

Exegetical Application of the Parable of the Net (Matthew 13:47-50) in Nigerian Context

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Abstract

Using the inculturation hermeneutics model to read the parable of the net in Matthew 13:47-50 in Nigerian context, this paper showed that the parable was an encouragement to sustain moral values in the society. It was also discovered that the simultaneous coexistence between good and evil in the society is inevitable but doing nothing about is rather more dangerous to human society, hence the aim of this paper is to exegetically apply the parable in Matthew 13:47-50 in the context of ethical values. Ethical values are seen as the key that helps to check evil in the society including that of Nigeria. at the expense of true justice. The concept of *basileia ton ouranon* (the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God) was not only to be interpreted and applied as an abstract entity but translation of the kingdom in the affairs of human societies. The metaphoric use of the phrase “gnashing of teeth and furnace of fire” were indications of eminent judgment that await evil men at the consummation of time and contemporary concretization of sanction against evil. The paper was concluded with the inference that every institution in Nigeria: including Christian, political and traditional institutions should learnt from this parable of the eminent danger that are associated with evil and as such the church and all ties of government in Nigeria called upon to cultivate the habit of honouring those who have done well and punishing those who perpetuate evil in the society.

1 Introduction

The Parable of the Net as recorded in Matthew 13:47-50 present some imageries which are literarily and culturally familiar with Nigerian socio-cultural context. Imageries such as fishing is very familiar with Nigerians especially those in the riverine areas. Using the parable of the net to drive home the message of ethical moral decorum in the society, it could be represented in Nigerian socio-cultural context. This work therefore, is a contextual interpretation of the parable of the net as recorded in Matthew 13:47-50. The inculturation hermeneutics model shall be explored as a methodology in this reading. This is a methodology that treat both the cultural and secular aspect of the society as interconnected. The parable of the net as could be seen within the cultural context of the Jewish people, was used to create awareness that there are physical and spiritual capable institutions that have been empowered by God to determining what is good or bad and punish evil.

In the immediate setting of Matthew 13:47-50, there were imageries employed to drive home the message for the hearers of the parable. The imageries include: boat and net (instrument), fishermen (professionals) and fishing (to catch fish through the aid of the net) and selection (distinguishing between good or bad). The issue of good and evil is not strange to Nigerians. Although, the concept of evil may vary from place to place with some nuances, at least every society has one concept or the other about good and bad. Here the aim of this paper is to exegetically apply the parable in Matthew 13:47-50 in the context of ethical values in Nigeria. In this context, Matthew 13:47-50 is read into the parameter of distinguishing between good and evil and how institutions in Nigeria could be read into the activities of encouraging good and condemning evil (bad) in Nigeria.

One problem which this paper intends to address is the strong romance between good and evil in Nigeria. This strong romance between good and evil sometimes make it difficult to totally distinguish between good and evil even though people in the society are not ignorant of the presence of evil in the midst of good in Nigeria. When bad or evil is allowed for too long, it will be mistaken for good hence the need to distinguish between good and bad, encourage good and condemn evil in the society is very paramount to the moral probity of a society such as Nigeria.

2 What is Parable?

Parables are usually stories out of ordinary life used to illustrate spiritual or moral truth and sometimes used in form of brief similes, comparisons, analogies or proverbial sayings. Ordinarily they had a simple main point and not every detail was meant to have significance.¹ Within the methodology of inculturation hermeneutics used here the following assumptions are made about parable: parables are plurivalent, hence a parable may have different applications in different contexts; parables are about the realization of the rule of God on earth, that is, the putting into practice the sort of structure of relationships in the world that would express Jesus' vision of God's rule and actions on earth; the parables of Jesus have meaning on at least two levels that are interconnected that is, the human-human level and the divine-human level; parables are a critique of human relations and interaction in society; this is the human-human level and the other level points to God's perspective on such situations and this is called the divine – human level and thus the study of any parable involves bringing to light these two aspects of the story which suggests that a purely spiritualized interpretation is therefore eschewed;² parables are stories, and as such all aspects of the story including literary and stylistic devices are important for appropriating them and their messages, thus no aspect of the story is to be seen as insignificant; parables are concerned with concrete situations and events not abstract concepts or theories,³ and as such in the parables, real life issues and concrete situations in the society are discussed in a veiled way contrasting them with the vision of God's rule that Jesus had come to inaugurate (cf. Mark 12: 1-12); and parables are meant to challenge the hearers⁴ and invite them to decision and commitment, in the light of Jesus' vision of God's rule on earth, about situations in society then and now hence they are to be interpreted dynamically in our contemporary context. A very important part of the study of any parable therefore is recognizing the challenge or challenges it issues to the hearers.

3 Inculturation Hermeneutics: A Contextual Methodology

The methodology that will be adopted for this study is the Inculturation Hermeneutics model. This model is one of the African contextual approaches to biblical interpretation. Ukpong⁵ opines that the

inculturation hermeneutics model is a methodology that treat the religious and secular aspect of culture as interconnected. Moreover, Ukpong postulated that there are two approaches in this model.⁶ One is concerned with the socio-cultural critique of biblical texts as exemplified by Onwu⁷ and seeks to uncover and bring to critical consciousness, and then deconstruct texts that could be used in a way that is not Good News, that is, text that could be used to reinforce oppression in the society. The other approach, exemplified in Ukpong⁸ and Adewale⁹ engages the socio-cultural appropriation of texts. Its goal is to appropriate texts critically in a way that makes them Good News in a contemporary context. In this case, the reading of the parable of the Net shall not just see fishermen using boat and net to catch fish but shall see the passage as a narrative that gave deeper meaning in the time of Jesus then and now.

4 Contemporary Context of Interpretation of Matthew 13:47-50

The specific contemporary context of this reading of the parable of the net is the situation of distinguishing between good and bad by the use of moral institutions in Nigeria. Not that Nigeria and her moral institutions are ignorant of good and bad (evil) in the society but the need to remind such institutions to double efforts in the fight against evil in the Nigerian society is important. It is a common place to see hard working people who do not have godfathers at the top being frosted and retiring in penury. It is also a common place to see good and great people in Nigeria being rewarded after death with eulogies and memorial monuments to immortalize their names. Although good is being rewarded in Nigeria, those so rewarded and encouraged are very few when compared to those who made it through crook and hook means. In Nigeria, it seems evil is prevailing over good and as such it is not out of place to see institutions such as the Judiciary and law enforcement agents, religious and traditional institutions failing in their responsibility of chasing evil away or punishing evil in the society. For example, it was alleged in Delta State that a police officer who was saddled with the responsibility of anti-kidnapping squad was a collaborator of kidnappers in the State.¹⁰ Cases in court stay longer than necessary thereby delaying Justice. Some Judges give judgments that seem to encourage corruption. One example among others is the

recent controversial judgment that gave soft landing to Mr. John Yusufu, the former head of the Police Pension Board who was discovered to have embezzled N23.3 billion of the police pension fund.¹² Law enforcement is deteriorating due to some corrupt elements in the Nigerian police force who take bribes at the expense of justice. Although, in Nigeria, some judges, pastors, police officers, traditional and political leaders are doing well in the fight against evil, the need to intensify effort is not out of place.

Another example of evil in Nigeria is the growth of corruption in Nigeria especially among public office holders.¹¹ It is no observed that some public office holders loot the money of the nation for their personal gain. It is unfortunate to note that terrorism now exist in the Northern part of the nation and robbery and kidnapping very rampant in the southern part. All these evils may have grown over time in Nigeria because, probably, there were some people who were fueling them in one way or the other. Ritual killings, prostitution and human trafficking are also thriving evils in Nigeria today even though the law enforcement agents are trying hard to stop it them.

5.1 The Greek Text of Matthew 13:47-50

47 Πάλιν ὁμοία ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν σαγήνη βληθείση εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν καὶ ἐκ παντὸς γένους συναγαγούση· 48 ἦν ὅτε ἐπληρώθη ἀναβιβάσαντες ἐπὶ τὸν αἰγιαλὸν καὶ καθίσαντες συνέλεξαν τὰ καλὰ εἰς ἄγην, τὰ δὲ σαπρὰ ἔξω ἔβαλον. 49 οὕτως ἔσται ἐν τῇ συντελείᾳ τοῦ αἰῶνος· ἐξελεύσονται οἱ ἄγγελοι καὶ ἀφοριοῦσιν τοὺς πονηροὺς ἐκ μέσου τῶν δικαίων 50 καὶ βαλοῦσιν αὐτοὺς εἰς τὴν κάμινον τοῦ πυρός· ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων.

5.2 The English Translation of Matthew 13:47-50

47 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net which was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind; 48 when it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into vessels but threw away the bad. 49 So it will be at the close of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous, 50 and throw them into the furnace of fire; there men will weep and gnash their teeth.

5.3 The Setting of Matthew 13:47-50

This text is pointing out the fact that there are both bad and good people in the community in which this text was written. It was a puzzle of how evil can be detected and punished. There was a crisis situation between the Pharisees and Jesus Christ. While the Pharisees try to paint Jesus to the people as an evil person (criminal) by calling Him Beelzebub the prince of demon (Matt. 12:22-24), Jesus on the other hand, knew them as being evil and corrupt in their judicial activities. The text under consideration tends to pose another question here: how and who determines who is a criminal and who is innocent in the society? This is a crisis between conservatism and radicalism. According to Kelly in the above understanding of the text, he writes that:

the creative milieu (*Sitz-im-leben*) of Matthew contained conservatism and radicalism. This evangelist seeks to steer between the two extremes. His most obvious criticism is directed against the Scribes and Pharisees who represented the conservative element (Matt. 23: 13-16).¹³

At this time, there were temple police who were acting under the whims and comprises of the teachers of the law. They were so far from justice and investigation because they seem to have no conscience. By this time the Jewish people were under the Roman authority and as such they have no power to carry out capital punishment.¹⁴ The Roman authority had established institutions that sanction crimes which they consider to be against their laws. Jesus knew the evil in the hearts of the Pharisees against Him. Hence, this parable is a warning against evil intentions.

In the Old Testament prophets were always sent by God to warn the children of Israel to repent from their evil or face an impending doom that await the boom of evil in the society.¹⁵ This same warning system was also very glary during the time of Noah when God warned the people then against the impending judgment by flood against ungodliness.¹⁶ The parable of the Net in Matthew 13:47-50 is situated in the context of warning against evil and the reward of doing good. This was given to the Pharisees to beware of the judgment that await evil people. The audience of the setting of the parable were warned so as to have a repentant heart. On the other hand, Gerhardson

opines that: “the famous parable in chapter 13 of Matthew’s Gospel, is constructed on the basis, firstly of the SHEMA, secondly, of the text from Old Testament and thirdly, in the case of rabbinic moral theology.”¹⁷

This background might explain Matthew’s polemic against the scribes and Pharisees. Jesus’ concept of morality was quite different from that of the Pharisees. While the former advocates righteousness by example, the later operate the principle of “do as I say not as I do.” The Pharisees perverted justice in the name of piety and religion. This was so clear in their advocacy for the release of a notorious criminal in the stead of a righteous man, Jesus Christ (Matthew. 27: 15-26).

Adeney¹⁸ states that, Jesus’ teaching was drawing the attention of his listeners more than the Pharisees and this was a problem to them because such an attention was expected to be arrogated to them. At this period, the chief priests and the Pharisees formed the upper class. Farmers, artisans and small business made up most of the population.¹⁹ The primary audience of Jesus in this context were people in Israel (particularly Galilee) who were familiar with the activities of fishing. By mentioning good and bad and separation of good and bad, it shows that there is going to be a time for judgment and the judgment must be handled by a competent judge (God) who will dispense justice without fear or favour at the consummation of time.

6.1 Exegesis of Matthew 13:47-50

The major theme of the text is βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν-*basileia ton ouranon* (v.47). The Greek phrase *basileia ton ouranon* is translated the kingdom of Heaven. The Greek word *basileia* means royal power, kingship, dominion, rule and it also refers to the reign of the Messiah. On the other hand *ouranos* means the sky, God’s dwelling, etc. The Greek word *basileia* (Kingdom) carries two understanding, first, it refers to the authority to rule and second, it refers to the realm over which the reign is exercised. The Hebrew equivalents of *basileia* include *meluka* (royal dominion, reign), *malku* (kingship), *malkut* (kingdom, empire, realm, royal power, position as a king, royal estate), *mamlaka* (royal dominion, reign) and *mamlakut* (kingdom, realm, royal dominion, reign).²⁰ The Greek noun *basilokos* denote noble or royal official. Although, God is seen in this context as the supreme king who is in charge of the kingdom, He also gave men

the privilege to occupy earthly leadership position to lead with righteousness. The kingdom of God in a general sense means the rule of God and His divine kingly authority.²¹ The concept of the kingdom of heaven as used in the gospel of Matthew could refer to four different interpretations. First, it refers to the transcendence of God of which the Jews out of reverence to God prefer not to call His name instead heaven is used. Second, the kingdom of heaven (God) was personified by the presence of the Messiah, Jesus the *Christos*. Third, the kingdom is seen as the place where God's rules dwell and is being observed by His subjects and by implication; it is expected to dwell on earth in the hearts of men to guide humans against evil or wrong doings. Fourth, the kingdom of heaven also refers to an eschatological kingdom in which God the righteous king is going to judge all deeds of mankind at the consummation of the *parousia* as envisaged in verse 50. When Christians and sundry in Nigeria willingly observe the rules of God in their hearts, the positive change Nigerians are searching for will be visible and realizable. When the rules of God control the hearts of men in Nigeria, the real observation of the rule of law, abstinence from evil which the Christians in Nigerian have been preaching, will become more visible and applicable in the church and the society. What goes on in this kingdom was represented with familiar imageries in and around the Sea of Galilee. The imageries include σαγήνη-*sagene* (dragnet) and θάλασσαν-*thalassan* (sea). The dragnet that was spread on the *thalasa* caught παντός-*pantos* (all, every, all things); γένος-*genos* (kinds, race) and συναγα-*sunaga* (to gather together). In other words, the net was able to gather all kinds of things together. It is suggested that the parable of the net was created assuming that the reader was familiar with the fishing in the Sea of Galilee, such as in Mark 1:16-20. According to Smith,²² the fishing net used in the Sea of Galilee called "dragnet", was very large and tossed out into the water with the help of the boat swinging around in a half circle. After being cast in the water for quite some time supported by floats, the net was pulled onto shore with ropes. There are said to be over two dozen different species of fish caught in these nets. Not only were fish caught, but other sea creatures as well; hence why some versions of the Bible use the term "fish" and others use the term "species". The comparison of sea creatures to the wicked and righteous is used because the fisherman would pick through the batch and throw out anything that was not of use to them.²³

Other major themes in this parable as encapsulated in verses 48-49 are *καλὰ-kala* or *kalos* (good) *σαπρὰ-sapra* or *sapros* (rotten, worthless, unwholeness, corrupt). In verse 49 it reads: *πονηροὺς ἐκ μέσου τῶν δικαίων –ponerous ek mesou ton dikaion* (separating the good from the evil). Another New Testament Greek word that is used synonymously with *kalos* is *agathos* and both of them mean good and its Hebrew equivalent, *tob* referred to an ethical connotation of moral goodness and what is right.²⁴ It also means ethical or moral value. Moreover, other New Testament Greek renditions of bad include *ponerous* meaning negative quality of an object, evil, wickedness, crime, the negative moral quality of a person or action opposed to God and His goodness, wicked deed, wicked thing, the evil one, grievous, harm, lewd, malicious; and *kakos* meaning evil, wrong, wicked, bad, a perversion of what pertains to goodness, moral wrong, noisome.²⁵ The Hebrew Language equivalent of *sapros*, *ponerous* or *kakos* is rendered in Jeremiah 24:2 as *roa* and it means bad, disagreement, inferior in quality, evil, wicked in ethical quality, naughtiness, sadness or sorrow.²⁶ Matthew uses the term evil 26 times in his book. This is twice as much as Luke uses which are thirteen.²⁷ The term evil is not specifically used in this passage but the message is the same. It speaks of separating the “wicked” from the “righteous”. These “evil” and “wicked” people Jesus refers to are those who choose to stray from God and his ways. They are those who choose to not accept the gift of salvation from Jesus. The other In Nigeria good and evil can be distinguished with moral and ethical values and the constitution in both the traditional and political settings of the society respectively. Among the Christians in Nigeria good and evil are distinguished by the Bible, and among the Muslims in Nigeria, good and evil are distinguished by the Quran. Although, morality and ethics are relative, Christian standard of righteousness and holiness is universal. This is what the kingdom of God represents before Christians. The wicked, whether those in the immediate setting of the parable or Nigeria cannot go unpunished by God and the society.

Verse 50 speaks on the kind of punishment that will be meted on the wicked. The punishment of the wicked is depicted in verse 50 with *κάμνον τοῦ πυρός* (finance of fire). The expression of the pain which the wicked will experience in the finance of fire is described with *κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων* (weeping and gnashing of teeth). Both the Hebrew *es* and Greek *pyr* which were translated for

fire can figuratively mean the presence of God, purification but in this context they both carry the figurative meaning of fury and indignation (cf. Isaiah 30:27;66:15) and punishment (cf. Gen. 19:24).²⁸ According to Sim, the phrase, “weeping and gnashing of teeth” can be situated in six functional contexts, viz: eschatological woes; arrival of a saviour figure; judgment; fate of the righteous; fate of the wicked; and imminent expectations of the end of time.²⁹ In the opinion of Erdey and Smith the phrase glues together the passages that communicate a holistic theology of end-of-time judgment.³⁰ This fearful picture of the punishment of the wicked is a warning against evil doing and to deter people especially followers of Christ against being involved in evil or wickedness.³¹ Many modern versions of the Bible use the term “fish” when referring to the catch. In earlier texts words such as “species”, or “gathered of every kind”, are used instead to stray away from any specific kind of animal or species. The catch in the net is referred to final judgment day when God will take those who followed him in their earthly lives and send those to hell who turned their backs. The parable of the net is the last of a pattern of several parables speaking of final judgment.³²

6.2 Socio-Cultural Implications of Matthew 13:46-50 in Nigeria

i. Encouragement of Moral Values (vv.47-48): The picture around the *sagene* (dragnet) catching all kinds of things which reflected both good and evil show that the society of man under the earthly kingdom is a mixed multitude. It is filled with those with good intentions as well as those with evil intentions. In this case, the main subject in the story of the parable is punishment of wickedness. Social issues cannot be isolated from human day to day living. Every society lives within a societal culture. Nigeria is a heterogeneous entity with over 250 indigenous ethnic groups, the major ones being the Yoruba, Hausa and Ibo. Some other ethnic groups considered to be minority ethnic groups in Nigeria include the Anang, Edo, Efik, Fulani, Tiv, Ibibio, Igala, Jukun, Itsekiri, Urhobo, Nupe, Bata and Angas³³ among others. Among all of these groups the concept of good and evil are relative in some areas but unanimous in some areas due to the divergences in culture, language, social structure, economic, political and religious factors. Generally, in Nigeria, the term evil is subsumed in the concept of moral values which deals essentially with what is desirable and undesirable in

a people value system.³⁴ While the sociologists argue that morality originated from the society and that the society places some sanctions and demands on the individuals which they must observe for the purpose of its peaceful continuity to avoid chaos and disintegration, the anthropologists contend that moral values are products of man's common sense of the knowledge of good and bad, right and wrong and therefore, a product of man's accumulated wealth of experience over the years.³⁵ Nigerians hold a divergent view from that of the sociological and anthropological views on good and bad. To Nigerians, moral values which are many and varied are not just human invention or product of the society but the fruit or offshoot of religion as a result of the sanctions and demands of the Supreme Being (God), divinities and the ancestors.³⁶ Moreover, all the regulations, prohibitions, taboos, traditions, customs, laws, statutes, injunctions and covenants in Nigerian communities are primarily in force due to the sanctions of the supernatural beings.³⁷ In this line of thought, Hachett and Olupona postulate that if Nigeria must realize the important role of moral values, the nation should place values on moral standards.³⁸ In order to fight evil or crime in the Nigerian society, the introduction of norms and values were used to check the society against evil.³⁹ These norms and values were formulated into regulations that guides every individual in the society. In many of our Nigerian cultures, incest, homicide, armed robbery, thieving, adultery, witchcraft, cheating, breaking and entry, etc are regarded as evil. This concept is not different from that of the Jews in which Jesus spoke about the parable of the Net of which God is seen as a one who will judge evil doers in His coming kingdom. If the parable refers to the separation of good from bad, it therefore resonates with sanction against evil. Politically, in Nigeria, armed robbery, kidnapping, cheating, corruption, rape, murder, terrorism, assassination, etc are being regarded as crimes against God and humanity. In Nigeria today, norms and values and corresponding punishments are enshrined in the constitution. Sometimes when some of these crimes take place, it is difficult to know who did it. It is so because most evils that are being perpetuated in Nigeria are being done in the dark. Sometimes, it amazes one to see that some of the people behind the heinous and hideous crimes in the society are even nobles on whom the lives and the properties of the people of the society have been entrusted to protect.

ii. Translation of God's Rules to Human Society (vv.47-50): It is true that Scripture does encourage one to think of the kingdom in terms of a

state that can be entered into, in terms of a possession to be enjoyed, even in terms of a spatial, material realm. Yet in the primary sense the kingdom of God is the divine kingly dominion exercising itself. Jesus' own explanation of the significance of his casting out demons (Matthew 12:28, Mark 3:27, Luke 11 :20) is only one of the ways in which Jesus makes this clear.⁴⁰ In Nigeria, the kingdom being referred to in Matthew 13:47-50 can correspond to the State since the Greek noun *basilikos* referred to empire, sovereignty, entity and rulership. Although, the kingdom of God is being referred to as spiritual and as where the rules of God are being observed, God has also made humans to govern the affairs of fellow humans in such a way that there will be law and order in the society. Paul alluded to this line of thought when he addressed Christians to be loyal to constituted civic authority.⁴¹ It will be aberration to see Christians violating the law of their land when it does not infringe on their Christian practice. In Nigeria, there are institutions that are saddled with the responsibility to imposed sanctions on offenders or deviants in the society so as to control the behaviours of human beings in the community. This is being carried in Nigeria because of the mixed multitudes the reside together in the society like that of the *sagene* (dagnet) and *thalasa* (sea) in the setting of the parable in Matthew 13: 47-50. Both the dagnet and sea can also be seen as a picture of a community that is harboring mixed multitudes of people consisting good and evil. Traditional institutions as well as religious and political institutions in Nigeria are saddled with the responsibility of sanctioning evil people so to serve as deterrent to those with similar evil intentions. Impunity should not be allowed to thrive in any sphere of Nigerian life. Moreover, traditional institutions as well as religious and political institutions should be empowered enough to detect and sanction evil in Nigeria. In a nutshell, the lesson from the parable of the net calls on the society and her institutions to employ ethical values⁴² (high regard for morality or upright behaviour) in carrying out the task of prevention and punishment of evil in the Nigeria.

One of such meanings among others is the activities of men in which evil or bad behaviours are rightly judged now and also will be eschatological judged by God. By implication, the society must be ware of evil. While the society is encouraged by this parable to discourage evil, the evil man will not go unpunished by God. One of the ways evil or criminality can be discouraged in Nigeria is to make

laws against evil and such laws are expected to be enforced by the law enforcement agents in Nigeria to forestall law and order in the society. This is the aspect this parable will be read in this work.

iii. Eschatological Reality Unfolded in Human Traditional Riddles (v.47-50): In verse 10 and 11 of Matthew 13, Jesus affirmed that His use of parable where intended to reveal the secrets of the kingdom in an obscure manner so as to make the hearer puzzle and rack the intellect to be able to understand it. In verse 47, the figure of speech used is simile which indicate and indirect comparison of the Kingdom of God and that of what is happening in the community of humans. This can be easily understood by a typical traditional Nigerian philosophers when thought in the local language and with familiar illustration. In Nigeria parables and idioms are part of the folklores and speeches of traditional philosophers. One of the ways to test the wisdom of an elder in *Urhoboland* for instance, is the ability of such an elder to express himself in parables and idioms. Parables in Africa go beyond a mere expression of words, for they carry within them deeper thoughts and obscure meanings. Sometimes, the youths find it difficult to spontaneously comprehend parables in Nigeria. One purpose for the use of parables in Nigeria cultural milieu is to allow the hearer to develop a critical mind in digging out the information or message for which the parable was intended. This is why the Nigerian cultural elder can be seen as a Natural traditional philosopher. Some times when the village *Juju* (idol) priest in *Iboland* for instance wants to pass out a message from the gods, he speaks in parables and when he speaks in parables, the diligent elders understand. Some examples of parables and their meanings in Nigeria can be seen below.

Table 1: Some Parables in Nigeria

Parables	Tribes	Meanings
He who brings cola brings life.	Ibo	Such person is a peaceful person.
When we finish eating we sit.	Urhobo	Let us proceed to the farm after eating.
A delicious soup is killed by Money.	Yoruba	with money you can buy what you want.
When a child washes his hands clean, he dines with	Ibo	the wise child knows how to relate with elders.

elders.		
If you wait for the harvest of the yellow yam, you will not have the fruit of annual harvest.	Edo	Do not stay idle, just do something useful.

7 Recommendations

In addition to what has been said above about how to deal with evil in Nigeria it will be wise therefore to make the following recommendations:

- i. grassroots policing should be introduced in Nigeria by way of establishment of local and state security formations in addition to federal formation Nigeria already has;
- ii. both traditional and religious institutions in Nigeria should be adequately empowered and utilized by the political institutions to fight against evil in the society;
- iii. in order to be faire and hold justice in high esteem in Nigeria, those saddled with the responsibility of adjudication and arbitration especially the judiciary and traditional institutions should be patience, thoroughness, discipline, display high level of intelligence, and eschew taking of bribes; and
- iv. the Nigerian child and youths should be educated as to how to distinguish between good and bad through moral teachings of traditional and religious institutions to have regard for God's law, respect elders, respect constituted authority and respect the law of the land.

8 Conclusion

This work has shown that the parable of the Net in Matthew 13:47-50 not about the net and the sea but literary imageries to concretize what is happening in the society of human beings and how the action of man in the society will be judged by God at the consummation of time. It also depict the inevitability of the simultaneous coexistence of good and evil in the human society. The setting of the parable revealed that the parable was a warning against the evil of the Pharisees and recalcitrant people who reject the righteous rule of God before the *parousia*. The parable refers to the activities of men of which some where doing good and some doing evil

to fellow man and the society. The parable also showed how God the right and perfect judge will bring to consummation the eschatological punishment that is awaiting the wicked.

In all of these, the socio-cultural lesson the can be learnt by Nigerians is how to encourage moral values, translation God's rules to human society and read accurately the eschatological reality that has been unfolded in Jesus' Parable. Every institution in Nigeria, including Christian , political and traditional institutions should have learnt from this parable of the eminent danger that associate with evil. The church and all ties of government in Nigeria need to cultivate the habit of honouring those who have done well and punishing those who perpetuate evil. The issue of dealing with social deviants or culprit of crimes should not only be seen in a futuristic sense but also be addressed in the present day society like Nigeria.

Endnotes/References

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