails to recognise how a metaphor works. In telling his parables, Jesus was suggesting that God encounters his people in the concrete everydayness of their lives. But by making extensive use of metaphorical language, Jesus was challenging them to see that familiar world in a new way (cf Patterson 1998:127). For this to happen, the familiar has to remain familiar. At the same time everydayness cannot simply be equated to the

parables' functionality. A parable is not about "everydayness", everydayness is the means to an end. Funk (1966:158) postulates that metaphorical language, does not look *at* a phenomenon, but *through* it. It functions like a model. It filters the information, and by doing so it unfolds into a new world. This new world which opens up is both extraordinarily similar and strangely different to the everyday world of the parable's audience.

We come now to the third element of Dodd's definition.

3.4 The paradoxical nature of a parable

The third element of Dodd's definition is: "... arresting the hearer by its vividness or strangeness ..." Our focus falls primarily on the words "vividness" and "strangeness". A story depicting the everyday can at times be arresting, especially if vividly narrated. But why should a story told by Jesus in which common situations and characters are used, be regarded as strange? Dodd had observed what since then has become a central issue in parable interpretation. Even though Jesus used common situations and characters in his stories with the aim of drawing his audience into the world of the parable, the *way* he used them was far from common. Once the world of the parable is entered, the parable makes unexpected twists and turns by which the familiar world of everyday experiences and expectations is replaced by a challenging and at times most distorting picture. In his structural analysis of narrative parables Scott (1981:98-103) shows that at least one actant in Jesus' parables is moved from an *expected* position to an *unexpected* position. Again this is most clearly illustrated by the parable of "The Good Samaritan (Lk 10:30-35). The original Israelite audience would have expected the introduction of an Israelite layman after the priest and the Levite failed to help the man fallen among robbers. But a despised Samaritan enters the story, and instead of adopting the role of an opponent, is assigned the position of a helper. This and other unexpected twists and turns follow at various levels, and are not confined to the broad strokes of the narrative's structure. In the parable

of "A Man Had Two Sons" (Lk 15:11-32) the familiar is consistently distorted by socially strange and unfamiliar behaviour. The younger son, who in Hebrew literature is often portrayed as the favourite son, becomes the scoundrel who brings endless shame on his family: Even before his father's death, he claims his inheritance, thereby declaring his father to be dead. He departs to a *foreign* country and feeds *pigs*, thereby breaking with both his family and religion. On his return, the father does *not* do the expected. He indulges in what is for an aged orient socially unacceptable behaviour. He rushes to his son, embraces and kisses him - even before the son can utter an apology and repent of his sins. The strangeness of the parable lies in the *distortion* of the everydayness. What seems to be an everyday event or action suddenly changes into something quite extraordinary. The everydayness of the parable is undermined.

From the above it is clear that it makes no sense to regard certain words in a parable as literal and others as metaphorical. The entire narrative is told at the level of ordinary (literal) life events and actions. The bearers of the metaphor are therefore not the individual words or sentences of the narrative, but the entire structure, the story as a whole. Accordingly, the "tension" is not one between words but between the everyday *reality* of the listener and that of the story. Ricoeur (1975:95-96) writes that the kinds of tension that can be found in the parables

> offer no inner tension between tenor and vehicle because of the "normalcy" of the narrative, and little tension between literal and metaphorical interpretation of the message itself. The "tension" is entirely on the side of the vision of reality between the insight displayed by the fiction and our ordinary way of looking at things.

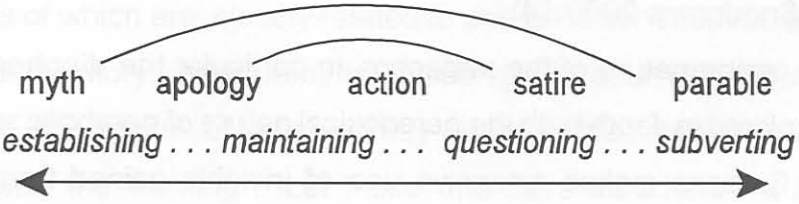
The question remains, of course, how the listeners or readers will know that a particular narrative conveying an everyday event is the bearer of a metaphorical

process? What clues are available? Ricoeur (1975:98-99) gives a dual answer, the elements of which are closely related to one another: The first answer is the "normalcy" of the story. John Dominic Crossan (cf Ricoeur 1975:98) noted that if, for example, the recital of an everyday event, which seems quite normal, concludes with the warning : "Let those who have ears hear!" it is not to be regarded as pointless, we have to look for another kind of interpretation. The parable should be interpreted metaphorically, *because* of its normalcy. The second answer is the "element of extravagance" (Ricoeur 1975:99). The term "extravagance" refers to the presence of the "extraordinary" within the "ordinary". An everyday, ordinary event is narrated, with *extra*ordinary behaviour on the part of certain characters or with an unexpected turn of events. Examples of such language in Jesus' parables are: a Samaritan not only helping a man (an Israelite) lying half dead next to the road, but also taking him to the inn and paying all the expenses; or an oriental father running down the road to welcome home a prodigal son; or a landlord whose servants have been killed by his tenants sending his only son to risk a similar fate. These apparent "inconsistencies" make the structure of the narrative unstable, and create awareness that this "normal" story, is not "normal" at all. Again, this is not a device simply to catch the attention or the imagination of the audience: it forms the essence of metaphorical (diaphorical) language to challenge and subvert a contemporary view on reality. By the distortion of the ordinary, it opens a gab in our thinking; and this in turn makes room for a new, alternative vision.

The use of extravagance (or hyperbole) within the everydayness of Jesus' parables has often been misunderstood. For Blomberg everydayness and extravagance are mutually exclusive. Blomberg (1990:139) writes: "... it is better to see the unusual features in Jesus' parables as more straightforward pointers to their allegorical nature." However, the way Blomberg uses the term "allegory" does not disqualify the metaphorical function of extravagant language. Everydayness points to the way in which parables address human existence.

Extravagance in turn points to the way in which this familiar human existence is shattered (cf Snodgrass 2000:14).

Based on the nature of the metaphor, in particular the diaphor, Crossan (1975) has explored in depth both the paradoxical nature of parabolic speech and its function. Crossan makes extensive use of insights gained from the *New Hermeneutics* that language has the ability to "create" world. Crossan (1975:56-26) draws on the study of Sheldon Sacks who argued that all literary forms serve a particular function within their social setting, three of the most important forms being: satire, apologue, and action. Apologue defends world, action investigates world, and satire attacks world. Crossan (1975:47-57) then expands Sack's typology by adding two other literary forms, myth and parable. "Myth" is not used in the popular sense of a "made-up story" or of a story of "gods and goddesses". Myth is investigated at its deepest level of *structure.* Drawing on the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss, Crossan advocates that the basic function of myth is *reconciliation*. Myth establishes and enforces what for a particular community has been accepted as real. In many respects myth coheres with the *métarécits* (grand narratives) of Jean-François Lyotard (see chapter 2 above). Myth has normative function. When within a particular social world doubt and uncertainty arise, myth restores the balance. In contrast the basic function of parable is *contradiction* (Crossan 1975:54-57). Whereas myth constitutes and legitimises a social world, parable undermines and shatters the world into which it is delivered. Making reference to a statement of the literary critic Frank Kermode that "Myths are the agents of stability, fictions the agents of change", Crossan (1975:56) argues that "Parables are fictions, not myths; they are meant to change, not reassure us." The fictional forms and the functions of the above mentioned literary forms can be arranged as follows, drawing on figures 2 and 3 in Crossan's (1975:59,62; see also Herzog 1994:47) work:



Reading a parable of Jesus is always a somewhat unnerving experience. It redirects attention by means of "imaginative shock" (Funk 1966:138). No listener who gets caught up in the story, with its unexpected twists and turns, remains completely untouched. There is always the challenge of seeing the reality of this world and human existence differently.

Not all scholars agree with Crossan that parables are always and solely world "shattering". John B Cobb, jr (1980:158), for example, makes the case that we "cannot live by subversion alone". Cobb (1980:159) argues that by placing all stories on a single line, from world-establishing to world-subversion, Crossan fails to give enough attention to a parable's ability to "transform" the world of its listeners. Cobb (980:159) writes: "... to transform is neither to establish alone nor to subvert alone. It includes both. A world cannot be transformed without being shaken and disrupted, without losing its character of world. But this subversion in itself is not transformation, it is simply destruction." Cobb's statement is true, of course, and creates a valuable balance between destruction and transformation. The strength of Crossan's work, however, remains by its creating awareness of the subversive nature of Jesus' parables.

For a twenty-first century reader, the paradoxical and world-shattering nature of Jesus' parables may not always be self evident. The main reason here is that the twenty-first century reader (especially in the West) lives in a socially vastly different world. What for us might be socially acceptable behaviour, a father rushing towards his home-coming son; or a man (an Israelite) being helped by a "good" Samaritan, could be (and is) socially dishonourable behaviour and a

violation of human dignity. What seems to be an ordinary, epiphoric (illustrative) juxtaposition of entities, is discovered to be extraordinary and diaphoric (paradoxical), and as a result puzzling, demanding our attention.

Failure to register the social and cultural setting of the parables of Jesus will not only contribute to the failure of the interpreter to note their often paradoxical nature, but will also inevitably lead to a falling into anachronism. In this regard Herzog (1994:38) makes a helpful distinction between "anachronising" and "modernising". Modernising is advocated as being an inevitable condition of historical inquiry. Historians who read and interpret a text cannot detach themselves totally from their own world. To some extent, it is the very world of the historian that makes perception possible, whether it is done consciously or unconsciously. Anachronising is described by Herzog (1994:38) as "unconscious modernising". Failing to register the social and cultural world of the text, the modern interpreter unconsciously reads the world of the text as if it was his or her own. It is such "unconscious modernising" that often blurs the paradoxical and subversive nature of Jesus' parables. When however the paradox and the subversiveness of the parables are noticed, they pose an unsettling and highly absorbing challenge. This leads us to the last element in Dodd's definition.

3.5 The challenge of a parable

Dodd's definition on a parable concludes with the line: "... and leaving the mind in sufficient doubt about its precise application to tease it into active thought." The word "doubt" implies that the application of the parable is not specified; it remains open-ended, until the listeners are drawn into the parable and specify it for themselves (cf Funk 1966:133). The application does not form part of the parable itself. The parable "teases" and "ignites" thought. It challenges the listener to see the world differently. The application is concluded by the listeners in their own particular situation.

Within the Synoptic tradition, many parables *do* have an application. They

don't end with the "story"; the story concludes with an interpretation and application of sorts. But the application may destroy the metaphor as an instrument *creative* of meaning. The moment such an application has been made, the "meaning" of the parable tends to become fixed, and over a period of time crystallises into a general conclusion (cf Funk 1966:134). The metaphorical challenge of the parable is thus radically reduced. According to Borg (1997:12-14) this is a natural process when a novel metaphor (heard for the first time) is conventionalised (becomes part and parcel of everyday language use).

Borg's understanding of this process is closely associated with Ricoeur's understanding of religious language. Because of the metaphor's aptness to speak of the unknown (the transcendental world) in terms of the known (the empirical world), Ricoeur (cf Borg 1997:12-13; see also Du Toit 1984) has argued that religious experience invariably finds expression in metaphors. However over a period of time these metaphors become conventionalised to a point at which the metaphor has (in part) been forgotten. By way of example Borg (1997:13) refers to a number of metaphors which seek to express the relationship between Jesus and God, and/or Jesus and ourselves: Jesus as the servant of God, lamb of God, light of the world, bread of life, door, vine, shepherd, great high priest, son of God, wisdom of God. Once these metaphors have become common, they are systematised into a conceptual framework which culminates in the formulation of a fixed doctrine. The metaphor "son of God" serves as an example (cf Borg 1997:13-14). Originally a metaphor of intimate family *relationship*, it has through conceptual reflection developed into an ontological statement about the ultimate *status* of Jesus, climaxing in the doctrinal statements of the Nicene Creed: "only begotten Son of God", "true God of true God", and "of one substance as the Father". The initial "imaginative shock" (God actually being a "father" to us) has been replaced by a doctrinal statement to be believed and confessed.

When metaphors have undergone the process of "crystallisation" and "conceptual development" they cease to *function* as true metaphors. A true

metaphor continues to open out on a vibrant nexus of meaning. The interpreter therefore needs to resist the temptation to reduce a metaphor to a single clip (a "slide" or "photograph"), but should rather allow the movement of the imagery ignited by the metaphor to flow (a "video" or "film"). Funk's (1966:152) insistence that a metaphor is not to *be* interpreted, but that it *interprets*, has merit. By leaving a metaphor intact, it can live on indefinitely and can open out on a plurality of situations and a diversity of audiences.

The essence of a metaphor, and indeed of the parables of Jesus, is the element of surprise. When Jesus' parables are read as metaphors within the social setting of the first-century Mediterranean world, they reveal unexpected twists and turns, that are highly troublesome and intensely thought-provoking. Basic assumptions concerning human life and human perceptions of God are called into question. Questions are raised; but the parables themselves seldom resolve in a way designed to give an answer to the questions raised. They "tease into active thought". They challenge.

That a parable "challenges" is decisive to our understanding of *how* a metaphor, and hence the parables of Jesus as metaphorical stories function. Funk (1966:144) quotes Cadoux who advocates that "almost all the parables ... were spoken in attack or defence." Cadoux accordingly concludes that the parables of Jesus are "argumentative" in character; that is, points (set of ideas) are presented to persuade the listener into seeing something differently. But clearly Jesus' parables were not argumentative in the sense that valid premises for and against an argument were put forward which could either be verified or falsified. Instead, a world (a new vision of reality) was drawn which was juxtaposed with the conventional world of the audience. That being the case, the parables of Jesus are not "ideational" at all, with a set of ideas being "weighed-up" against one other (Funk 1966:149). *Worlds* are contrasted, revealing something new that was not there before. Literary critics describe parables as "aesthetic objects" and highlight their poetical quality. They are "works of art". As works of

art, the parables do not make one single point, but *impact* on the listeners' imagination as a whole. The *New Hermeneutics* has created awareness of the *performative* aspect of language and postulated that parables are "language events", and that listeners *experience* them as events. The challenge lies in the apparent difficulty of reconciling the two "worlds" with each other, the world of the everyday experience of the listeners, and the world of the parable. As a result of the challenge being posed, some listeners may "shut the door" on the alternative world of the parable, whereas others may "take up the challenge" and endeavour to enter this new world. The challenge is not an appeal to the will, "Do this", but rather "Consider seeing it this way" (Borg 1994:75). "This way" may be irreconcilably different to the world known and experienced by the listener.

Worlds being juxtaposed again raises the issue of reference (see our discussion in 3.2 above) and poses two related questions: (1) What is referred to by the parable? and (2) What is the direction of the reference? The "juxtaposition" of two worlds has been understood by some scholars as a total abolition of reference. This is however not the case. The word "juxtapose" is used consciously to contrast it with the word "transfer". This is done to distinguish between metaphor and allegory and also to guard against the traditional understanding of metaphor in which the meaning of one word is *transferred* to another word (substitution theory). Referencing remains central to the metaphorical process.

With regard to the parables of Jesus, the referent is in some cases explicitly named. In many cases, however, it is left unspecified. Of interest to us is, what Ricoeur (1981:239) has termed the "second-order" reference. The "first-order" reference, is the reference for the literal level, which is easily assessed when specified. The "second-order" reference, however, is for the nonliteral level - when the literal level is suspended. Whereas in Rabbinic parables the second-order reference, as assumed by the rabbis, is the *Torah*, the reference in Jesus' parables is the Kingdom (rule) of God, or more precisely its fictional re-description

(cf Scott 1990:48). This assumption is based on the centrality of the Kingdom of God in the language, message, and teaching of Jesus. The *status* of the Kingdom of God, however, remains a controversial issue and constitutes an ongoing debate. An invaluable contribution has been made by Norman Perrin. Since Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer the Kingdom of God has generally been understood as an apocalyptical concept, with both a present and a future dimension. Perrin (1976:33) however rejects the notion of a concept for Kingdom of God all together in favour of a *symbol*. A "concept" grasps cognitive experience and can be translated into discursive speech. A "symbol", however, is perceptive and experiential and cannot be substituted by some larger meaning or set of meanings. Perrin's understanding of symbol is based on the distinction made by Peter Wheelwright between *tensive* and *steno* symbols (see 2.1.2 above). "Kingdom of God" is not a *steno* symbol in a one-to-one relationship with what it describes, but a *tensive* symbol which by definition is open-ended and polyvalent. As a tensive symbol "Kingdom of God" does not describe one particular, fixed meaning, but is itself symbolic and incapable of complete capture. Scott (1990:61) contests that opting to interpret Jesus' parables exclusively against the background of the apocalyptic, restricts that which "Kingdom of God" as a symbol refers to. As a symbol in Jesus' parables "Kingdom of God " opens out on a much wider range of associations. The *mediate* referent of the parable on a "second" level is the Kingdom of God. But the *ultimate* referent is human reality in its wholeness (Scott:1990:62; Jones:1995:99).

Based on the above insight, we have used the word "worlds" to define the entities juxtaposed in the parables of Jesus. As such, "world" is used interchangeably with "worldview" (a view of reality), which includes a convergence of the temporal and the transcendent. A narrative (story) always reflects the worldview of the author. Accordingly, the parables of Jesus refer on a "second level" to the distinctive worldview of Jesus (or that of the evangelists). This in turn is juxtaposed with the worldview of the person or community to whom the parable

is addressed. The worldview of the storyteller (Jesus / evangelist) is reflected in the world of the fictional narrative; that of the listeners in the "everydayness" of the narrative and the repertoire of associations it calls to mind. Scott (1990:36) shows how the parables of Jesus repeatedly draw on the conventions of Israel's heritage. Their "everydayness" consists not only of events that could happen everyday, but out of allusions to well-known stories and themes in the history of Israel, termed "mythemes". The word "mytheme" consists of the two words "myth" and "theme". Again the word "myth" is not used in the popular sense of "made-up" stories , but as "world-establishing" stories (see above 3.4). Myths legitimise and sustain a social world; they confirm and further impress a dominant worldview on a particular society. An example of such a mytheme is that of the "two sons", a common theme in the Hebrew Bible: Cain and Abel, Ishmael and Isaac, Esau aund Jacob, and so on (cf Scott 1990:109; cf Syrén 1993). The younger son, although often a rogue, is portrayed as the favourite, with the older son usually portrayed as the one not loved by the father. A parable starting with "A man had two sons" immediately places the parable within a known story tradition (articulating a particular worldview). But as Crossan (1975:54-57) contests, Jesus' parables are not myth, but antimyth. The "challenge" posed to a new vision of reality leads the listener along the path of disordering the mythical world. The "mythical world" is juxtaposed with the "world of parable" in a diaphoric structure.

That scholars have often overlooked the diaphoric nature of Jesus' parables is related to the second question posed above: What is the direction of reference? For Scott (1990:47-51) this is a central issue in the understanding of the metaphorical process. Scott (1990:47) elaborates: "Does the transference go from parable to referent or the other way around? Does the referent determine the understanding of the parable? .... Is the parable a true illustration or is it dictated by what it illustrates?" The natural notion acceded to by most interpreters in the past is for the direction of movement to be from *referent* (Kingdom of God) to *parable*. In such a case the parable is indeed an ornament of something

already known and in need of further illustration but with no cognitive value in itself. The referent is used to determine how the parable is to be interpreted with the result that the first-order (literal) reference is often bypassed by the interpreter. An example given by Scott (1990:48-49) is the interpretation of the "leaven"in Matthew 13:33. Although leaven is a well-known example from the ancient world that stands for "corruption", interpreters consistently argue that in this parable "leaven" cannot signify that, because it is a parable of the Kingdom, that is, something "good". The parable is robbed of its cognitive value and indeed becomes an illustration of an already known referent, not to speak of the exegetical illegitimacy of bypassing the literal level for a secondary level. Scott (1990:49) argues for a movement from the *parable* to the *referent* (symbol), which allows for a "literal" understanding of the parable on the first level. This coheres with our understanding of metaphor as an *instrument* of knowledge. The metaphorical process remains one of juxtaposing two entities (worlds), exposing both similarities and differences between the parable and the referent. Whereas the substitution theory of metaphor (epiphor) taught us to focus on the similarities, the interaction theory of tension metaphors (diaphor) has taught us not only to take *notice* of the dissimilarities, but has *demanded* a connection. Demanding a connection, where no connection is naturally perceived, paves the way for a new vision. Strong dissimilarities should therefore not be bypassed, but heighten the awareness that the dissimilarity may well be a way of challenging a listener's vision of the referent. The choice in parable, as so rigorously advocated by Crossan (see 3.4 above), should however not be a choice of one (its diaphoric nature) *against* the other (its epiphoric nature). In essence, parable can do both, either exploit the associations (mythemes) that resound in the narrative (epiphor), or turn against them (diaphor) (cf Scott 1990:61). Invariably, however, the parables of Jesus pose a challenge. We believe that this challenge is not confined to the original audience, but is equally present in the context to which the parables have been transferred.

3.6 Parable and context

For the purpose of this study, in which we focus specifically on the *Lukan* metaphorical stories, the relationship between parable and context needs to be specified. Adopting the last clue of Dodd's definition discussed above, we stressed that the parables of Jesus are open-ended and as such pose a dynamic challenge to their listeners - in both their original setting as well as in the context into which they have been imported. That parables can so easily be introduced into different contexts' arises primarily from the polyvalent character of metaphorical language. The polyvalence of metaphorical language was especially pursued by Crossan. In *Cliffs of fall*, Crossan (1980:9-10) argues that no metaphor has a precise, univocal, absolute, or fixed meaning to begin with. It has by nature a "*void of meaning* at its core". This "void of meaning" awaits *discourse* to give it specification. The specification is as diverse as the number of contexts into which the metaphor is introduced. Snodgrass (2000:21) draws attention to the different ways in which people use "polyvalence". Blomberg (1990:163) uses "polyvalence" to refer to multiple points made by a parable if read from the multiple perspectives of the characters within the story. He is not interested in reading the parables in any context other than that provided by the gospel writers. Crossan (1980:9-10), however, uses "polyvalence" to refer to the multiple meanings the reader may assign to parables from reading them in various different contexts (see also Funk 1996:187).

As metaphors, parables are not confined to one *Sitz im Leben*. They have a freedom of independence. The original context in which a particular parable was initially used can therefore also not determine the "true" (universal) meaning of the parable in all contexts. The meaning is always dependent on the context. The challenge posed by the *Lukan* metaphorical stories could, for example, be quite different from the challenge posed by the "same parable" when used by Jesus. This should not be confused with the endeavour of an interpreter to obtain insight into the historical situation of a particular parable. Historical insight is indeed

essential to avoid misunderstanding and an arbitrary, ethnocentric, and misdirected reinterpretation of a parable. But an interpretation of the parables *in Luke* (or in one of the other evangelists) is not dependent on the interpretation of the same (or a similar) parable told by Jesus in a different social setting and to a different audience. Hypothetically there may either be continuity or discontinuity between a particular parable as used by Jesus and Luke. Many scholars have reflected on both similarities and differences in meaning. The focus of this study, however, is not to determine whether there is continuity or discontinuity between Jesus or Luke, but to determine *how* the Lukan metaphorical stories (of which the text is available and does not need to be reconstructed) challenged the conventional worldview of the audience addressed by *Luke*. Our focus on Luke is highlighted by the *Sondergut* status of the three parables selected for explication in this study. In this regard, however, it should be noted again, that as narrative fictions, parables have priority over their context. The parable interprets the context (Scott 1990:41-42).

Like Jesus, who told parables to communicate with his audience, Luke selected, edited, reworked (and possibly created) parables to address the needs of his community. The parables of Luke are therefore "in service of his own age and theology" (Kingsbury, cited by Herzog 1994:45). They are addressed to a particular community and are intended to *impact* on that community. As such, we must not only know what is written in the parable, but also the situation of the community. To understand the "part", we need to know the "whole". The need to know the situation of the community, makes it imperative for the interpreter to take cognisance of the social, political, cultural, and economic context of the first-century Mediterranean world in which the Gospel narrative features. Herzog's (1994) *Parables as subversive speech* is a good example of such an endeavour. In contrast to Herzog however, who focuses on the challenge that Luke's parables posed to the social and economic inequalities so prevalent in the first-century Mediterranean world, our focus falls primarily on how conventional visions of

reality (often the cause of their social and economic inequalities) were challenged and subverted by the parables told by Luke. This endeavour is based on the insight that narratives (stories) articulate worldviews (see chapter 2 above). A narrative, such as the Gospel of Luke, reflects the worldview of the particular community it is addressed to. It discloses "a world already graced and a mode of human being that corresponds to that world" (Jones 1995:77). Similarly the choice of a metaphor (a parable) reflects the author's worldview, which through narrative fiction is juxtaposed with the world of the community. As a language event, the parable as a metaphorical story challenges the reader to see life and the world in a new way. Or more precisely, by building associations, creating interest, evoking sympathy and understanding, while at the same twisting, turning and subverting, the parable *creates* a reality into which the reader is challenged to enter.

Imperative for the interpretation of the *Lukan* metaphorical story is insights into the "worlds" created by Luke, both his narrative world, as well as the social, cultural, religious, and political world of his community.

We proceed in chapter 4 with an investigation of these worlds.