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Touched By the Master: Luke Presents Jesus

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*Touched
by the
Master*
*Luke portrays
Jesus*

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October 23-28, 1995*

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Harding's 72nd annual Bible Lectureship has brought together some of the church's best-known speakers to explore the theme "Touched by the Master: Luke Presents Jesus."

The 1995 Lectureship continues Harding's tradition of textual studies that can have an impact on our ministries today. Luke's gospel is an important study in the way Jesus ministered to people and how He reached out to touch the lives of individuals who were hurting both physically and spiritually.

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Harding is in the business of changing lives and developing Christian servants. Our mission is to help individuals develop a deeper, stronger relationship with God. To achieve that goal we provide this 72nd annual Lectureship as a faith-building experience. By imitating the Christ portrayed in Luke's gospel, we can change the world around us.

— *President David B. Burks*

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Harding University's 72nd Annual
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Touched By The Master:
Luke Presents Jesus

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Harding University's 72nd Annual
Bible Lectureship

*Touched By The Master:
Luke Presents Jesus*

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FORWARD

Lectureships represent both a mirror and a billboard for our fellowship: a mirror in that the lectures are to reflect clearly the Word of God; a billboard, because the themes and classes show the concerns organizers think are important at the time.

This year's theme, "Touched by the Master: Luke Presents Jesus," is a timely collection of lectures. Students of world cultures say that modern man is weary and in search of a hopeful future. Two questions which are being asked are "What will happen to people as we move from the Cold War era into an uncharted course in international politics?" and "What is going to happen to American culture as she becomes a more pluralistic society?"

While answers to the above concerns are not finalized, it seems evident that followers of Christ are faced with the challenge of being genuine Christians in the modern world. For years our fellowship has advocated a return to First Century Christianity. That concern is still important. However, there is also the challenge to bring the timeless essence of First Century Christianity into the fabric of today's culture.

Jesus did not accept Pharisaical codification as Godly behavior in first century culture; rather he called people back to the intent of the Word of God. He reached out to the lost and down-trodden to give them a life which is known only in Him. He put into Christianity the fact that to the world crosses are for dying, but baptism is a resurrection to a new life which seeks to connect with people and give them hope.

Therefore, early Christians felt their mission was to take the gospel to all people and teach them that God loves them, wants to save them, and wants them live in fellowship with one another. As the New Testament shows, they transcended culture to achieve this God sent commission. Some of them came to be known as "risk takers," a word found in Philippians 2:30. They cared for the sick, the

outcasts, people no one else wanted, and even risked their lives in order to help them.

In America, with government programs being cut back, with people being victimized by a greedy and immoral society, the need for Christianity is becoming more and more apparent. Our fellowship has but two choices: either pass by on the other side, or seek to be of significant help to the victims of sin. The intent of this lectureship is to inform and to motivate us to reach out and demonstrate that type of compassion which we have found in Christ. May the world say of our fellowship, "They have been with Jesus."

Allan Isom
Lectureship Director

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THEME
LECTURES

CROSSES ARE FOR DYING

JIMMY ALLEN

INTRODUCTION

In modern American society, crosses are considered to be beautiful. A gold-plated cross on a necklace or bracelet is described as "simply lovely." Expensive crosses on church buildings, shiny crosses on communion sets, carved crosses on communion tables, and hand-stitched crosses on communion table cloths have an aesthetic appeal to many. A row of white crosses in a military cemetery is beautiful to behold (although dead bodies are buried beneath them). Men in their fifties and sixties sometimes wear their shirts open exposing chests full of grey hair and crosses that sparkle because they think this promotes the illusion of youth.

Assemble the correct words to describe the beauty of an electric chair, gallows, lethal injection, gas chamber, or a headman's sword. As far as these instruments of death are concerned, beauty is understood to be their exact opposite. Well, the cross was a means of execution and fits into the same category as our modern ways of fulfilling the death penalty. To say the least, the cross is not beautiful!

From the text, crosses were clearly meant to be carried because the condemned had to carry them to their places of execution. Eventually, however, crosses were for dying. Jews captured trying to escape Jerusalem during its siege by the Romans in A.D. 69-70 were crucified in sight of the city's walls. When the community finally collapsed, there were 30,000 rotting bodies hanging on crosses. Those who died and those who viewed their suspended bodies knew

that crosses were for dying. Anyone who has seen the latter part of the movie *Spartacus* will remember the dead and dying men crucified on both sides of a road outside of Rome. Crosses, invented by the Carthaginians in the third century B.C. and borrowed by the Romans, were for killing. Obviously, men would have died quicker had they been executed in other ways. However, death on a cross was intended not only to be agonizing, but also humiliating. Generally, it took a normal, healthy man two or three days to die by crucifixion.

In the first century, crosses were reserved for those considered to be debased criminals, thugs, hoodlums, and other similar scum who plagued the earth. Regardless of what a Roman citizen did, it was illegal to execute him by crucifixion. Cicero expressed the typical Roman attitude when he said, "Not only let the cross be absent from the person of Roman citizens, but its very name from their thoughts, yes, and ears."

JESUS WAS CRUCIFIED

From our study of the New Testament, we all know that Jesus was crucified. Of the tens of thousands who died in this manner, he is, perhaps, the only one remembered. A few also know the tradition about Peter's dying on a cross with his head to the ground. This is true because he alone was raised from the dead! A Muslim once said to a Christian, "We know where our prophet is buried, but you don't even know where your prophet is buried." The Christian replied, "There is quite a difference. Your prophet is still in his grave, but ours has been raised. It is rather difficult to locate one's tomb after he has left it."

Jesus suffered physically in those events which led up to and included his crucifixion. This is true because he had a physical body just as we do. The beating with the flagellum, a scourge similar to our cat-o'-nine-tails, cut into his flesh and spilled warm blood even before he went to the cross. Nails pierced his hands and feet. With

every beat of his precious heart, blood coursed through these wounds to drench the cross. Think what it would be like for you to die in this fashion, and you will understand how he suffered physically.

The Lord also experienced mental agony while on the cross. Do you know what it is to be royally "chewed out" by a drill instructor, platoon sergeant, or platoon leader? If you are black, have you ever been verbally "worked over" by a white racist? The Pharisees and the Sadducees were masters of the art of mental torture. They and their followers said, "If you are the Christ, come down from the cross... He saved others, but himself he cannot save... You said you could destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days... Why don't you come down from the cross?" Had I been the Lord Jesus, I think that, John Wayne-like, I would have left the cross and sent them all to the hell they deserved.

Christ also suffered spiritually while on the cross. Of course, suffering in this area was far worse than anything he experienced physically and mentally. It is my judgement that the Lord's prayer, offered in sweat and blood, the night before his death dealt primarily with the spiritual agony he knew he must endure. While on the accursed tree, our Lord underwent what he had never known before or has known since. He was alienated from his Father. The plaintive, questioning cry of Jesus from the cross was, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46). In as much as hell is an estrangement from God (2 Thess. 1:7-9), Jesus must have experienced the pains of the damned during the crucifixion.

WHY DID CHRIST HAVE TO DIE?

The master died to pay for the sins of humanity (Is. 53:4-6, 8). He atoned for the evil committed before and after his coming (Heb. 9:15; Rom. 3:25). This action was necessary to appease God's wrath and satisfy his justice. These two concepts are seen in the word "propitiation" (KJV) or "expiation" (RSV) (Rom. 3:25; 1 Jn. 2:2;

4:10). When God the Father saw what had been done by God the Son at Calvary, he was "satisfied" (Is. 53:11).

He also went to the cross to purchase the church (Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:23, 25; 1 Cor. 6:19). Clearly, if one is saved and heaven-bound outside the church, the death of Jesus was unnecessary. The truth is that the moment one is saved from past or alien sins, he is also added to the church revealed in the New Testament (Acts 2:38, 41, 47, KJV). This is not to say that every born-again person in the world is within our fellowship. Anyone who has complied with the conditions essential to remission of sins is part of the universal body of Christ.

To say that we are Christians only does not mean we are the only Christians (N.B. Hardeman, *Tabernacle Sermons*, Vol. II, p. 253). If we intend to be undenominational, we must agree with Brother Hardeman's observation. To say that the saved are in the church does not mean we should tell the lost to get into the church to be saved. If we take this approach, we bypass the cross. Instead, let us tell people to receive the crucified and risen Savior by faith, repentance, and baptism that the Lord might add them to the church. In so doing, we will remain a cross-focused people.

By the shedding of his blood, Jesus ratified the new covenant (Matt. 26:28; Heb. 9:16-17). In ancient times, men sealed solemn agreements by killing an animal, cutting it in half, and standing between its two pieces while exchanging their vows. This action meant that their covenants were ratified by the life or death of the animal. The expression "to make a covenant" in the Old Testament literally means "to cut a covenant" and comes from the practice of cutting animals in half. When Abraham made a covenant with God concerning the land of Canaan, he stood between the halves of three dead animals (Gen. 15:7-11, 17-21). Their agreement was sealed with blood. When Israel made the Old Covenant with God, it was ratified by the shedding of animal blood (Ex. 24:3-8; Heb. 9:18-20). If covenants between men were made binding by the blood of

animals, if the covenants between God and Abraham and God and Israel were sealed with animal blood, how much more binding is the New Covenant between God and his people in this age which has been ratified by the precious blood of Jesus Christ!

Christ died by crucifixion to test our faith. According to Paul, the cross is foolishness ("moria") or a stumbling block ("skandalon") to some (1 Cor. 1:18, 23). A second century picture found in the Palatine Mill area of Rome shows a young man worshipping before a Jackass-headed man on a cross. The picture lets us know how many pagans despised the sweet story of Jesus. The apologist Marcus Minucius Felix (third century) reported the sentiments of some unbelievers concerning the Christ when he wrote, "Again, to say that a man who had suffered capital punishment for a crime and the death dealing wood of the cross are objects of veneration, is to assign fitting alters to abandoned wretches, and to assert that they worship what they deserve to worship." From 1 Corinthians 1:18-31, we learn that many rejected the Savior because the gospel appeared to be idiotic, nonsensical, or ludicrous. Apparently, when one truly accepts the Christ of the cross, his faith is tested to its limits.

The cross was also necessary to express the love of God (Jn 3:16; 15:13; Rom. 5:7-8) and to reveal Jesus as God's son (Jn. 8:28). His baptism, miracles, and resurrection were also involved in upholding the latter view. The Master died on a cross to draw the lost to himself (Jn. 12:32-33). In addition, he shed his blood to sanctify his people (Heb. 13:12). There may be other reasons for the death of Jesus, but this should be enough to convince us that his work at Calvary is "the climax of history" (Heb. 9:26, NEB).

DISCIPLES OF CHRIST MUST ALSO BE CRUCIFIED

Those who would serve Jesus must be crucified to sin's dominion (Rom. 6:1-7). It is true that the unsaved die to the love of

sin in repentance. However, they do not die to its control until baptized (Rom. 6:4, 6, 7, 11). It is true that Jesus died, was buried, then arose from the dead (1 Cor. 15: 1-4). However, the analogy between what he did and what we experience is not exactly the same. A careful reading of Romans, chapter 6, makes this clear. There is something similar in Romans 6:10. Jesus died "to" sin in that he died to its approaches, assaults, and temptations. We died "to" its sovereignty or control. As Christ surrendered to the will of the Father in Gethsemane and then went to the cross, we surrendered to the will of God in repentance and were then crucified in the act of baptism (Rom. 6:6).

As Noah and his family died to the old world of ungodliness by the flood, as Israel died to Egyptian slavery in passing through the Red Sea, as Naaman died to his leprosy by dipping in the Jordan, as the blind man died to his blindness by washing in the pool of Siloam, we died to sin's power when we were immersed. Since we have died to sin's rule, we must not allow it to re-establish itself in our lives (Rom. 6:12-13). We have been freed from sin to fight it rather than favor it.

In our crucifixion, we also died to law (Rom. 7:4). The lost are under law and controlled by sin; the saved are under grace where sin's mastery is broken (Rom. 6:14). Of course, to be free from law does not mean there are no rules or regulations to follow (1 Cor. 9:21; Gal. 6:2). If one loves the Lord, he keeps his commandments (Jn. 14:15). To be dead to or free from law means we are not under a legalistic system that demands perfection on our part if we would be saved (Gal. 3:10).

Furthermore, we have been crucified to the world (Gal. 6:14). Obviously, this is not a reference to those innocent matters in the world's culture. It is not necessary for us to use "thee" and "thou" because contemporary culture uses "you" and "your". Nor must we drive wagons, as do the Mennonites, because our neighbors drive automobiles. Rather, we are crucified to the world's course (Eph.

2:2), corruption (Gal.1:4), condemnation (Rom. 8:1), and its call ("dead to voices that call to me"). We are in the world, but not of the world (Jn. 17:6, 11, 14, 15, 18, 20). "I was sinking deep in sin" means I was once in the sea, but I do not want the sea to be in me. The boat may be in the water, but I don't want water in the boat.

We must no longer love the world (1 Jn. 2:15-17). We are not told "Don't love the world much" or "Don't love it too much." Rather we are commanded "not to love it at all." Generally, one's spirituality can be measured by the horror he experiences when thinking of the world and how it dishonors God with its practices.

The Romans, Greeks, or Gentiles were indifferently called "the first race." The Jews, admittedly different, were known as "the second race." But the Christians, so peculiarly "disfranchised of the world," so intolerant of the world's spirit and atmosphere, and standing out in such bold contrast and daring unworldliness were stigmatized "the third race." The Christians willingly embraced the stigma. Anything was better than sin. Let the heathen rave. Christians belonged to another world. Thus the cry in the circus of Carthage: "How long must we endure this 'third race'?" (L.E. Maxwell, *Born Crucified*, p. 40).

The primary emphasis in a disciple's crucifixion is that he died to himself (Lk. 9:23-24; 14:27). Like David, he cannot sacrifice to God what costs him nothing (2 Sam. 24:24). Dying to self means crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts (Gal. 5:24). Surely, the latter verse includes pride, greed, lovelessness, selfishness, and anything else that centers in our egos. The Christian ideal is not "some of self and some of thee" but "none of self and all of thee." Self is the root of our evil. The tree, branches, and fruit come from the root. It is not enough to hew down the tree; it must be uprooted. Ten thousand heavens cannot bring peace to our souls until we have been crucified to self and constitute the "Cruciform Church." Once we have died to self, all of the smaller issues of life can be resolved.

To one who asked George Mueller the secret of his service, he replied:

"There was a day when I died;" and as he spoke, he bent lower, until he almost touched the floor. Continuing, he added, "Died to George Mueller, his opinions, preferences, tastes, and will; died to the world, its approval or censure; died to the approval or blame even of my brethren or friends; and since then I have studied only to show myself approved unto God." (Maxwell, *Born Crucified*, p. 60).

CHRIST'S DISCIPLES ARE CRUCIFIED FOR WHAT?

Naturally, we are crucified for the sake of Christ (Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1: 21-23). We are also crucified for the benefit of others (1 Jn. 3:16). Both of these will be emphasized under the heading of our having died for the doing of God's will. First, to do God's will means we must forsake evil (Col. 3: 4-11). I believe every sin under the sun is committed by our people, and in many instances attempts are made to justify such wickedness by the Word of God. God's people must hate or abhor evil (Rom. 12:9) in themselves and others. No one can be a good Christian without being a good hater.

Second, we are expected to work for the advancement of Christ's kingdom. Many of our people never read the Bible, rarely pray, contribute very little money, never give serious thought to the lost, never share the gospel with anyone, never speak out against iniquity, never stand for an unpopular view, and attend church only an hour a week during which time they are bored to death! When they die, someone has the unmitigated gall to talk about their "faithfulness" at the funeral service. Regardless of what they may have once been, the people just described ARE NOT NOW CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST!

Third, God's people are expected to be involved in kingdom work. The tower of Babel was built because of work (Gen. 11:6). The walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt because the people had a mind to work (Neh. 4:6). The one talent man was called "wicked" not because he was a drunkard, fornicator, or liar but because he was lazy (Matt. 25:24-30). Faith without works is still dead (Jas. 2:17). The gospel spread throughout the first century world because men like Paul, Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, Titus, and others labored at preaching. After teaching a young lady here in Searcy, I called the local preacher in her community and asked that he contact her. I explained that she was a first class prospect. He knew her and her family, but after assuring me that he would talk to her, he never even called on her. He is a full-time paid evangelist! His attitude explains why the church is at a standstill or in retrogression all over this country. Even some who are well paid to evangelize won't do it. I sometimes think they believe it is below them or it is dirty work. We must rely on crucified people to work for Christ.

Fourth, those who have died to the world and themselves will stand for the truth (Jn. 8:32; 2 Thess. 2: 10-12). No one can operate without tradition; however, it is truth, not tradition, that saves. Much of today's fight to redefine our identity is over the difference between the two. All should be willing to compromise concerning tradition but stand like a phalanx for truth. No one will get to the truth without a struggle with the biblical text. Many have taken too much for granted. If a well-known brother said it, it must be right. But, it could be wrong! Frankly, I think we need another Restoration. Recently, I saw a picture of the heads of seven early Restoration preachers arranged in a sphere for easy framing. As I looked at them, I realized that five of them would not even be received in some of our congregations because of the immersions they received.

Fifth, our crucifixion means we will develop a personal holiness. The expression may be redundant because there is no other kind of holiness than what is personal. This involves time.

Remember the song, "Take Time to Be Holy"? We must spend time in introspection, meditation, praise, prayer, and Bible study. The flesh will never be controlled without these activities. Repeatedly, I have told my students they cannot be lost if they pray ten minutes a day. I don't believe in "once saved, always saved," but I do believe the attitude that leads one to pray ten minutes a day (most of us need to pray longer than this) will keep him from leaving the Lord. So often we have said that one can be sincerely wrong; however, this does not mean that one can be insincerely right.

Sixth, the crucified must undergo hatred (Matt. 24:9). Elijah was hated by the idolaters of his day. Daniel was hated by his colleagues in the Persian government. John the Baptist was hated by Herodias. Paul was hated by orthodox Jews and Judaistic Christian teachers. Jesus was hated by the Pharisees and Sadducees. God was and is hated by rebels (Rom. 1:30). The great black evangelist, Marshall Keeble, once said, "The white man hated me because of my color and the black man hated me because of my religion. In whom could I trust but the Lord?"

We sometimes think a Christian is complimented when it is said, "He doesn't have an enemy in the world." It is obvious that he is not of the same breed as Jesus, Paul, Peter, and the apostles, most of whom experienced martyrdom. Charles McKay wrote the following:

No Enemies?

You have no enemies, you say?

Alas! My friend, the boast is poor--

He who has mingled in the fray

Of duty that the brave endure,

Must have foes!

If you have none,

Small is the work that you have done;

You've hit no traitor on the hip;

You've dashed no cup from perjured lip;

You've never turned a wrong to right--
You've been a coward in the fight.

Seventh, just as surely as the sun rises in the east, those who are hated for the cause of Christ will be persecuted. If they are crucified and dead, although it is unpleasant, they are willing to experience persecution for his name's sake. Jesus predicted persecution for his followers (Matt. 5:10-12). Paul said the Godly will be persecuted (2 Tim. 3:12). Paul knew it firsthand (2 Cor. 11:23-33). Even "brethren" (called false) were after his hide (Gal. 2:4; 2 Cor. 11:26). Earlier in my career, I may have thought that as a preacher I could be popular with almost all those in our movement, but time and experience have taught me better!

Eighth, there are times when the crucified must choose Jesus over their own families (Matt. 10:35-37; Lk. 12:51-53; 14:25-27). I have baptized several who knew they would be strongly opposed by their loved ones. A number of my students have lost the support of their families because they chose the New Testament or undenominational Christianity. As Abraham was called upon to sacrifice his son Isaac, we may have to sacrifice our relatives to please the Lord.

Since dead people are not concerned about time, they are willing to use it to further the cause of the Crucified One. Dead people have no interest in money, so they give generously to do good. Dead people are not concerned about work, so they will labor for Jesus. Dead people are not concerned about approval and respectability, so they will stand for the right, as God gives them the ability to see the right, biblically and experientially. As a matter of fact, the dead are perfectly willing to be used any way the Father sees fit.

CROSSES PRECEDE RESURRECTION

Jesus was crucified and then raised from the tomb. The believer is crucified with Christ in baptism and is then raised to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4, 6; Col. 2:12). Those who experience no crucifixion will not be raised to newness of life here, and they will not be raised to glory in the hereafter. If you are willing to mount the cross and die initially or die again by restoration to the Savior, come tonight in response to his invitation.

Jimmy Allen is retired from Harding University, where he served as Professor of Bible for 36 years. He received his B.A. from Harding College in 1952, his M.R.E. from Harding Graduate School in 1959, and in 1971 was awarded his Hh.D. from Oklahoma Christian College. He has published 10 books, his most recent being *Rebaptism?* He has held more than 1,000 gospel meetings with 33,000 responses and 8,000 baptisms. He and his wife Marilyn have three children.

NOKOMIS YELDELL, SR.

THE PLACE

He came to Nazareth. A man's reflections, feelings, and piety will always be affected when he comes to the place where he was brought up. Nazareth was a small town of the Zebulonites in Galilee, seventy-two miles north of Jerusalem, and west of Mount Tamar. Nazareth lies on the edge of the Galilean hill country where the highland ends abruptly at the Esdraelon plain. From the tip of the hilltop basin where the little city lies, there is a wide view over the plain. Armageddon, as the plain is also called, is a vast level stage in the wide amphitheater of hills, which became in the apocalypse, a symbol for the meeting place of nations. This south Galilean town is nowhere referred to in the Old Testament. It owes its fame and place in history to the fact that it was the home town of Christ. We all very well know that whatever Jesus touched became a legend, even a stable and a manger. Joseph, the carpenter and Jesus' earthly father, plied his trade there.

Jesus had been to the baptism of John and had been tempted in the wilderness. For a considerable time He visited other places where He performed His first miracles; and having gained a well-deserved renown, which served to augment his introduction to His townspeople and His relations, He came to Nazareth where he had been brought up. It was altogether fitting that He should go there. We should understand that each movement of Jesus was significant because He did it. Jesus Christ, like His Father, never did any work of supererogation. Men often do things to point out their intelligence,

but not Jesus. He didn't have to prove God nor Himself. He simply took God for granted.

THE TIME

God, you see, is the God of time and place. When the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His son made of a woman, made under the Law (Gal 4:4). We often weary our finite minds wondering why it took God nearly four thousand years from the fall in Eden to the birth of Christ in Bethlehem to send the Savior. It was God's time, that's all. The prophecy of Isaiah 61 needed to be fulfilled, but who would fulfill it?

CIRCUMSTANCES

At the time of His coming and subsequent baptism and temptation, the world felt that it didn't need another religion. Many prophets had come and gone. The people had their hopes built up and let down so often until they wanted no more of it.

THE AUDIENCE

In Luke 4 Jesus was well aware of the risks involved in what He was about to do and acknowledge in Nazareth. At first, the home town folks were bursting with expectation to see Him. You know the old cliché, "home town boy makes good!" Their eagerness to see this famous personality was of course coupled with "the elder brother syndrome." It was the Sabbath when he entered the synagogue. Synagogues were scattered all over Judea and were in every country where Jews lived.

THE PREACHER

The preacher is Jesus Christ. God has a thing to do in this world, and He has one only begotten son. He is not a politician; He is not a lawyer; He is not a supreme court justice; He is not a president; He is not a mayor; He is not a doctor; He is not an architect, nor engineer. All of these professions have their place and render vital services. "But He is a preacher!" Paul later by inspiration stated, "How shall they hear without a preacher, and how shall they preach, except they be sent?" (Rom. 10:14-15). His activities during those proverbial eighteen silent years are now apparent. When they asked, "Is not this the carpenter?" that tells of His trade. He stood up "for to read" and was given the book of the prophet Isaiah by the attendant. He opened the book and found the appropriate passage and read Isaiah 61. He read, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." It must have been a glorious experience to hear Him.

In Isaiah we see the universality of His ministry: "The Gentiles would see God's righteousness" (Is. 62:1-2). Many of Jesus' parables were designed to prepare the Jewish mind for global ministry: the good Samaritan, the centurion's son, the Syrophenician woman are a few examples of Jesus' world view. Again, Isaiah 2:2 says, "All nations shall flow into it."

When Jesus read from Isaiah 61:1-6, His audience evidently was not aware that He was, or would claim to be, the fulfillment of that prophecy. Even when He closed the book and gave it again to the minister and sat down, they were not aware that He was God. They were so awed by His fame and honored by His presence that they seemingly never gave that idea a thought. When He said, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears," they were shocked, and all

witnessed and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. If that scripture were selected for that Sabbath by the synagogue committee, how appropriate, how timely, how providential for His purpose. And they said, "Is this not Joseph's son?" Their joy turned into resentment, and they sought to cast Him over the cliff, but He was able to escape them. They were looking for the Messiah but didn't recognize Him when He came.

Jesus was ready to preach His message. The spirit pushed down upon Him. He felt a pressing urgency. He felt great piety. He felt a great need. We too must catch His spirit! All our committees and elaborate structures will avail nothing unless we feel that pressing urgency! Every soul would love to know what that sermon was and all that was said. We have His menu there in Luke 4:18, but how did He say it? Two of the evangelists were gratified by the Sermon on the Mount, and who is not? But the third evangelist, Luke, felt that the sermon in the synagogue was His inaugural utterances of the Galilean gospel. Our purpose will be served if in some small way, we could visualize what our Master might have said in that cutting message that caused such unrest and aggravation to his audience.

"He has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor." Yes, you neglected, suffering people, the Savior of the world places you on a level with the well-to-do, well-fed, and well-cultured. The permanent and spiritual belong to you as much as to them; the same Father, the same love revealed; the same heaven beyond, are for you.

By the poor, Divine Truth is most needed. Their lives on earth are hard, often characterized by unrelenting toil and by severe deprivation, by little comfort or enjoyment, by hard oppression, in which the strong will of another robs all liberty of action. The past is sad, the present gloomy, the future dark. There is no pleasure in recollection, and there is no relief in hope. How precious, how necessary to these lives are the joys which earth cannot give and

cannot steal-- the treasures which enrich the heart, the hope which reaches beyond the grave.

By the poor, Divine Truth is most appreciated. How hardly do they that trust in riches enter into the Kingdom of God! (Mk. 10:23). Their time is occupied, their minds are filled with pursuits and pleasures which are on an earthly plane, and things higher and worthier are hidden from view. The poor, though they have indeed their own temptations and their own errors and failings, are yet more likely to see the Divine hand beckoning to them and to hear the heavenly voice calling them to wisdom and service and eternal joy. And in fact, the common people still hear Jesus gladly. To the poor, the gospel is markedly offered and "the gospel is preached unto them" (Matthew 11:5). It is one of the water-marks of Christianity that our Master made His appeal, not as philosophy and theology had done before Him and as science in our day is doing to human learning and influence, but to the unlettered and lowly, to the multitude, to the common human heart. Other systems have tried to reach the lower levels by affecting the heights of society first. The gospel of Christ "moves upward from below." It teaches, cleanses, raises the people, and so it purifies and exalts the nations. This is the Divine method and must be ours. Luke hits hard at the idea of reaching out to Gentiles and Samaritans.

TO HEAL THE BROKEN HEART

There are two things which break the human heart. One is intolerable shame, the shame which comes from a sense of second class citizenship and a crushing sense of sin. The sin may be a flagrant sin, such as commands the deep indignation and strong censure of our fellowmen and causes the loss of our own self-respect; or it may be a sense of that common sin of which all the souls of men are guilty in the sight of God. The second thing that breaks the heart is overwhelming sorrow. It may be some crushing disappointment,

or it may be some wearying and trying illness; it may be some heavy and humiliating loss; or it may be some terrible bereavement and consequent loneliness of heart and life. Under one or more of these overwhelming burdens the heart may be bowed down even to breaking.

THERE IS BUT ONE REMEDY

There is only one refuge to which the broken hearted can go. Ah, we may try psychiatry, psychology, psychoanalysis, etc., but Christ is the only one who can heal the broken heart. That ought to say to us that no other means can do so. He is the High Priest who "is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, having been in all points tried even as we are, and therefore able to enter perfectly into our griefs, whether of mind, body or estate" (Heb. 2:18). He is the God of all comfort.

THE SPIRITUAL BONDAGE

Who does not pity the captive? Saddening to the sympathetic heart is the thought of the man or woman who is confined within his lonely and dreary cell, shut in from the beauties and melodies of nature, excluded from the haunts of men, debarred from all the activities of busy life, unable to enter his own home, compelled to unwilling solitude, and separated from those he loves! There is no prayer that we breathe with a finer or fuller feeling than the petition, "let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee."

Yet there is bondage that is worse than any ever inflicted by stone walls and iron chains; the bondage of sin. Sin is at first a transgression, but it soon becomes tyranny. It grows into a power; it attempts to rise, to move, to grasp so that it enslaves; and it becomes a despot which holds the soul in its grasp. This is sin in its true form, and it is true in a number of degrees. It applies to error, which

becomes an unpenetrable prejudice through which no light will break; folly, such as that of procrastination, which in a length of time weaves itself around the soul; vice, such as intemperance or profanity or impurity (especially in some of its forms.) There is no bondage more thoroughly deserving the name than vice. The victim of vice is indeed "held with the cords of his sins" (Prov. 5:22); they hold him fast in the saddest and most degrading thralldom in which a human being can be held. And vanity. How many a man is a wretched slave to the judgment of other men! The fear of their condemnation or of their ridicule impel him into a direction in which he knows he ought not to be going and ties him in a position from which he is longing to break away. Even when that soul thinks of breaking away, it finds itself held to its sinful state.

BLINDNESS

We think of the annoyance of blindness and its degrees. "It must be awful to be blind," we will say, but we faintly realize what it means. It is indeed disappointing to be physically blind, to look not on scenery, to read not, to behold no circumstance, to recognize no love in a human face, to grope our way in the thick darkness. It is worse, however, to be mentally blind, to see, and not see; to open the eyes on the beauty and wonder and glory of the universe and to recognize nothing as beautiful, wonderful, glorious there; to be as lonely in a library as in a cell! Even worse is to be morally blind--blind of soul, so that a man can see nothing degrading in drunkenness, nothing shameful in vice, nothing revolting in obscenity and profanity, nothing repelling in selfishness; so that a man can see nothing noble in generosity, nothing beautiful in beneficence, nothing regal in righteousness and duty, nothing sacred in human love.

But it is far worse to be spiritually blind-- worse because that is the root and source of all the others; blindness of spirit, a darkness in which the soul fails to see the highest of all things, the loftiest of

all the truths, the greatest of all facts; a darkness in which the soul fails to recognize the essential truth that in God we "live and move, and have our being" and that to Him we are responsible for all we are and have; a darkness in which we are blind to our sorrowful state of guilt and condemnation in the sight of God. It is spiritual insensibility that is the most deplorable. Men don't know that they don't see. They suppose themselves to know everything when they know nothing. They are not aware that a world of truth and blessedness is around them and accessible to them.

TO SET AT LIBERTY THEM THAT ARE BRUISED

Who are these bruised thus described? Those who are chafed with the sorrows of life; wives who have been abused by the hands of wicked and unkind husbands; children who have been scarred by the hands of ungodly fathers or mothers; employees who have been driven as slaves under the hands of cruel masters; citizens who have been overly taxed by inconsiderate heads of governments. The bruised are those who are worn with excessive toil; those from whom health or reputation or position or fortune or the object of strong and deep affection have been taken away. Only Jesus was and is able to solve all of these ills of human kind.

CONCLUSION

"The spirit of the Lord is upon me." Ah, that is that spiritual concentration that every man needs in the pulpit if he is truly to affect the souls of men. The Spirit was the power in which Jesus would carry on His ministry, the idea being that the Spirit as a holy unction from on high anointing for work. Ezekiel said, "the hand of God was upon Him." Without getting myself in trouble and being written up, we, too, must have spiritual concentration, else we fail. His is a gospel of healing and liberty, an illumination and comfort for

all people, beginning with the lowest of the people. His own relations were poor people. He passed among men as the carpenter's son. When He was asked by what signs He would prove His claims, He replied, among other things, "the poor have the gospel preached unto them."

The gospel is the great harmonizer of all the conflicting interests of human society. It alone can elevate the masses; it also can reclaim the fallen. Christ came to raise the human race, to develop it one step higher, to make men happier, truer. He came to do this, not by working outwardly, but by working inwardly. Christ's gospel is a remedy and a guide to a higher nature, which needs to be developed.

The biologist, by his wisdom, may develop man's knowledge regarding human life, but that isn't enough. The psychiatrist, by his intellectual wisdom, may develop man's knowledge to the possibilities of the human mind. The astronomer, by his wisdom, may develop man's knowledge of the solar system. The technologist, by his wisdom, may develop man's knowledge to the far-reaching potentialities of technology. The mathematician, by his wisdom, may develop the limitless possibilities of mathematics.

Jesus, in order to perpetuate His ministry of developing and elevating men, established His church. He knew that there was not, nor would there ever be, an entity on earth that could do what needed to be done. Paul stated in Ephesians 3:10, "That now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." The prime duty of His church is to preach the gospel to the poor and all others.

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DON MCLAUGHLIN

Learning to imitate the life of Christ flows from a study of the written word and the Living Word. Both are essential to the believer who wants to experience His lifestyle. This is especially true of our topic tonight, "The Compassion of Christ," in the Gospel of Luke. A great deal is taught, discussed, and written regarding compassion, but corresponding actions and good works are few. Our discussions of the compassion of Christ could be compared to houses built on sand that crumble before we get to our beds for the night, because we have listened with an ear to hear, but not with an ear to do.¹ My singular prayer tonight is that we would accurately portray the way Christ demonstrated his compassion and then imitate him.

How did Jesus demonstrate this love in his life and in the lives of others? This is where Luke is so strong in his presentation of the life of Christ. Luke builds his gospel around events in the life of Jesus that highlight the difference between God and man, both in thoughts and priorities. This is especially true in Luke's description of God's "higher love" as shared through the compassion of Jesus. It is of note that when Luke records Jesus' scathing denunciations of the religion the Pharisees had superimposed on God's teachings, (Lk. 11:42, cf. Matt. 23:23) he writes, "Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue, and other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglected justice and the love of God. You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone."

Let's now turn our attention to events in Luke's gospel that beautifully illustrate the compassion of Christ, looking to learn

practical ways to experience the compelling love of Christ in our daily lives. (For the sake of space and time we will focus on the raising of the widow's son at Nain, intertwining other narratives to develop the broader themes of compassion.)

THE COMPASSION OF CHRIST IN THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

Soon after the healing of the benevolent Centurion's highly valued servant in Capernaum of the region of Galilee, Jesus traveled some twenty-five miles southwest to Nain, where he happened on a widow and her community in great grief over the death of her only son. Although the sight of this funeral procession is unfamiliar to most modern Western cultures, many who have traveled and served beyond the tourist traps of Southern, Near Eastern, and some Asian nations have witnessed a funeral like this that has remained basically unchanged for centuries. The people, young and old, bearing flowers, wreaths, and often an object of endearment that represents their loved one, follow along with the mourning family through the streets. Due to the nature of their religious, cultural, and economic conditions, most of these burials take place in areas semi-remote from the village. Of course for the Jews, there was the spiritual concern of not touching the dead body to avoid becoming ceremonially unclean.²

When Jesus saw the woman, the Scriptures read, "His heart went out to her." This is actually a very good translation of the Greek thought behind *splachnizomai*, "compassion." The noun form literally meant, "the inward parts of the human body, the entrails" and came to mean, "love, affection, object of affection, beloved."³ The verb then came to carry the meaning of, "have pity, feel sympathy."⁴ Growing from the root meaning, this word translated compassion, pity, or "his heart went out to her," conveys the idea that the action of compassion is rooted deep in the inward feelings of a person. The motivation for the action is an unstoppable response that is deeper

than conscious thought or even a mental decision. The heart (feelings and thoughts of sympathy and love) of Jesus came out from within him and went over to the grieving widow.

How did the heart of Jesus become transparent to this woman and her community so that they could quickly yet fully experience the love of God through Jesus in that moment? The scriptures reveal three specific and consistent steps Jesus followed in demonstrating compassion.

Jesus Noticed People, and They Saw Love in His Eyes. When Jesus drew near to the gates of Nain, He searched his environment to locate and surface needs to which he could apply the love of God. One major theme in the writings of Luke is the personal attention Jesus gave to people. Jesus and the Father are portrayed as always probing their surroundings for people who are in need of simply being noticed. Luke makes this exact statement about Jesus and the woman with the issue of blood in 8:47: "Then the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling at his feet. In the presence of all the people, she told why she had touched him and how she had been instantly healed."

Notice this theme in the helpful Samaritan,⁵ "But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him."

Again in the text of the restoring Father,⁶ "So he got up and went to his father. But while he was a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him."

Jesus could easily remember the day that Adam and Eve needed to be noticed, along with Abraham and Isaac, Hagar and Ishmael, Job, Elijah, the three in the fiery furnace, Daniel, and a host of others. Like the Psalmist who cannot escape the roving and watchful eye of God,⁷ this widow was experiencing an eternal quality of God in her temporary moment.

As a father I can deeply appreciate the power of being noticed as an act of tender love and compassion. Every victory to be celebrated in the lives of children and every hurt to be comforted is a part of the greater puzzle of building their self image and ultimately their self esteem. Neglect is often a tragic form of abuse. It establishes a caste system or a pecking order. People become convinced over time that they are either the favored or the disfavored, deserving or undeserving. Their boundaries and expectations in life reflect the strata of society to which they believe, albeit subconsciously, they have been assigned.

The majority of our global society, including the United States of America, feel totally alienated from God and his love, completely *unnoticed*. Could they know the love of God? Would they know the love of God if they had personal contact with us? They need Christians who care enough to stop, look, and listen to notice them and not just demonstrate offense at their lifestyles. Jesus practiced what Hosea recorded from the mouth of God:⁸ "It was I who taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by the arms; but they did not realize it was I who healed them. I led them with the cords of human kindness, with ties of love; I lifted the yoke from their neck and bent down to feed them."

This woman knew God loved her because the only begotten Son of God noticed her and went out of his way to get involved. Jesus goes to lengths in the story of the helpful Samaritan to call attention to the fact that a position of religious influence, a genealogical heritage, or a pure Israelite lineage was not enough to be an example of God's compassion or a vessel of his love. Only the one who sees, feels, and acts on the compassion of God is worthy of mention as one to follow and "...go and do likewise."⁹

In the story of the restoring Father, Jesus brings the father's compassion into sharper focus by previewing the feelings of the younger son while he is still away. The boy outlines a four part speech for his father: (1) I have sinned against heaven, (2) I have

sinned against you, (3) I am no longer worthy to be called your son, (4) make me like one of your hired servants. The boy feels separated from the heart of his father and had lost the worth to be considered a member of the family. So many people in my community, church, and family could use the feelings of this boy as a template for their own feelings about the heavenly Father. So alienated. So alone.

Jesus portrays God as the father positioning himself in such a place that as soon as the boy turns toward home he senses the loving eyes of his father. That notice alone was enough to keep him coming closer. Later in the same narrative, the father was equally aware of the struggle of the older brother who thought his place in the father's circle of love depended on his ability to "...never disobey his orders." Noticing the absence of the older brother the father went out to meet him in his emotional distance, just as he had met the younger brother at a physical distance. In regard to both boys the message is the same: God is looking for an opportunity to get into the lives of his children so that they can experience the depth of his compassion.

This message came through to the woman with the issue of blood, and the widow at Nain, and hopefully to you and me, as Jesus makes it clear that no person on earth escapes the Father's notice. (*More will be said in the Application section of this lesson concerning the individual and corporate demonstrations of this aspect of compassion.*)

Jesus Spoke Compassion to People and They Heard Love in His Voice. Jesus continues to demonstrate God's love verbally by saying, "Don't cry." After he gained her attention with his eyes, he spoke to her. His statement does not scold her for her state of grief; rather, his words convey that she can anticipate something from Jesus that will so change her situation that the tears will be replaced with joy.¹⁰ So often people are afraid to go to funerals, hospitals, or to get involved with people in crisis because of the emotional volatility inherent in these situations, and the most common reason I hear for their absence is, "I just don't know what to say." To be quite honest,

I believe this is a cop out. The key to knowing what to say, and what not to say in these situations could be learned by reading the words and actions of Jesus in these situations and then just loving people enough to get in there with them despite the pressure.

Jesus makes the statement recorded in John 12:49 that "The Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it." This was demonstrated by what he said to people throughout the book of Luke.¹¹

Though somewhat tedious to study each context, this is the most practical way to learn "what to say and how to say it." The power of the spoken word in conveying compassion has no substitute. Jesus' words are reassuring, comforting, confidence building, forgiving, releasing, and honoring. His words break down barriers of physical deformity, racial hostility, and religious hypocrisy.¹²

Jesus also used his conversations with individuals to influence the crowds who were listening to him. Jesus' statements taught others a better way to respond to hurting people. Speaker and author Johnny Maxwell said, "When you help one person, you influence a lot of people." Jesus was the master of influencing crowds while verbally demonstrating his compassion to an individual. We find in him the model for our daily interaction with those in our lives who need us to "say only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen."¹³ People often talk too much and yet have so little to say to others. Jesus used the positive power of words to convey compassion to others effectively.

Jesus Got Involved In People's Lives and They Learned Love Through His Actions. The third step in understanding the full picture of the compassion of Jesus is in his actions. Returning to the text in Luke 7:14-15, examine Jesus' actions, looking for principles of compassionate behavior to apply to all situations. "Then he went up and touched the coffin, and those carrying it stood still. He said, 'Young man, I say to you, get up!' The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother."

It has been said that thoughts and feelings only make it into the history books through statements and actions. This is true. We know nothing of the lives of millions because their thoughts, intentions, meditations, and emotions were never brought onto the stage of human drama though the boldness of speech or deed. The actions of men are the best interpreters of their thoughts.

Jesus took bold actions. Stepping right up to the coffin and touching it left no question that Jesus was committing himself to the situation. Just by touching the dead, he would render himself ceremonially unclean for at least seven days, with further complications if these stipulations were not properly met.¹⁴ The people bearing the young man were stopped in their tracks, as were so many others by the "touching" of Jesus.¹⁵ Jesus was warm and accessible in a climate where religious leaders were aloof and separate.

Jesus' behavior offered people hope. He spoke an action command to a dead man! Of the one hundred fifty-two funerals I have conducted, I have heard many people speak to the dead, but none have stood and commanded the dead to get up. (And the dead did, I would probably just climb into the casket myself!) People are so often in hopeless situations, like this widow, only because they have lost hope. They can no longer draw on their own strength or the power of God because they are overcome by the darkness of the difficulty.

Mary and Martha found themselves in this same frame of mind upon the death of their brother,¹⁶ as would have the traveler in the story of the helpful Samaritan after the Priest and Levite passed by.¹⁷

The Son in the story of the restoring Father expresses this same hopelessness in his prepared speech. The father, however, only allows the boy to get out the first three parts of the speech. It was true and acceptable to the father for the boy to confess his sinful ways and to repent, but as soon as the boy drew the conclusion that his sin made him unworthy for a place in the father's family, the father quickly interrupted with a barrage of gifts symbolizing total accep-

tance. The actions of the father filled the boy with hope instead of leaving him in fear and isolation.

Luke records that Jesus gave the son back to his mother. This miracle, (like the healing of the demon possessed boy in Luke 9:42) is done as much for the mother as for the son. Her grief activated Jesus' compassion on her behalf, and he pursued immediate involvement in her life. This love reflects the wisdom of Solomon in Proverbs 13:12, "Hope deferred makes the heart grow sick, but a longing fulfilled is the tree of life." The example of Jesus challenges us to become healers of hearts by helping others recover their hope in the Lord. The response of the people after Jesus restores the boy and his mother is exactly what Jesus desired, "They were all filled with awe and praised God. 'A great prophet has appeared among us,' they said. 'God has come to help His people.'"

APPLICATION

There is an incredible undertow in our brotherhood today of people who long for a return to that simpler church characterized by evangelism, worship, and fellowship, yet they are faced with the resistance of those who are just trying to maintain what they personally worked to build. In some instances, large numbers, whether in groups or one at a time, are leaving to join or form congregations where the resistance is aimed toward the enemies of selfishness and inwardness, and the priority of restoration is service and compassion.

Although in many instances there seems to be only variations of these two sides, I would pray that a third paradigm could emerge the champion: one where we could learn how to have ages, races, generations, and genders all together in the same mission and assemblies.

An important beginning point for this paradigm is initiation. Jesus did not wait for the widow to make a move toward him, and those who did bring their requests to Jesus did so because his lifestyle

of initiating service to others preceded him. Jesus was simply proactive.

Two interesting truths concerning change would be helpful on this point. First, people do not resist change *per se*. They mainly resist change that comes from external sources. People change daily at the impulse of some internal decision they have made, with little or no resistance. The "rub" comes when we feel that change is being imposed upon us by someone else who has a controlling hand in our lives.

Second, you have noticed that many people are more than willing to neglect things that should be done as long as their normal schedules and preferences are not subject to intrusion. Christians who are fully familiar with the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20 may never act on this command of Jesus in a direct way their entire life. Likewise those who are fully familiar with the teachings of God on taking care of widows and orphans may never even purposefully go out of their way to even meet one.

But if you were to intrude upon the schedule or areas of preference of such a Christian, you will find a tremendous amount of emotion and stirring. In these situations we are capable of marshalling passages of scripture, strategies of debate, and reserves of zeal to ward off the intrusions.

This leaves us, however, somewhat like the emperor with no clothes: doggedly defending our personal preferences while the weightier matters of the example of Christ gather spiritual dust on the shelves of our souls. We must return to a simple awe and respect for the lifestyle of Jesus, finding our joy in displaying his splendor before the world through compassionate service to God and our fellow man. God calls us to become a people who are begging for the opportunity to share in this ministry.¹⁸

The second stage in this paradigm is tolerance. When Jesus met the widow and the mourners; when the Samaritan met the wounded victim on the road of danger; when the father hugged his

pig-stained son, there was tolerance of the initial state of the person they wanted to feel their love. We desperately need Christians to quit being picky. Checking the shine on your army boots is a peace-time-in-the-barracks activity. It has no place in the heat of the battle.

So much of what we get frustrated over in the body of Christ reflects that we have too much time on our hands. The battle to win the souls of our children and grandchildren from the endless burning of hell will not be won with votes on song books or overhead projectors. Compassion drives our hearts to the deeper issues. To put it into perspective, will we tolerate being ceremonially unclean for seven days to raise the dead and restore life and joy to a widow? Will we be willing to endure the derision of the less compassionate, and our own discomfort, to keep the priorities of Jesus at the forefront of what people see in our eyes, hear in our voices, and learn from our actions?

A third step in this paradigm is appreciation. Jesus floored his pompous host in Luke 7:36-50 when he demonstrated appreciation for her offering. Think of what it did for the children, the blind man, and the other outcasts when Jesus insisted that their value be affirmed in the presence of all by his insistence that they be close to him. So often we only like to hear the things we like to say. This limits our appreciation of the thoughts and tastes of others to the times when they closely imitate us.

This struggle is found raging in the heart of the older brother in the story of the restoring Father. He is so angry that his brother went one way and he went another, yet the Father finds favor in his heart for both. The older brother cannot enjoy his father and all the blessings that were naturally his by birth because the father has reserved the right to love the younger brother.

We are living in a church climate today in desperate need of Christians who are willing to begin enjoying the Father again, appreciating the power of his calling to reach people of all kinds, as different as they are. I remember G.P. Hold speaking to our chapel

one morning while I was a student at Harding. After two songs in the devotional that definitely didn't get the toe tapping', G.P. opened his speech by stating, "You white folks can endure your religion; we black folks are going to enjoy it!" Then he led us in a rousing spiritual that we all enjoyed as much as the other songs already sung.

Can we not imitate that spirit in all our churches, or must we stubbornly resist each other until we either make everyone like us or drive them away? The strength of this University through the years is in the commitment of her leadership to focus on Christ and his Word, tolerating and appreciating the individual ministries and gifts that the Holy Spirit has distributed to people for the building up of the body. Let's take this spirit home with us!

Truly the love of Christ is compelling. He initiated the opportunity for salvation to you and me. He tolerated our open rebellion and lives of sin until we fell before him in repentance. And he appreciates the life we now live in him, despite our weaknesses and frailties. We are commissioned by God tonight to love as we have been loved.

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ENDNOTES

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6. Luke 15:20.
7. Psalm 139.
8. Hosea 11:3-4.
9. Luke 10:37.
10. Nolland, 323.
11. 5:10-26; 7:36-50; 8:43-56; 13:10-17; 15:7,10; 17:17-19; 18:1-17; 18:35-43; 19:1-10; 21:1-4; 23:34; 23:43.
12. See specifically the context of the story of the helpful Samaritan in Luke 10 and the restoring Father in Luke 15.
13. Ephesians 4:29.
14. Numbers 19.
15. Luke 5:13; 6:19; 7:14; 7:39; 8:44-47; 18:15; 22:51; 24:39
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LET'S HAVE A FEAST AND CELEBRATE

LUKE 15

PAUL FAULKNER

"Quick, bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. "

INTRODUCTION

Do you remember when Scott O'Grady was shot down in Bosnian territory in June just a few months ago? There was hope at first that he may have parachuted out, but as the hours went on and on, there was real doubt. And the days went on, and there was definitely doubt. Finally after about five days, even his parents had little hope left.

Then, all of a sudden, the SOS from "Basher 52" came through, and there were tears and rejoicing and shouts and hallelujahs. How natural! It would have been absolutely unnatural not to shout and cry and celebrate when one who has been lost is found.

That's the point of these three messages tonight. And it is not uncommon to find three stories (triplets, if you please) to follow one after another, all with the same point. That point is, the story of the intimate connection between love and forgiveness and joy.

In the story of the lost sheep, in Luke 15:6 the man who lost the sheep calls to his friends and neighbors and says, "Be happy with me because I have found my lost sheep!" And they threw a party. The storyteller punctuates with this sentence, "I tell you that in the same way, there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who

repents than over the ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent."

The story of the lost coin in which the lady had ten coins but loses one, when she found the coin, she called her friends and neighbors and said, "Rejoice with me, I have found my lost coin!" And the writer punctuates it the same way a second time: "In the same way, I tell you there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

And in the story of the lost boy, when he is found, the father runs to him with compassion. He throws his arms around him and kisses him. And then he says, "Put the best robe on him and the ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fatted calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate!"

Notice how he punctuates it again. "This son of mine was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found." And they began to celebrate.

This triplet of stories is basically told to drive home the point that we not only love and forgive, we celebrate. It is OK to celebrate. In fact, it is more than OK to celebrate; it is necessary to celebrate. It is necessary to rejoice. There is an idiom in Greek in this passage that implies it is necessary to rejoice. That attitude, that disposition, should be carried by every Christian. We have a horrible time in understanding that the kingdom is a banquet. Perhaps it is because of this American concept of work-ethic Christians. Maybe we lean too far over, as we will see later, to the association of our salvation being based on our production quota. Or perhaps our view of retirement inhibits our view of the kingdom as celebration and banquet. It is amazing how many people die shortly after they retire. It looks as though they have always identified who they are, based on what they do, their vocation, their work. It stops them from celebrating, and "banqueting" and praising and glorifying God (which we should have been doing all along).

I think it was Peter Berger who said, "When play is at its best, something of the presence of God breaks into our lives and redemptive powers are experienced." When we play at something we enjoy that we have fun doing the right thing. This play stops us from choking or strangling on the work ethic and allows us to experience the *exuberance* of living the Christian life.

Sam Cassells, the guard for the Houston Rockets, in front of his team after their second game in Orlando, said, "Sam Cassells didn't get tied up. He came out to play like he was playing on a sand lot." This was after Sam had been the leading scorer in that game. The point is, Sam came out relaxed to enjoy the basketball game. As a result he scored more than he had ever scored before and led Houston to a victory. Can't we "play" the game of Christian life in much the same way?

I really think God was playing, enjoying, and all smiles when He created the universe. He could create the stars on one day and step back and look at them and smile and say, "That is good." We may keep associating parties and banquets with something that is obscene, but God throws bigger, better celebrations and parties than any man ever thought about throwing. And you will see that as we continue.

Listen to this verse found in Isaiah 55:26, "Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare." Sounds like a party, doesn't it? And God is the host. That is what heaven is all about. I think heaven, to a workaholic, is just more work. Drudgery. Nose to the grindstone. Wheel to the pavement. But Rev. 19 puts it this way, "And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, ...and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, 'Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.'"

We are at a party.

And the voice continues, "Write, 'Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.'"

We are at a party and God is the host. What we are saying is, not only is it OK to party, it is necessary to party. You can't keep from celebrating. Or as our text says, "Hurry, bring the best...Kill...celebrate...music and dancing...."

OLD TESTAMENT CELEBRATIONS

Now this whole idea isn't found just in Luke 15. Let's go back and take a peak at some of the teachings about celebration in the Old Testament. Elmer Martens, in his book, *The Flowering of Old Testament Theology*, says,

The imperative to rejoice, like the imperative to love, while strange, nevertheless indicates the basic posture for the Israelite. Further, Philo, the Jewish philosopher-exegete of the first century, described even the Day of Atonement as the 'Feast of Feasts.' Israelite worship was a worship of joy and praise. (p.319)

Listen to Deuteronomy 16:14: "You shall rejoice in your feast." Again, in Leviticus 23:40: "You shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days." One of the commentators (Ludwig Koehler, *Old Testament Theology*) said, "There is hardly a word so characteristic of the OT as the word joy" (p. 151).

But more than that, look at the festivals, the feasts. There were twelve festivals and celebrations on the Hebrew calendar. Passover, for example, was referred to as a special form of fellowship offering. Listen to the scriptures in Exodus 13: "This is the day you are to commemorate [Passover] for the generations to come. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord, a lasting ordinance." He is talking about the Passover feast. Another text dealing with the Passover is Exodus 34:18: "Celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

For seven days eat bread made without yeast." And then there is the Feast of the Weeks. Deuteronomy 16:10 says, "Celebrate the feast of the weeks to the Lord your God by giving a freewill offering in proportion to the blessings the Lord your God has given you. And rejoice before the Lord your God."

Deuteronomy 16:13, talking about the Feast of Tabernacles, says,

Celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days after you have gathered the produce of your threshing floors and your winepresses. Be joyful at your feast--you your sons and daughters, your menservants and maidservants, and the Levites, the aliens, the fatherless and the widows who live in your town. For seven days celebrate the Feast to the Lord your God.

Now you talk about a party! That is a celebration, a seven-day celebration. I like the quote by John Drane in *Introduction to the Old Testament*: "Formal worship was one way of expressing this [joy], and the sanctuaries would be open every day. But there were also special times when the great national festivals would interrupt the normal run of things and the people would join together to celebrate God's goodness to them." We want to make the point again that all were invited. Even critics. Even the aliens. These celebrations were not to become exclusive. The non-Israelite was included as well. Males appeared at the sanctuary, but sons and daughters, servants, Levites, the fatherless, and widows were singled out for special mention. Even the sojourner was made welcome (Deut. 28:12).

Let's take a look at the tithe in the Old Testament. What was the tithe for? It was for a big banquet praising God. It wasn't particularly for mission work, for charity, or an educational annex. Listen to Deuteronomy 14:22: "Be sure to set aside a tenth of all that your fields produce each year. Eat the tithe of your grain, new wine and oil,

and the firstborn of your herds and flocks in the presence of the Lord your God...." But supposing you live too far off to eat in the presence of the Lord. In that case he says in verse 25, "Use the silver to buy whatever you like: cattle, sheep, wine or other fermented drink, or anything you wish. Then you and your household shall eat there in the presence of the Lord your God and rejoice." Sounds like a banquet, doesn't it?

What happens to the mission work? How do we go about reaching out to others? Well, banqueting was service. Deuteronomy 14:29 cautions against forgetting the underprivileged, "... store your tithes in the towns so that the Levites and the aliens, the fatherless, and the widows who live in your towns may come and eat and be satisfied and so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands." In other words, the Lord is going to bless you when you take care of all of these folks, but you are doing it as a party for all of them, and they are all together with us. We are hosting the party. Today that would be like labor and management getting together. Like Jew and Gentile. Male and female. Like a dinner on the grounds the way we used to do in the "old times" when everyone in the community--all the religious folks--gathered at the "tabernacle" and had dinner on the grounds.

Oh, and by the way, we are talking about just the tithe. What you did with the other 90 percent also included things that you did to serve others. The tithe seems to be set aside to have a banquet. These people are a celebrating, rejoicing people. That was the intent of the tithe and the festivals. It never seemed to be a dull, boring thing because these festivals, this rejoicing for what God has done for us, is a foretaste of what is to come.

Not only that, I get the impression that these times were extravagant. These parties were extravagant. Remember when David brought the ark into the holy city? The first time it failed, but when he started the first time "David and the whole house of Israel were celebrating with all their might before the Lord..." (2 Sam. 6:5). As

you remember, they ran into some problems and had to stop, and so they brought it in the second time. This is what the book says when they brought the ark into the place that David had prepared for it: "David, wearing a linen ephod, danced before the Lord with all his might, while he and the entire house of Israel brought up the ark with shouts and the sound of trumpets .."

David's wife Michal saw her husband-king leaping and dancing before the Lord, and she despised him in her heart (verse 16). She said, "How the king of Israel has distinguished himself today, disrobing in the sight of the slave girls of his servants as any vulgar fellow would!"

David replies, "I will celebrate before the Lord. I will become even more undignified than this, and I will be humiliated in my own eyes" v.21. In other words, he is saying, "This may seem rash and extravagant to you, Michal, I guess. Maybe even lewd. But I am willing to be even more undignified if that is what it takes to show how joyful I feel about how the ark demonstrates that God is with us."

It was extravagant to the point that every time the men bearing the ark took six steps they offered up another bull and a fatted calf. And we better be careful about criticizing that extravagance or what appeared to be lewdness in the eyes of Michal because, you remember, she became childless after she stood in the way of David's celebration of the bringing in of the Ark.

NEW TESTAMENT CELEBRATION

Clearly, that was a lot of festivity and banqueting and celebration in the Old Testament by God's design, but what about the New Testament? Does the Bible say anything beyond Luke 15? I think so.

In Matthew 22, the writer says the kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He says God's church and God's kingdom is like a banquet. That sets the stage,

doesn't it. The story goes on to say that the king has a banquet and the people refuse to come and celebrate. His cattle are butchered, and everything is ready, and he says "Come to the wedding banquet." But they pay no attention, and some of those brought in by his servant come unwilling to dress for the celebration. And they are thrown out. He says, "Many are invited but few are chosen." Chosen for what? Chosen to come the wedding party--the banquet. That's what we have been chosen for.

Remember also that in John 2, Jesus' first miracle was at a party, a wedding feast. When it looked like they were running out of wine, Jesus prolonged the party by making the best that there was. And Jewish weddings, by the way, are big parties. I will never forget the one we went to in Israel a few years ago. The Hispanic culture also makes a big thing out of a wedding feast. So when the Bible talks about a wedding feast, it is talking about real celebration.

Furthermore, in Matthew 5, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, "blessed are the poor in spirit. . ." and "blessed are those who mourn . . . blessed are the meek . . . blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness...." Another translation for "blessed" is "count it all joy." There should be some celebration right in the midst of our trial. What a switch! What power! And you remember Paul and Silas in jail? Shackled in the inner chambers? And what were they doing? Singing and praising God! They were having a spiritual banquet.

You see, folks, celebration is that which enables us to endure: celebration of our trials, celebration of our Christian life, because we have a knowledge of the victory. It is a prelude of things to come. When we get home, there is going to be some kind of party. God is going to be there. He is going to be our host. It is going to be the party of all parties. He himself is going to dry away every tear. I want to be there. I want to be there for that celebration.

WHAT WE CELEBRATE

What are we going to celebrate? The Israelites, in their festivals and celebrations, celebrated their roots--where they came from. The Sabbath celebration was a look back at their deliverance from Egyptian bondage. They celebrated "what God has done for us. He has delivered us."

By the way, when a person is delivered from sin at the point of baptism, when he has been born again, he is just like any newborn. And when a baby is born, the parents and the people and the friends celebrate. They give out gifts or cigars or candy or whatever because a child has been born. How much more should one who has been born spiritually sing out and praise and shout "Hallelujah" because we have the spirit of God indwelling He is actually inside us, a presence there. That alone should bring forth a sense of ecstasy.

We celebrate our reconciliation. We are no longer divided. We are no longer separated from God. At baptism the angels sing and shout. Remember our text? There is more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who don't need to repent. There is a party going on when a sinner repents.

We also celebrate our reconciliation to other people. People, not stuff, is what we celebrate. Christ ate dinner with the publicans and sinners. Eating with them was a way of saying, "I recognize them." This is also a way of saying he received them. He welcomed them. Jesus was their host, and they were his guests. It was a table fellowship and a breaking of bread. And it seems that the Bible is plainly teaching that even the ugliest outcasts are welcomed. That is the point in Luke 15:1-3, when the tax collectors and sinners gathered around to hear him. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." This is the setting for these three stories.

Of course we also celebrate God's love. The father back home, he wasn't blaming himself for his son's running away. He wasn't

worried sick to the point that he couldn't function any more. The father went on about his work on his farm with his son who was there and others, sharing and celebrating. But I think he was always looking over his shoulder, looking for that boy, looking down that road. We are celebrating love. The father never stops looking; he never stops muttering under his breath, "Come home."

WHO CAN'T CELEBRATE

These celebrations allow for renewal of commitment. But you know, some folks can't celebrate. They can't do it. They think the only ones who can celebrate are the righteous. These people are the ones who felt like Jesus should have known better than to let that woman wash his feet with her tears and wipe his feet with her hair. Didn't he know who she was? But the message at the feast of Simon the Leper was plain. Jesus celebrates with all: righteous and unrighteous, the good son who stays at home and the bad son who comes back.

Other folks can't celebrate because they think celebration is only for the obedient. The older son is in this category. "Look, Dad, I have put in my time." It is a way of saying, "He who obeys the most, gives the most sweat, inherits the most." The Pharisees would say, "He who prays and fasts the most is the one who celebrates." The older son is saying in effect, "Well then, what happens to those of us who have this long-term loyalty? Isn't there a reward for those of us who have stayed back? You give the inheritance to the young son who has been a rebel, and I have been here earning and proving my loyalty all these years."

It is like the old question of whether it is fair for a fellow who repents on his deathbed to be saved. When there are those who have given their lives serving the Lord, it's not fair for some guy in the last days of his life to repent, obey the gospel, and be saved. It's the same argument given by the workers who resented the other workers who came to work for the boss at the eleventh hour and were paid the

same as those who had been there all day. They were complaining because they worked all day. The boss said, "Didn't we make an agreement? Didn't I meet my part of the bargain? Why are you complaining? If I choose to give, by my grace, to the guy who has worked only one hour, what is it to you?"

It really was an offense to the older son. The older son was saying, "Yeah, that young boy who comes back ought to get some food to eat, but bread and water--not the fatted calf. He ought to get clothes, but it ought to be sackcloth rather than a new robe. He ought to be wearing ashes, not a new ring. He ought to be showing repentance in tears, not in merriment. Not a banquet. He needs to be kneeling on his knees in prayer, not dancing. I think, Dad, you have just canceled the seriousness of sin and repentance."

Well, it kind of makes sense if you are a legalist or if you think we earn salvation. It really doesn't seem fair for the younger son to get two inheritances, does it? The truth of the matter is, any inheritance we get is more than we deserve. Our inheritance is more than we deserve. It is a gift. The father's generosity is what makes it available. The whole Old Testament has always pushed forth the idea that everything is God's. Nothing is yours or mine to hold and to pass on to others, really. We are just stewards. And that is the point of the Jubilee. Everything belongs to God, and it goes back to God. That is why he tells us to be extravagant with his blessing and give that ten percent and enjoy ourselves. It is his--a gift from him. We enjoy it instead of acting as if it is ours and we earned it.

Others can't rejoice and celebrate because they think of the extravagance, and somehow extravagance is improper or perhaps bad stewardship. They think of all the things that could have been done with that money, maybe to do some great work, mission work, or given to the poor. That was said about that expensive perfume that Mary poured on Jesus' feet in John 12. Judas felt that way when he thought that Christ should have given the money to the poor.

Then there are those who can't celebrate because it is embarrassing. It doesn't reflect well on those of us who are Christians. It is a bad influence. They might see me associating with those bad people and think that we agree with the evil. David's wife was thinking that, and she got in trouble for it. And Jesus had charges brought against Him because He was careless about whom He associated with. He was notorious for including the excluded. In fact he was called a glutton and a drunkard and a friend of tax collectors and sinners. He wasn't holding to the traditional lines. He was an iconoclast, a bad influence. He ran around with sinners. I mean, these were really *sinners*. They were despised people and ceremonially sinful. These tax collectors came in contact with Gentiles. Furthermore, it was treason because a tax collector was working with foreigners against his own people. A tax collector was an outcast. And Jesus was running with those people and eating with those people.

What kind of people are the folks who can celebrate like this? I can tell you one thing. The folks who can celebrate don't pout like the older brother did. He said, "You never killed a fatted calf for me." He seemed to be saying, "It's just not fair." It's the same accusation that those who had worked all day were making against the owner for paying the same wages to those who worked only one hour.

Not only do the celebrants not pout, but they can also accept wrong. People can do them wrong. The father in this story was really done wrong. His son didn't just deplete the father's bank account; he hurt the father's heart. He *broke* his heart. But the father did not become bitter or resentful. Celebrants can accept being wronged. First Corinthians talks about the ability not to go to law with a brother. It is better to be wronged than to go to law. The people who can celebrate seem never to bring up the past again. What was done was done. They just rejoice that the past has been forgiven. If God has really blotted out our sins, how good is it for us (how fair is it for us)

to dig it up again to try to humble somebody, pull somebody else down?

Also, the celebrants can love the very worst sinners. The young prodigal was no model. He had blown his money, his reputation, virtually his life. This father accepted him and loved him exactly as he was. Somehow Christian celebrants learn how to expect the best, even from the worst sinners. And those of us fathers whose children go far away like this young prodigal need to remember that these are loved just much as the straight-arrow children in the church.

Furthermore, the father even underwrote the wrongdoer, gave him his inheritance. He didn't want to underwrite him, but he yielded to what seemed to be against his better judgment. In the long run, the father figured by giving him the inheritance the son might be more likely to return than if he cut him off.

Celebrants welcome and receive bad women, tax collectors, sinners. Remember that woman that washed Jesus' feet with her tears (Lk. 7)? He told her, "Your faith has saved you, now you go in peace." Well, where was she going to go? Was she going to go back to the streets? No, she was going to go with the disciples. They were going to take her in, even with AIDS or whatever, and they were going to rejoice. They were going to have a party because the lost had been saved.

See, the ultimate purpose of Christianity is to get to the point of celebration and rejoicing. The story isn't finished yet because I think we still have a problem with some in the church today. Isn't Christ in this story really talking about what is spirituality? Isn't he saying to the Pharisees and the Sadducees, "You guys better learn to celebrate. You keep calling me a sinner and telling me I couldn't possibly be the Messiah because I fellowship with people you would never accept into your fellowship. But you've got to understand: it is not just the theologically pure people like the older son, like yourselves, that God accepts and loves. He also loves sinners. And when those sinners respond, we are going to throw a party. A bash, if you

please. And if you are too stiff-necked to do that, that is your problem."

So those who act like the elder son, come on in and join the party. Develop a little passion. Develop a little feeling. Quit your pouting and learn how to accept wrong without getting your bottom lip out. Never bring up the past again about what that young brother did, either. Learn how to love the very worst sinners. Welcome them, receive them, throw a party for them, because there is a big, big party going on up in heaven for them right this very minute. Every one of them.

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THEME CLASSES

WHAT LUKE IS ALL ABOUT

Tom Alexander

Most of the information we have about the life and ministry of Jesus is contained in the first four books of the New Testament, commonly referred to in biblical studies as the "Gospels." It has long been recognized that John is the most unique Gospel, sharing only about ten percent of its material with the others. Matthew, Mark, and Luke, however, share so much material in common and present the ministry of Jesus in so similar a manner that they have received the designation "Synoptic Gospels."

These gospels are similar largely because they all draw from a common body of information as they tell the story of Jesus of Nazareth. However, these documents also have striking differences. Biblical scholars have recognized that by comparing the Gospels to one another and by being sensitive to the shades and hues of each, we can have a better understanding of the contribution each writer makes to our overall understanding of Jesus.

One of the major ways in which Luke differs from the other Gospels is that it is the only account of the ministry of Jesus that has a sequel. Matthew, Mark, and John all close their records with their respective reports of the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus. Luke, however, moves beyond the resurrection and the ascension of Jesus to write a narrative of how the message of the crucified, risen, and ascended Lord was proclaimed from Jerusalem to Rome by those who believed in him. This means that as we read the third Gospel we must not only view it in comparison with the other Gospels, but we should also be aware of its relationship to the second volume, Acts of the Apostles, in which Luke tells us what Jesus "continued to do and to

teach" through the lives of believers who survived him on earth. [The expression "continued to do and to teach" is a possible inference from Luke's remark that his Gospel concerned what Jesus "began to do and to teach" (Acts 1:1). [See I. Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1980), 55.]

A second feature that can help us in our quest for Luke's central interests is his distinctive literary preface (Lk. 1:1-4). While the prologue definitely places the Gospel in the arena of the literature of the Greco-Roman world of Luke's day, it more importantly introduces us to some of Luke's fundamental spiritual concerns.

A third characteristic of Luke's Gospel that can help us in getting a handle on its distinctiveness is the birth narrative of chapters one and two. While both Matthew and Luke provide information regarding the birth of Jesus, the two accounts have their unique features. In addition to presenting his special details surrounding the birth of the Savior, Luke is the only author to supply material concerning the birth of John. These facts suggest that while Luke 1-2 is somewhat like Matthew 1-2, its distinctive features may give us insight into some of Luke's special concerns. In fact, a number of scholars have persuasively argued that the first two chapters of Luke constitute an important preamble to Luke's work. [Paul S. Minear, "Luke's Use of the Birth Stories," in *Studies in Luke-Acts*, ed. by Leander E. Keck and J. Louis Martyn (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 111-130; also Donald Juel, *Luke-Acts: The Promise of History* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1983), 9-24.]

This essay will utilize the information of Luke 1-2 as a guide into some of the distinctive perspectives on the ministry of Jesus we gain from Luke in general.

"THAT YOU MAY KNOW THE CERTAINTY"

In his prologue (Lk. 1:1-4) Luke acknowledges literary predecessors who had produced accounts of Christian origins based on eyewitness testimony. While not necessarily being critical of the work of his forebears, Luke, on the basis of his careful investigation, regards his effort to produce an orderly account as justified.

An emphasis on certainty occurs in what is clearly Luke's statement of purpose. Luke 1:3-4 tells us that he had written so that Theophilus may know the certainty of the things he had been taught. It appears that Theophilus had received information concerning Christianity prior to reading Luke's narrative. Whether Theophilus was an interested non-Christian whose understanding of Christianity was limited or inaccurate, or whether he was a Christian who had received elementary instruction in the faith continues to be debated. Also, scholars differ over whether the "certainty" Luke wanted his reader to have implies the correction of false information or the supplement of incomplete instruction, or whether Luke simply wanted Theophilus to have confident assurance about the initial instruction he had received. Regardless of the view one takes, it does appear that Luke wanted Theophilus to know that the information included in his Gospel and Acts "would form the basis for a sound Christian faith." [I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1978), 40.]

"THE THINGS THAT HAVE BEEN FULFILLED AMONG US"

Verse one introduces the topic of **fulfillment**, another key concept that constitutes a window into Luke's agenda. Luke shared the concern of his predecessors to write about the things [matters] that

have been fulfilled among us" [NIV; ASV]. Translations that describe the content of the narrative as things which are most surely believed" [KJV] or "things which have been accomplished" [RSV; NASV] fail to detect the overture of a pervasive Lucan theme. Luke means more than that these things have simply happened. As Donald Juel observes:

The word "fulfill" suggests that the events which have transpired are not mere occurrences: rather, they fill up or fill out something; they reach toward some goal, which would suggest this story cannot be read by itself. The events belong in some larger context; they are perhaps part of a plan. [Juel, *Luke-Acts*, p. 16.]

As one reads through the narrative of Luke 1-2, this larger context becomes clear.

According to Luke 1:16-17, the angel from the Lord told Zechariah that the son Elizabeth would bear would turn many of the people of Israel back to God as he made ready a people prepared for the Lord. The messenger tied the ministry of John to the prophetic expectations of Malachi (Mal: 4:6) and Isaiah (Is. 40:3-5). When the angel Gabriel described the son that Mary would have, his language evoked the familiar prophetic theme of the everlasting kingdom of the Davidic Messiah (Lk. 1:32-33; cf. 2 Sam. 7:13, 16; Is. 9:6-7; Dan. 2:44). At Elizabeth's house Mary glorified the Lord who had helped Israel in remembrance of his promise to Abraham and his descendants (Lk. 1:54-55; cf. Gen. 17:7; 18:18; 22:17; Mic. 7:20). After the birth of John, Zechariah praised the Lord for redeeming and saving Israel, and he connected these blessings directly to what God had earlier spoken through his holy prophets and to the oath of the covenant God had made with Abraham (Lk. 1:68-75). After the birth of Jesus, Simeon, a man 'waiting for the consolation of Israel' encountered Jesus. As he took the infant Messiah into his arms, he praised the

Lord for the salvation which had been prepared, in part, for glory to his people (Lk. 2:25-32). The decidedly Jewish focus is reinforced by the description of the aged Anna who "gave thanks to God, and spoke of him to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem" (Lk. 2:38).

This emphasis on prophecy and fulfillment related to the destinies of Israel, broached in the preface to Luke and worked into the fabric of the birth narrative of Luke 1-2, also pervades the remainder of the Gospel and Acts. [See in this volume Jack P. Lewis, "The Things Which Have Been Fulfilled Among Us." Also see Richard Oster, *The Fulfillment Concept in Acts*," in *Acts: The Spreading Flame*, Harding University's 1989 Lectures (Searcy: Harding University, 1989), 279-285.] It is clear that Luke intends for his readers to know that the story they are reading is the culmination of God's purpose that has been at work for generations. Further, the events that he narrates serve the purpose of bringing the people of Israel back to God.

"A LIGHT FOR REVELATION TO THE GENTILES"

Luke also wants his reader(s) to know that the story of God's faithfulness to Abraham embraces his acceptance of the Gentiles. The birth narrative shines a ray of light in this direction when it relates Simeon's blessing: ". . . for mine eyes have seen thy salvation which thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to thy people Israel" (Lk. 2:30-32).

This ray joins with others to form a powerful beacon by the end of Luke's work. Luke's genealogy of Jesus, tracing the Savior to Adam (Lk. 3:23-38), is more universal than Matthew's list that links Jesus with Abraham (Matt. 1:1-17). At the synagogue in Nazareth Jesus identified himself with the God who sends prophets to non-Israelites (Lk. 4:25-27). The Gospel closes with the anticipation that the message of salvation would be preached to all nations (Lk. 24:47),

and Acts continues the theme by narrating the spread of the gospel to "the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8; cf. Acts 13:47). Paul's sermon at Antioch ties the developing story of the Gentile mission in Acts to the words of Simeon: "I have set you to be a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the uttermost parts of the earth" (Acts 13:47; cf. Lk. 2:32; Acts 1:8; Is. 49:6). Acts closes with God's intention to address the gospel to the Gentiles: "... this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen" (Acts 28:29).

"FOR THE FALL AND RISING OF MANY IN ISRAEL"

Some interpreters of Luke-Acts understand Luke to have a basically negative view of the Jews and regard the mission to the Gentiles as an indication of God's rejection of Israel. [For a summary of representative views see Joseph B. Tyson, "Jews and Judaism in Luke-Acts: Reading as a Godfearer," *New Testament Studies* 41 (1995): 19-38.] To be sure, Jewish opposition to the mission of Jesus and his followers is formidable in Luke-Acts. Simeon described Jesus as a sign that is spoken against" (Lk. 2:34). The hostility Jesus encountered in the Nazareth synagogue (Lk. 4:28-29) was a precursor to the Jewish opposition he would face in his ministry (Acts 2:23), and which his followers would experience as they perpetuated his cause (Acts 4:1ff.; 5:17ff.; 6:11ff.; 9:1ff.; 13:45ff.; 14:2, 19; 18:4-5).

However, passages which seem to suggest God's total rejection of the Jews, upon closer investigation, actually demonstrate the opposite. According to Acts 13:46 Paul spoke sharply to jealous Jews who contradicted his message and indicated that since they had judged themselves unworthy of eternal life, he was turning to the Gentiles. However, he travelled on to Iconium where he spoke in the Jewish synagogue and converted both Jews and Greeks (Acts 14:1). He told Jews in Corinth, "From now on I will go to the Gentiles" (Acts 18:6). Yet, shortly thereafter Crispus, the ruler of the syna-

agogue, and his household believed (Acts 18:8). In the final lines of Acts, Paul calls attention to the recalcitrance of many of the Jews and announces that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles who will listen (Acts 28:25-29). However, the context makes it clear that not all Jews had rejected the gospel (Acts 28:24). Luke's point is not that God has rejected Israel, but that he has rejected those in *Israel* who had refused to accept the Messiah.

Two other points should be noted: not all Gentiles accepted the gospel; and some Gentiles joined in the opposition to the Christian mission (Acts 14:5; 19:23ff.). However, believing Gentiles would join with believing Jews to constitute the people of God. The gospel of Jesus polarized people within Judaism, but it did not signal God's eternal rejection of Jewish people.

Luke relates the good news of the action of God in Christ that brings salvation to all who accept it. [The concepts of "gospel/good news" and salvation" are recurring themes in Luke- Acts.] It is God's salvation prepared in the presence of all people (Lk. 2:31) and preached to all nations (Lk. 24:47). It is offered to all whom God calls to him, whether among the Jews or among those who are far off (Acts 2:39) It is message that offers acceptance by the impartial God to anyone of any nation who will fear God and do what is right (Acts 10:34-35).

"HE HAS EXALTED THOSE OF LOW DEGREE"

You may have recognized that many of the thematic statements in the earliest chapters of Luke are made by major characters. Another of these themes is voiced by Mary in her song of praise at Elizabeth's house:

He has shown strength with his arm, he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts, he has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree; he

has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty (Lk. 1:51-53).

These words should make the reader understand that God's action in Jesus turns, normal cultural stereotypes on end. The pride and prominence of wealth and human achievement are powerless to secure a right relationship with God. In fact, God refuses those who rely on such things (Lk. 1:53; 6:24; 12:16-21; 16:19-35; 18:18-27). To the contrary, Luke understands God to be the champion of individuals too frequently regarded as marginal.

Jesus' first points of identity were with an insignificant virgin who recognized her "low estate" (Lk. 1:48), and with her betrothed carpenter (Lk. 1:27) who came from a less than prominent village in Galilee (Lk. 1:28). The sacrifice of a pair of birds instead of the more expensive lamb after Jesus' birth (Lk. 2:24; cf. Lev. 12:6-8) indicates the modesty, if not poverty, of Jesus' parents. The one who was destined to reign forever entered human history through common doors. Luke regards Jesus' words in the Nazareth synagogue as the inaugural sermon of his ministry. There he voiced the divine concern for the outcast:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord (Lk. 4: 18-19).

As the story unfolds in Luke and Acts, we recognize that God and his Christ have a special interest in those who were frequently marginalized and discounted in the first century. Shepherds (Lk. 2:8), children (Lk. 7:12; 8:42; 9:38, 47; 10:21), women (Lk. 7:11-12, 37-50; 8:2-3; 10:38-42; 13:11; Acts 1:14; 9:36-43; 16:11-15), the poor (Lk. 1:53; 6:30; 14:11-13, 21; 16: 19-31), Samaritans (Lk. 10:29-37; 17:15-19; Acts 8:5ff.), lepers (Lk. 17:11-19), tax collectors and sinners (Lk. 15:1; 19:1-10), common criminals (Lk. 23:32-43),

and foreigners typically excluded from the community of Israel (Acts 8:27) are among those who frequent the story in Luke-Acts. As some have remarked, God has a way of upsetting our sociological distinctions and finding his saints in unexpected places." [D. A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 130.]

"FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT"

Luke introduces another of his major themes when he reports the angel's prospect that John would be "filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb" (Lk. 1:15). The Gospel of Luke has more references to the Holy Spirit than Matthew and Mark combined. The Spirit figures importantly in the events that prepare for the ministry of Jesus (Lk. 1:35, 41, 67; 2:25-27). He is a conspicuous participant in Jesus' earthly ministry (Lk. 3:16, 22; 4:1, 14, 18; 10:21; 11:13; 12:12). The Spirit is more pervasively present in the continuing story of Acts (Acts 1:8; and approximately forty other references)

The reader is reminded that this is a story of divine dimensions. It is God's story, initiated and sustained by God's Holy Spirit.

"FOR WITH GOD NOTHING WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE"

One might suspect that the movement which constitutes the fulfillment of God's ageless promises would have a lot going for it. Surely, the cause initiated and sustained by the Holy Spirit should prevail. Luke appears to want his readers to understand this truth.

The story begins in the context of impossibilities. Zechariah and Elizabeth are beyond the years of parenthood; yet, they have John. Mary, a maiden who has not been intimate with a man, conceives and has Jesus. How else could things like this occur except that God brings them to pass? Mary's declaration, For with God

nothing will be impossible" (Lk. 1:37), heralds an overarching theme of Luke and Acts. Jesus and his followers face odds that from the human perspective may appear impossible to overcome. However, the opposition does not prevail. The efforts of people in the Nazareth synagogue to thwart Jesus were unsuccessful (Lk. 4: 28-30). Even though the Son of man suffered many things and was rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and was killed, he was raised on the third day (Lk. 9:22; 24:46; Acts 2:22-24). The flame of Christ's mission to the world was not quenched by his death; it was fanned by his resurrection!

The earliest Christians faced a number of setbacks, from the arrests and deaths of prominent church leaders (Acts 4:1ff.; 5:17ff.; 7:54ff.; 12:1ff.), to intramural tensions within the church (Acts 5:1ff.; 6:1ff.), to sweeping general persecution (Acts 8:1). However, the progress reports Luke gives us indicate that there was no retreat for the church (Acts 4:4; 5:14; 6:7; 9:31). And as Luke's account draws to a close, in spite of all the harassment and hindrance Paul had encountered, the apostle was preaching the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ quite openly and unhindered" (Acts 28:31).

The story that Luke tells demonstrates the wisdom of Gamaliel's advice to the Sanhedrin, "... keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this undertaking is of men, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them" (Acts 5:38-39).

"AND THE WHOLE MULTITUDE OF PEOPLE WERE PRAYING"

The story that Luke tells is not one of divine determinism. Instead, the power of God is manifested among those people who yield their wills to his and who acknowledge their dependence upon him. God is responsive to the prayers of his people.

Luke's story opens with Zechariah representing the people of Israel in the sanctuary of the temple, while the whole multitude of the people were praying outside" (Lk. 1:8-10). In the best tradition of Jewish piety, the people acknowledged their need for God at the daily hour of prayer. Anna is an epitome of the faithful Israelite who devotes herself to prayer (Lk. 2:37). Prayer was an important aspect of the ministry of John (Lk. 5:33; 11:1) and a vital part of Jesus' ministry. Jesus' prayers at his baptism (Lk. 3:21) and at his passion (Lk. 22:41) frame Luke's account of Jesus' personal prayer life (Lk. 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28; 11:1; 22:32). Jesus also taught the importance of prayer in the lives of his followers (Lk. 6:28; 11:2ff.; 18:1ff.; 22:40).

Prayer was at the root of the church, which perpetuated the ministry of Jesus (Acts 1:14, 24; 2:42). Luke informs us that prayer was a common feature of early Christian life. Of the several passages in Acts that call attention to prayer in the early church, perhaps Acts 4:29-30 shows best how the prayers of the earliest Christians functioned to place themselves at God's disposal while at the same time expressing their absolute confidence in God's care and providence:

And now, Lord, look upon their threats, and grant to thy servants to speak thy word with all boldness, while thou stretchest out thy hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of thy holy servant Jesus.

CONCLUSION

Luke has a challenging message for Christians of the modern era. First, he reminds us of the importance of the church. The church embodies the unfolding plan of God. What God purposed for the world ages ago, he now brings to fulfillment through Christ and his

church. At a time when many think the church is irrelevant, Luke reminds us of its centrality to the plan of God.

Second, the church must carry out its design. The church is called to proclaim the gospel to the nations of the world. Walls between nations created by pride and prejudice must be breached. And within nations, the gospel must be carried to all classes. As the church perpetuates the ministry of Jesus, she perpetuates his concern for the outcasts.

Third, like Luke, the church must offer the nations a credible message. In a world where attitudes toward the message of God range from denial to skepticism to uncritical credulity, the church is called to help our modern Theophiluses to know that the foundations of the Christian faith are solid.

This task is indeed formidable and requires more for its execution than our human efforts. Like those whose lives are played out on the pages of Luke-Acts, we must recognize that God, his Christ, and the Holy Spirit who began the church and sustained its earliest members in the living out of their faith, will sustain us. All the discouragements and disappointments that come our way must not take our focus off the victory toward which God moves his people. Prayerful communion with God and daily reliance upon him constitute the only assurance that his servants today can speak his word with all boldness.

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LUKE 11:1-13

LEON BARNES

Jesus was the Master of prayer, during His visitation on the earth. His prayers were a constant source of communion with the Father. He prayed before every great event of his ministry. It was a constant source of wonder for the apostles who knew he prayed all night. He arose before the light of day to go out into a deserted place to pray. When he and the inner circle, Peter, James, and John, went up on the mountain of transfiguration, it was to pray. The disciples just couldn't stay awake. But He prayed. When they awoke, it was with astonishment to see Moses and Elijah with Jesus, talking about His coming death. At the end, with the shadow of the cross looming over Him, Jesus went to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray. It was there He laid His soul bare to the Father and asked for another way out. But His prayer concluded with, "Not my will but yours be done."

The apostles, witnessing Jesus in prayer to the Father, broke out in wonder: "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples to pray." These were grown men, who had been brought up in praying families, who had attended Synagogue services where prayers were uttered and great feast days in Jerusalem where prayers were said over everything. You would have thought if anyone knew about prayer it would have been them. But as they listened to Jesus praying, it was painfully obvious there was a vast difference in the prayers they had learned to say and what they heard and saw in Him.

Notice, they didn't asked Him to teach them HOW TO PRAY. They asked him to teach them TO PRAY. Method was not the answer. They wanted the communion he had with God. His response dripped with simplicity. If they were expecting him to follow the path of the rabbis and teach them little prayers they could use on the different occasions of their work, they were terribly fooled. He didn't have a prayer book for them to carry with them. Instead he taught them to pray.

"WHEN YOU PRAY, SAY"

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name" (Lk. 11:2). The greatest single obstacle to prayer, is a wrong view of God. The apostles had learned early of the power and majesty of God. He is Jehovah, the Almighty. They knew him as the creator of the universe. They knew he was all wise and in every place at the same time. But, to see God as their Father was quite a different matter. God is so high above normal people like us. How could He even care about the trivial problems we struggle with day after day? Prayer will always be difficult when we can't imagine God caring about our needs or interest.

But if God is OUR FATHER, then we can understand how he would both care and be willing to act on our behalf. Fathers love their children. They want them to talk to them about anything in which they are interested. Good fathers will make time for their children. Even when the world is pressing at the door, their child can still get in and have all the time he wants.

Your friends may not like it if you to come at midnight with a request for bread, and they may make excuses as to why they can't get up and get you what you need, but a father, who loves his children, will both answer the door and hug them, wiping away any tears and telling them all along, "It will be all right. Don't worry about getting us up. We just want you to be all right. Here take what you need. Are

you sure that is enough?" Even, poor, sinful, earthly fathers won't give their child a snake when they ask for a fish or a stone when they ask for bread. If fathers as low as us will give their children what they need when they need it, how much more will our Father in Heaven provide for us? No wonder Paul wrote of this love with such eloquence. "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how will he not also with him freely give us all things" (Rom. 8:31-32).

God is our father. But he is a different kind of father from the ones we know here. When Jesus said, "Hallowed is Your Name," He wasn't just offering some formula for us to say at the beginning of prayers. The word "Hallowed" comes from the same word translated "Holy" and "Saint." It is the word which means to be set apart. The point is that God is our Father in heaven, but he is set apart from fathers we know on this earth. Fathers down here are a mixed bag. They have both good and evil. They have right and wrong motives and desires. Even the best of fathers will make tragic mistakes in their training and in their influence. But God is a different kind of Father. He is without the weaknesses and frailties of humanity. He is the perfect Father who willingly paid the highest price of all for us to be adopted into his family (Rom. 8:12-17).

"YOUR KINGDOM COME"

But, what do you talk to God, Your Father, about? Even Paul said, "We don't know what to pray for as we ought" (Rom. 8:26). So, what should we pray to God concerning? Pray for his kingdom to come! When Christ prayed, the kingdom had not been established. It was still "at hand." When Pentecost came, the kingdom was established, and all who are born again are now a part of the kingdom (Jn. 3:3-5). When we are converted, we are translated out of the power of darkness into the kingdom of God's Son (Col. 1:13). The kingdom of

Christ is not of the world but is spiritual in nature (Jn. 18:36). But is all this what Jesus had in mind when he said to pray for the kingdom to come? Matthew's account adds the phrase, "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). This is a parallelism, which means the second phrase explains the first. The primary point of "Your kingdom come" is "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

The word translated "Kingdom" means the reign or rule of God. This is far more than just a prayer for the establishment of the church. It is a prayer for the reign of God to be throughout the world. It is a prayer for evangelism. It is a prayer for all of us to accept the reign of God in our personal lives. It does not even touch the idea of praying for some earthly kingdom to be set up in the future, where Christ will sit on some throne in Jerusalem to reign for a thousand years.

Let it be clearly understood that praying for the kingdom of God to come should begin in my own life. How can I pray for God's will to be done in the world when I am not submitting to his will in my own life? The reign should begin in my own heart and life. It should proceed from there to the world around me and from there to the whole world. Clearly, to pray for the kingdom to come and not be one who is striving to carry the gospel to a lost and dying world is the height of inconsistency. The kingdom rule only goes where the kingdom gospel goes first.

Tied closely to this prayer should be another one Jesus commanded us to pray: "And seeing the multitudes, he felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to His disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest'" (Matt. 9:36-38).

"GIVE US DAY BY DAY OUR DAILY BREAD"

If God is my Father, surely I can also talk to him about the little concerns of my life. Nothing is more basic than the food I eat each day. Jesus said to pray about the daily bread. It is all right to go to God about food, drink, shelter, clothes, and all the other basics of life. He both cares and is involved in the meeting of those needs. But note: God says pray about our daily needs or daily bread. He didn't challenge us to pray for enough to fill the deep freeze. Also, prayer for food does not lessen the need to work. The two should go hand-in-hand. Our prayers of thanksgiving for the food we have acknowledges God as the source of the food.

"FORGIVE US OUR SINS"

Why bread before sins? Shouldn't the spiritual be taken care of before the physical? I don't know if the timing is indicative of importance. Perhaps the point is this, it is hard to think of sins while we are hungry. Or maybe, we tend to think first of the needs which come around every day. The greater need is forgiveness. All of us are guilty of sin. We may not sin daily or need forgiveness daily as with bread, but we must have forgiveness from sins for the bread to have any long term usefulness.

Denial of both sin and the need for God's forgiveness will build a huge barrier to prayer. Even when we attempt to pray in those circumstances, we sound like the Pharisee who raised his eyes to heaven and thanked God he was not like other men, especially not like the poor sinful tax collector beside him. He thanked God for how righteous he was, and his prayer was more a recitation of his goodness for himself than of any cry to God (Lk. 18:9-14). On the other hand, the tax collector couldn't hold up his head as he prayed and simply pleaded, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Jesus said, "He went down to his house justified." God knows us inside out. He

knows our frailty. He knows our needs. He knows us so well, He even knows what we need before we ask. Our prayer to Him is not to inform Him of our need for forgiveness or that we are sinners. It is to lay our lives open to Him and ask for the greatest need of all.

John said, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the word is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 Jn. 1:8-9). There is no sin too big for the God of heaven to forgive. And there are no sins so small but what they need His forgiveness. I know God doesn't wait for the one who is walking in the light to ask for Him to forgive since "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus Christ, His son cleanses us from all our sins" (1 Jn. 1:7). But I also know, for us to make that into an excuse not to ask God for His forgiveness is to miss the point and could well take us out of the light.

Our prayer for God's forgiveness prompts the prayer for us to be forgiving of others. "For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us." Matthew's account adds, "For if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father in heaven forgive yours" (Matt. 6:15). The marvel of God, so freely forgiving us no matter the depth of our sinfulness, should cause us to forgive quickly and easily, but it doesn't always work so well. We still stand in awe of Jesus when the rebellious crowd had him nailed to the cross, yet his prayer was, "Father, forgive them, they don't know what they are doing" (Lk. 23:34). Surely, if he could forgive such crimes, I can forgive the trivial attacks of men who think they are doing right.

Strangely, it is seldom the attacks which come from the world which cause us the greatest difficulty in forgiveness. It is the ones from the inside, from fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. It is the attacks made with vengeance and called righteous indignation by the perpetrators. Sometimes we need to pray, "Lord, help me to remember just how forgiving you have always been. Give me the will to forgive a brother on the attack." Probably the reason we have such a

hard time with this brand of forgiveness is that we feel it is unfair and we don't deserve it. But how fair was Jesus' treatment by the mob? How much did he deserve such sordid behavior, even from those who claimed to worship his father? So, let's brush off the prayers for our own forgiveness and the ones where we pray to be more forgiving ourselves.

"LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION"

It doesn't do much good to take a bath if you are planning to stay in the hog pen. Forgiveness of sins is vital. But we also need the guidance of God to keep us from going right back to the mire of sin. God is not concerned only about having our sins forgiven. He is concerned about getting us out of the sinning business. He wants to change our lives. "Whoever is born of God does not continue in sin, for his seed remains in him and he cannot sin, because he is begotten of God" (1 Jn. 3:9). To use the free forgiveness of God as an excuse to continue a life of sin is a crime against the very nature of God.

James said, "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and he himself does not tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death" (Jas. 1:13-15). The guidance of God is available in our lives. But we should pray for the guidance. Also, God guides through his word. His guidance never leads me in a different direction than what he has already commanded in his word.

KEEP ON ASKING

The prayer of a Christian is described by the Lord on three levels. Level one is "Ask and it shall be given unto you." Level two is "Seek and you will find." Level three is "Knock and the door will

be opened to you" (Matt.7:7). Prayer is not just casual conversation with a friend over coffee. In those conversations about the weather and who won the ball game and why, it matters little if anyone even remembers what was said. It is just conversation. It is meant to be friendly, but quite meaningless.

Prayer is more like Jacob's wrestling with the angel of God. It is the pursuit of God's blessings and God's will. It is setting the goal on the vital and going to the source to find the answers. Prayer is the petition which won't stop until an answer comes. Jesus has named the vital concerns which should send us to God our Father for our needs. Then he says, "Go and keep on going. When asking isn't enough, seek. When seeking isn't enough, knock and keep on knocking."

It isn't that God is a reluctant God. We should be so sold on the help God can give that we just won't stop without an answer. Certainly, there are times when the answer is not the one we want, as when Paul prayed for the thorn in the flesh to be removed but was told, no. He was given more grace instead. Then we can change the perspective and glory in the tribulation. But we must not stop when the problem may simply be our lack of will or determination.

GOD GIVES HIS SPIRIT

God our Father is so much better than any earthly father. Earthly fathers try to provide what a child needs. But God goes far beyond such efforts. "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?" (Lk. 11:13). Matthew's account of this statement says he knows how to give "good gifts to his children" (Matt. 7:11). That does offer some insight into the meaning here. The Holy Spirit is not the gift being requested, but the giver of the gifts. Matthew and Luke do not contradict each other, but one helps to explain the other. When we pray for the needs of our lives,

whether spiritual or physical, God gives us the Holy Spirit to take care of the needs which are troubling us.

Jesus later prayed to the Father to send another comforter or counselor who would abide with us forever. The Holy Spirit is the divine representative of the Godhead and dwells in every child of God (Acts 2:38; Eph. 2:18-22). Inside the Christian, who is the very temple of God (1 Cor. 6:18-20), the Spirit helps us with our weaknesses (Rom. 8:26). He strengthens us in the inner man (Eph. 3:14-18). He leads us and bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God (Rom. 8:14-17). The challenge for all of us is to be "filled with the Holy Spirit" (Eph. 5:18) so the Spirit of God will bear his fruit in our lives to make of us spiritual beings in this world.

Does this mean it is right for a Christian today to pray for the Holy Spirit? Certainly! But let it be clearly understood: this giving of the Holy Spirit doesn't have to do with miraculous signs. It has to do with the fulfillment of a Christians' prayers as he strives to live by the things Jesus teaches him to do. The Holy Spirit is there to help us forgive and to lead us not into temptation. To pray for the Holy Spirit to do these things is simply to pray for what Jesus said he would do if we asked.

Jesus was the master of prayer! I want to learn to have that spirit of prayer which so affected his earthly life. I want a measure of the fellowship He shared with the Father. I want some of the communion He had early in the morning and late at night. I want to know some of the power He received from prayer. Don't you?

God help us not just to learn the words, but to pray the prayer Jesus taught us to pray.

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WILL WE KNOW EACH OTHER IN HEAVEN?

STAN BRATCHER

What will it be like in heaven? Will we know one another? Can we be sure of our answer? Perhaps not, but it is an intriguing question. Almost everyone gives thoughts about the possibility. Our salvation may not depend upon knowing fully the answer to this question but it deserves to be considered.

BIBLICAL CONSIDERATIONS

We will know Christ, and He will know us in eternity (2 Cor. 5:10). Yes, we will know the Father and Son, and they will know us. Everyone believes in vertical recognition. The implication is clear that we will know God and Christ.

The lesson of the rich man and Lazarus (Lk. 16) teaches that the rich man remembered his brothers on earth and recognized Lazarus after his death. Christ used only true analogies to teach. He did not use that which was contrary to truth. He simply stated that people recognize one another after death.

Peter, James and John recognized Moses and Elijah when they appeared at the transfiguration in Matthew 17. Will they lose that ability after death, or will we know God's great heroes in eternity?

Matthew 8:11 speaks of many sitting down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. It implies that these will know each other; otherwise, the passage has no meaning. Matthew 25:37-40 tells of the judgment scene and of the Lord reminding those

condemned that they had not served the needs of their fellowman. They responded with full knowledge of their former lives. Luke 23:42-43 implies that when the thief was told he would be with the Lord in Paradise, it was something he could look forward to with full conscious awareness.

The implication of scripture is that man will retain his knowledge and awareness in eternity.

OBJECTIONS

One asks, "If we know each other and some loved one is not there, would we not be miserable?" Good question! The conclusion is that God will not let us recognize one another so we may be happy. But, remember this an argument from logic and not the Bible. Christ will surely remember all the saved and the lost in eternity. Yet, there is no hint that he will be sad because of the lost. They have rejected Him and cut themselves off from His love. Perhaps we will be of that same mind. It could be asked, "If we do not know anyone in heaven, would we not be sad and lonely, feeling like strangers?" What about babies that die in their early years or were aborted? If they have little or almost no memory from this life, will they spend eternity with that same shallow memory? This would be the hardest question to answer.

Jesus said that we will not have marriage relationships in heaven, but that we would be like the angels (Matt. 22:23-30). Therefore, our relationships on earth will mean nothing there. This does not deal with recognition of one another but teaches that there will be no marriages there.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Paul teaches that we "shall bear the likeness of the man from heaven" (1 Cor. 15:49). John tells us "that when he appears, we shall

be like him..." (1 Jn. 3:2). If Christ has full recognition of people in eternity and we are like him, will we not have that same mental awareness?

Only in eternity will we have the final answer to this question. We do have full confidence that whatever the answer may be, the redeemed will find joy and happiness.

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THE GOSPEL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

JIM HOWARD

THE NATURE AND FUNCTION OF THE SPIRIT

Before we can effectively understand the meaning of the Holy Spirit in Luke's Gospel, it is necessary that we examine the much bigger issue of the Spirit's nature and purpose in God's design. The history of our movement bears mute testimony to the difficulty we have had in grasping the meaning of the Spirit.

The British scholar Alan Richardson pinpoints our difficulty as the failure to grasp the Biblical writers' very different view of personality. Whereas we tend to think of separate, distinct personalities, in the Bible persons are not viewed as separate and distinct but rather flow together. A man lives on in his sons. Centuries following the death of Jacob, the patriarch's name can be used by the prophet Hosea to designate the whole nation of Israel. The Old Testament way of expressing Elisha's Identity with Elijah is to speak of "a double portion of your spirit" (2 Kgs. 2:9). Richardson rightly maintains that our stress on individuality of personality rather than the corporate personality lies at the root of Christendom's difficulty with the Trinity concept (Richardson, 103-104). [Richardson builds on the earlier conclusions of H. Wheeler Robinson who introduced the concept of corporate personality in the Old Testament.] This difficulty causes us to conceive of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit as three clearly distinguishable personalities -- a conception that gets us into all kinds of problems.

A second reason that we have difficulty understanding the nature and work of the Spirit is a practical, experiential one. As

human beings we have a lot more hands-on experience with fathers and sons than we do with spirits. The world of spirits seems somewhat "spooky."

A third reason we have such difficulty with the concept of the Holy Spirit is the one we least like to admit. By nature we are not as "spiritual" as we should be. Though we are supposed to be sanctified by the Spirit we must admit, if we are really honest, that we are far too secular and think with the mind of the world rather than the mind of the Spirit.

Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit is a dominant actor on the stage of the divine, cosmic drama of God's creation and maintenance of the world, as well as a major force in God's eternal salvation plan. Simply put, the Holy Spirit is one way of God's being God. The Spirit is God's powerful means of carrying out his plans and purposes for the world. In fact this definition surfaces a fourth difficulty in our understanding of the Spirit's function. Because the Spirit is of the essence of God and because his ways are higher than our ways and his thoughts higher than our thoughts (Is. 55:9), the Spirit does not submit to our logical categories. The Biblical use of identical terms for "spirit" and "wind" (*ruach* in Hebrew and *pneuma* in Greek) should make us understand that the Spirit will do his own work in his own way. Some of his methods and designs seem strange, even bizarre. But we are not programmed to understand divine activity. But this realization should create in us a heart of humility as regards our explanation of the Spirit's work.

To assist us in comprehending the Spirit's shaping of Luke's Gospel, perhaps it would be helpful to overview briefly the varied manifestations and teachings of the Spirit throughout Scripture. The Spirit's importance is seen in the reference to his "hovering over the waters" in the Creation narrative of Genesis 1:2. The Spirit fills Bezalel enabling him to create beautiful items for the tabernacle (Ex. 31:1-5). The Spirit came upon Samson to empower him to deliver Israel from servitude to the Philistines (Judg. 14:19; 15:14). Most of

all, however, God's Spirit is found in close association with his word, especially as that word is spoken by his prophets. The Spirit can come upon Saul with power, enabling him to prophesy (1 Sam. 10:9-11), terrify Obadiah with the awareness that Elijah may be carried away (1 Kgs. 18:12), empower Micaiah ben Imlah courageously to predict doom to Ahab (1 Kgs. 22), fill Micah with justice and might so that he can "declare to Jacob his transgression, to Israel his sin" (Mic. 3:8), and promise Ezekiel the power to keep the Lord's commands (Ez. 36:27). In the non-Lucan sections of the New Testament several of the Spirit's functions may be highlighted. In John's Gospel the Spirit (designated variously as Paraclete, Comforter, Counselor, or Advocate) when he comes will do several extremely important works. He will "convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment" (Jn. 16:8) and "guide you into all truth" (Jn. 16:13), which is perhaps another way of affirming that he will bring glory to Jesus by "taking from what is mine and making it known to you" (Jn. 16:12-15). In other words, the Spirit will exalt Jesus and his teachings. The other non-Lucan emphasis in the New Testament comes from the Apostle Paul. In Romans 8 we learn that the Spirit breaks the power of sin in the Christian's life by setting him or her free from the "law of sin and death" and co-testifying to Christians' status as children of God. The great apostle likewise promises the Spirit's bestowal of gifts upon all Christians, thereby making victorious body life possible (Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:7-11; Eph. 4:11-13). From these limited references in both Old and New Testaments, it is obvious that the Spirit's functioning is wide-ranging and all-encompassing.

THE SPIRIT IN LUKE'S GOSPEL

Many scholars believe that the Books of Luke and Acts are the surviving members of a trilogy written to trace God's eternal salvation plan through the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth and the birth and growth of the church he died to establish. The intimacy of the

relation of Luke to Acts demands that they be studied in tandem. As Fred Craddock puts it, "... the Gospel of Luke anticipates Acts and Acts reflects on the Gospel" (p. 11). The testimony of both concerning the Holy Spirit must be heard.

The key terms in both Luke and Acts to help us understand the Spirit are "witness" and "mission." The first of these seems most appropriate for Luke's Gospel. The Holy Spirit has as his goal authenticating and giving credibility to the ministry of Jesus Christ, God's universal redeemer. As mentioned in the introductory comments, the Spirit is one way of God's being God. The Spirit's work in Luke's Gospel is to make effective God's initiation of a new age, an age in which barriers are broken down and his grace is applied to all humanity. That this is Luke's purpose in writing is symbolized by his tracing the genealogy of Jesus, not back to Abraham as did Matthew in his "Jewish" Gospel, but rather back to Adam, the progenitor of all humanity. It is obvious that the breaking down of national and racial barriers for the reception of the gospel is a dominant emphasis throughout the New Testament. The presence and participation of God's powerful Spirit is necessitated in Luke because the creation of one new humanity in Christ is a task transcending human ability. Only the Spirit can make it possible. [That Luke gives greater emphasis to the Spirit than Matthew and Mark is proven not only by the greater frequency of usage but also by the writer's substitution of the term "Holy Spirit" in some parallel passages, e.g. Luke 11:13 compared to Matthew 7: 11.]

In Luke's Gospel Jesus is presented as a bearer of the Spirit (Hans Conzelman, 180). It is through Jesus that God's universal salvation for the new age will be initiated. It is for this reason, I believe, that Luke's emphasis on the Spirit is focused in the birth, early life, and beginning of ministry of Jesus. Because John the Baptist plays a crucial role in preparing for Jesus, the Spirit is also stressed in connection with his birth. The angel appearing to Zechariah prophesies that John will "be filled with the Holy Spirit even

from birth" (Lk. 1:15). The angel Gabriel informs Mary of the unique nature of her child with the words, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you" (Lk. 1:35). When Elizabeth hears the greeting of Mary who visits her, the unborn John leaps in her womb and she is "filled with the Holy Spirit" (Lk. 1:41). James Shelton suggests that whenever the phrases "filled with the Holy Spirit" or "full of the Holy Spirit" are used in Luke, they indicate that "inspired witness is about to occur or has occurred" (5). Even the aged Simeon is "moved by the Spirit" as he welcomes "the Lord's Christ" (Lk. 2:26-32).

At his baptism Jesus receives the Father's stamp of approval. As he was praying, "heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: 'You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased'" (Lk. 3:21-22). Following his baptism, "Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil" (Lk. 4:1-2). Here the Spirit appears actually to take an active role in leading Jesus to this experience of testing so crucial to the success of his life and ministry.

But the Gospel of Luke's greatest focus on the Spirit comes as Jesus gives his "state of the union" message at the Nazareth synagogue. Our Lord chooses what is perhaps the most significant reference to the Spirit in the entire Old Testament to justify his ministry. Isaiah 61:1 affirms, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me..." (Lk. 4:18-19), and the scripture continues that it is in the power of the Spirit with whom Jesus claims to be anointed that he will preach to the poor, proclaim freedom for prisoners, recovery of sight for the blind, release for the oppressed, and the year of the Lord's favor. This statement is pivotal. As stated previously, Jesus' spirit empowered ministry has as its central goal the turning upside down of worldly values and bringing in the day of God's salvation for all humanity. The Spirit provides the impetus for the dual themes of witness and

mission. The task is of such enormity that only the Spirit possesses sufficient power to bring about this exciting new spiritual order. Though other references to the Spirit's functioning in Luke could be provided if space permitted, the Nazareth synagogue disclosure provides in essence the thrust of the Spirit's purpose in Luke's Gospel.

THE SPIRIT IN ACTS

The lack of space precludes a detailed analysis of the all-encompassing ministry of the Spirit in the Book of Acts. It is possible, however, to trace the major outline of his functioning.

If the term "witness" seems most appropriate to sum up the Spirit's function in the third Gospel, both "witness" and its companion term "mission" aptly describe the Holy Spirit's work in Acts. The Spirit poured out on Pentecost inaugurates a qualitatively new age. Joseph Fitzmyer rightly sees the three-phase view of salvation-history of Lucan theology, as depicted in both Luke and Acts, as crucial: "The role of the Spirit as initiator was important for the inception both of Jesus' life and his ministry but now it has become the initiator of a new era of salvation-history when the Spirit becomes God's presence to his people anew" (p. 230). As earlier mentioned, John remembers Jesus' affirmation that the Spirit, when given, would not act independently but rather would bring to the apostles' recollection all that Jesus had taught them. John Stott notes that it is the ascension which serves as the watershed between the two phases--earthly and heavenly--of the ministry of Jesus Christ" (p. 34). The writer Luke in the first chapter of his second volume recounts the events preceding the ascension. First, he affirms that Jesus had given commandment through the Spirit (Acts 1:2). Second, he reaffirms the earlier promise that his apostles would shortly be baptized with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5). And third, Jesus instructs his followers to remain in Jerusalem until they would be empowered by the Spirit and would be his

"witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8)

On the great Day of Pentecost the vital Old Testament prophecy of Joel that God's Spirit would be poured out on all humanity (Joel 2:28ff.) is fulfilled (Acts 2). The Spirit empowers witness by energizing Peter's preaching so as to bring about conviction and salvation for three thousand. After the healing of the lame man, Peter is again "filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 4:8). This filling with the Spirit creates a holy boldness on the part of the apostles (Acts 5:32). Such references abound throughout Acts. In terms of the Spirit's guidance of the mission of the early disciples, one should take note of the actual geographical directions given to the earliest missionaries. It is the Spirit who directs Philip to the chariot occupied by the searching Ethiopian nobleman (Acts 8:29). The Spirit leads Peter to the household of Cornelius (Acts 10:19). Paul and Barnabas are sent out by the Spirit (Acts 13:4) and the great Apostle is directed away from Asia and Bithynia by the same Spirit (Acts 16:6-7). It is obvious from these and numerous other references that Luke's picture of the Holy Spirit is God's powerful intervention in the affairs of men to initiate and implement his universal salvation-history. Jesus is authenticated and endorsed by divine dictate. The new humanity which Jesus has created is empowered by the Spirit (designated in Acts also as the "Spirit of Jesus") to be his witnesses and to carry the good news to the whole universe. Thank God for his Holy Spirit who makes all the difference.

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JIMMY JIVIDEN

INTRODUCTION

There is no question about it. Women are prominent in the New Testament. This is particularly true in Luke and Acts. Jesus was born of woman (Gal. 4:4). Women ministered to Jesus (Lk.8:2-3). Women were last at the cross and first at the tomb (Lk.24:12ff). Women like Lydia showed hospitality. Women like Phoebe served as messengers. Priscilla helped her husband teach Apollos. There is absolutely no way that the role of woman can be viewed as less important than the role of man.

Jesus exalted womanhood. He showed her to be more than a sex object who can be divorced by her husband at will. Such was tolerated by the law of Moses (Matt. 9:7). Jesus showed that she was not to be subjected to a double standard of moral conduct by demonstrating that the woman taken in adultery was not the only one guilty of immorality (Jn. 8:7).

The first century culture demeaned womanhood, but she found her equal identity in the church of Christ. Paul said, "there is neither male nor female" (Gal. 3:28). Woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman "in the Lord" (1 Cor. 11:11). She might be the weaker vessel, but as such she is to receive greater honor (1 Pet. 3:7).

The Biblical role of woman is being undermined in our culture. Some have left the role of "house ruler" (οικοδεσποτειν - 1 Tim. 5:14) to become slaves in the market place. Men have

wanted it so. Some have left the role of motherhood to become neutered persons in the work force. Men have wanted it so.

I'm not speaking to the issue of whether a woman should work inside or outside of the home. I am speaking of the ideal role of womanhood. I am challenging women of all ages to prioritize the feminine role.

By doing this a woman will accomplish three things: First, she will find personal fulfillment. Second, she will make a more complete man out of her spouse. Third, she will bring glory to God.

The Biblical role of women has been radically challenged in our culture and is being questioned by many in the church. I want to examine three New Testament passages which speak to this issue.

1 CORINTHIANS 11:1-16

An important passage dealing with the doctrine of woman is 1 Corinthians 11:1-16. It deals with how women are to dress when they are praying or prophesying: "Every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying disgraces her head" (1 Cor. 11:5).

Women have a role in both talking to God in prayer and talking for God in prophecy. Certainly Paul would not be telling the women what to wear when praying or prophesying if it were sinful to do so in the first place.

This passage, however, is silent about several things. It does not say where this praying and prophesying are taking place. It does not say who was present when women prayed and prophesied. Other passages must be consulted for teachings concerning these questions. This passage only talks about the manner of dress.

Five Reasons Paul gives five reasons that a woman is not to pray or prophesy with her head unveiled:

1. A woman is not to pray or prophesy with her head uncovered because it would bring dishonor to her head --- her

husband: "Every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying disgraces her head" (1 Cor. 11:5).

2. A woman is not to pray or prophesy with her head uncovered because of the angels: "Therefore, the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head because of the angels" (1 Cor. 11:10).

3. A woman is not to pray or prophesy with her head uncovered because of propriety: "Judge for yourselves; Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered?" (1 Cor. 11:13).

4. A woman is not to pray or prophesy with her head uncovered because of nature: "Does not even nature itself teach you...if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her? For her hair is given to her as a covering" (1 Cor. 11:14).

5. A woman is not to pray or prophesy with her head uncovered because of the churches: "But if one is inclined to be contentious, we have no other practice, nor have the churches of God" (1 Cor. 11:16).

Nature of Paul's Arguments Paul does not quote the Old Testament. He does not say he has a commandment from the Lord. He does not say that this is an apostolic command. He uses reasons that are determined by how others feel about it within the culture.

A lady wearing a veil might dishonor her husband then --- but would the same be true now? This is a cultural argument.

It was improper for one of the Corinthian sisters to be unveiled when she "judged it within her own self" to be so. Most ladies today would feel improperly dressed if they were to wear a veil over their heads.

Paul argued that the ladies at Corinth ought to veil their heads because that was the brotherhood's custom. The custom of the brotherhood today is to go unveiled.

Paul uses cultural arguments to deal with a cultural problem. He argues from "what people think" --- "what other churches are doing" --- "what seems proper." He does not give a "thus saith the Lord."

Conclusion It should be noted that this passage says nothing of modern hats. It is speaking of the ancient custom of veiling. The only application for the church today is threefold: a woman's manner of dress should not cause others to think dishonorably of her husband; it should not seem improper in her own eyes; and it should conform to what others are wearing in the church.

1 CORINTHIANS 14:33b-35

The context of 1 Corinthians 14 shows how women were to act in the assembly of the church where spiritual gifts were exercised.

"Let the Women Keep Silent." Paul uses the imperative of exhortation --- let the women keep silent in the churches. He is saying that this is the way it should be.

Four Reasons Paul gives four reasons in this passage that women are to "keep silent in the churches":

- 1.They should keep silent because of the custom of the churches: "As in all the churches of the saints, let the women keep silent in the churches."
- 2.They should keep silent because of the law: "They are not permitted to speak, but let them subject themselves just as the law says."
- 3.The real reason for silence is that of apostolic instruction: "It is improper (disgraceful) for a woman to speak in the church (1 Cor. 14:35).
- 4.The apostolic instruction has the force of a command from the Lord: "If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment (1 Cor 14:37).

The first argument is from conformity. The second argument is from the law. The third argument is from apostolic instruction. The fourth argument is from the command of the Lord.

Women figured dominantly in the Delphi oracles, the Greek mystery religions and the Aphrodite cult at Corinth. The women, however, who followed Jesus Christ were more reverent, quiet, and submissive.

Contemporary Meaning What does 1 Corinthians 14 mean today? It is talking about women speaking in leadership roles when the church is assembled.

Notice verses 26 and 35. There is a contrast between "when you assemble" in verse 26 and "at home" in verse 35.

The same is true today for the same reasons. Christian women are not to speak in leadership roles when the church is assembled. The example of the apostolic churches shows this. The teachings of the law demand this. The apostolic instruction itself makes this the norm.

1 TIMOTHY 2:9-15

This is the most important passage in the discussion of the doctrine of a woman's work. God's ideal woman is described.

The passage relates to women everywhere, at all times and in all situations and is not limited to their conduct in an assembly where spiritual gifts are being exercised. It involves their over-all demeanor, their adornment and their most noble ideal.

Two Admonitions Paul gives two admonitions to the women in the text. The first one is to adorn themselves in proper clothing --- modestly and discreetly. The words translated "adorn" (κοσμεω) and "proper" (κοσμιος) are from the same root word. They convey the idea of "well-orderliness." A woman must be "well-ordered" in both dress and conduct to please God and be attractive to her husband.

Paul says the most attractive and appreciated adornment for the Christian woman is her good works. A woman adorned like this will be both pleasing to God and attractive to others (cf. 1 Pet. 3:1-4).

The second admonition to a woman is that she "quietly receive instruction with entire submission." A Christian woman at all times everywhere expresses her submissiveness by a quiet demeanor. In verse 12, a woman is forbidden to teach or to exercise authority over a man. Her role is quiet, submissive, and modest — everywhere, at all times.

Two Reasons After giving these two admonitions concerning woman's proper adornment and quiet demeanor, Paul supports his instructions with two theological reasons. Woman, he says, was last created and first deceived: For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve (1Tim. 2:13); "And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being quite deceived, fell into transgression" (1 Tim. 2:14).

Being last created does not mean woman is inferior. Woman is the most refined and exalted creation of God. The fact that woman was first deceived does not make her guiltier than man. In fact, Paul speaks of Adam's being the one who sinned at the beginning (1 Cor. 15:22, Rom. 5:12-21).

Woman's Domestic Role After giving the two admonitions and giving the two reasons to support these admonitions, Paul now affirms a domestic role for woman: "But women shall be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint" (1 Tim. 2:15).

Wifehood and motherhood are the greatest glories of womanhood. Paul could appreciate and enjoy the hospitality of a professional woman like Lydia. He did. He could appreciate a fellow trade person in Priscilla and commend her when she, along with her husband Aquila, taught Apollos and provided a meeting place for the church in her house. He did. He could write a highly complimentary letter introducing a traveling woman, Phoebe, and call her a servant

(*diakonon*) of the church. But when he instructed Titus about what an ideal woman should be, he spoke of her domestic role. She should love her husband, love her children, be pure, kind, submissive, and a worker at home (Tit. 2:4-5). There is no greater glory for womanhood than that of a Christian wife and mother.

Many titles have been given to women to indicate their honor and accomplishments. The queen is called "Her Majesty." Some because of professional skills are called "Doctor," "Your Honor," "Madam-president," and "Professor." Some because of position are called "chairman" or "boss." But the most exalted title that a woman can wear is to be called "Mommie" by her children, "Honey" by her husband and "homemaker" by the statistician.

CONCLUSION

The role of women in the church has nothing to do with the lack of worth. Women were the last and most refined of God's creation. Their role in the church is not that of spiritually inferior. Submissiveness and quietness are not characteristics of inferiority. They reflect the ideals of the Sermon on the Mount and the example of our Lord Himself.

The role of the Christian woman demonstrates the beauty of holiness, the eloquence of silence, the power of submission, and the glory of sacrificial giving for the benefit of undeserving others.

Without gaudy adornment, she is beautiful. Without public teaching, the eloquence of her life makes things change. Without being in authority, she powerfully points the way to better things. Without selfish interest, she seeks to mold her family and the church into all that they can be.

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AMONG US

JACK P. LEWIS

THE PROLOGUE OF THE GOSPEL

Study of the prologue of Luke is imperative in attempting to understand what Luke was trying to do. The prologue is an artistically constructed complex sentence which covers the first four verses. Some translations have attempted to simplify the sentence for the reader by breaking it into more than one sentence. Beginning with a prologue was standard writing procedure in Luke's world; a parallel example can be seen in Josephus's two volumes *Against Apion*. While the question is always debatable, Luke's prologue may be intended for both the Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles.

In contrast with writing a "Life of Jesus," a biography, a history of the times of Jesus, or any other known literary pattern of the ancient world, Luke writes a Gospel. This form, which has no parallel outside the canonical Gospels, is a treatise by a believer for other believers. The text, "things that have been fulfilled among us," reveals a consciousness of being in the Christian community and writing in the community.

Almost every word in Luke's preface offers perplexities. The gospel was first passed on orally; the period of time covered is uncertain. Luke speaks of many predecessors who have written accounts. How many they were and who they were cannot be known.

Luke casts no aspersions on them, but the very fact he writes reveals some expectation of doing the task more adequately than they had done.

Those who handed on information about what happened are the eyewitnesses and ministers of the word from the beginning. The source of their information and what they were obligated to do with it are suggested. Luke makes a difference between the sources of information and the writers of accounts. The qualifications listed for the successor to Judas (Acts 1:21-22) suggest that the apostles have the function of being witnesses.

Luke does not claim to be among the eyewitness group but merely claims to have investigated accurately. His Gospel has no "we sections" in it as the Book of Acts does. His account is a third stage account: the events, the witnesses to them, and his writing. He claims to have made investigation; he claims authenticity for what he writes.

He also states that his account is systematic. His term does not demand a chronological narrative arrangement. While the birth and childhood of Jesus chronologically come first, and the passion and resurrection come last, the material narrated between these points may be placed by some other principle of arrangement.

Luke's purpose is to confirm to Theophilus what Theophilus has learned. How and from whom is unknown. Whether Theophilus was already a Christian is a subject of much conjecture and will never be known for certain. Luke wants Theophilus to have certainty about what he has been taught.

THE HISTORICAL BASIS

Luke's story is not a "once upon a time" fable from "never-never land." Neither did it take place before the dawn of history. It is solidly founded in history at a particular time and place. The story opens "in the days of King Herod of Judea" (Lk. 1:5). A decree went out from Emperor Augustus when Quirinius was governor of Syria

(Lk. 2:1-2). John the Baptist began his preaching in the fifteenth year of the reign of the Emperor Tiberius when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea (Lk. 3:1). In his second volume, Luke mentions a famine in the reign of the Emperor Claudius (Acts 11:28) and a decree of Claudius about Jews leaving Rome (Acts 18:2). As Paul said about gospel events, these things were "not done in a corner" (Acts 26:26). These people really lived.

As all the Gospel writers, Luke is interested in the reality of the incarnation. He narrates some very human aspects of Jesus' career. Jesus heals the severed ear of the high priest's slave (Lk. 22:51). He looks at Peter after Peter's denial (Lk. 22:61). Luke (as Mark) narrates the need of Simon of Cyrene to carry the cross (Lk. 23:26). Jesus talks to women on his way to the crucifixion (Lk. 23:28-31); and he talks to the thief on the cross (Lk. 23:42-43).

Following the resurrection, Jesus assures his disciples that he is not a phantom. He invites them to feel his hands and feet (Lk. 24:39-40). He eats and drinks with them (Lk. 24:41-43; Acts 10:41). No place is left for the sort of Docetism which Marcion and the Gnostics of the second century championed. There is reality in the events narrated.

THE OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTION

For Luke, Christianity is not a creation out of nothing. He sets his story solidly within the hopes and expectations of Judaism. Zechariah and Elizabeth are of priestly stock, themselves walking in the commandments and regulations of the Lord blamelessly. Their promised child, who was to live a Nazarite type of life, would turn many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God (Lk. 1:16). Mary's child would receive the throne of David and reign over the house of Jacob forever (Lk. 1:32-33). The event is in keeping with the promise made to Abraham (Lk. 1:54-55, 73). God had raised up a mighty savior in the house of David (Lk. 1:68-69).

The angels speak to the shepherds of a child born in the city of David (Lk. 2:11). The circumcision of the child (Lk. 2:21) and the presentation in the temple (Lk. 2:22-24) are acts of law abiding people. Simeon in the temple is looking for the consolation of Israel and was expecting before he died to see the Lord's Christ (Lk. 2:25-26). Anna speaks of the child to all those looking for the redemption of Jerusalem (Lk. 2:38).

Luke tells a story of the fulfillment of the Messianic hopes of the O.T. He is thoroughly persuaded of the authoritative character of the O.T. Scriptures. It is one of the ironies of history that Marcion in the second century could expunge features objectionable to him from the Gospel of Luke and use the remainder as his "Gospel." Two of Jesus' temptations are answered with "It is written" and a citation of Deuteronomy (Lk. 4:4, 8). Luke has Jesus affirm that "the law and the prophets were until John" and that "it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the law to be dropped" (Lk. 16:16, 17).

What had gone before had no permanent significance apart from what had happened in the career of Jesus, and the career of Jesus could only be understood in the light of what had gone before. [R.V.G. Tasker, *The Old Testament in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), p.12.] All that was written must be fulfilled. All that God had done before and was doing now were involved.

This motif of Luke is to be seen in his use of the Greek Old Testament. While Luke does not have a series of quotations unique to his Gospel comparable to the ten unique fulfillment passages of Matthew, "In no other Gospel . . . do we find so many references and allusions to how the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus fulfilled the scriptures." [R.H. Stein, *Luke in The New American Commentary* 24 (Nashville, Broadman Press, 1992), 37.]

While Luke makes clear that Jesus has done prior preaching in Capernaum (Lk. 4:14-15, 23), at the synagogue in Nazareth, Jesus,

after reading the passage from Is.. 61:1-2, declares its proclamation fulfilled in the people's hearing (Lk. 4:21). John the Baptist is the one about whom Malachi 3:1 was written (Lk. 7:27). The passion of Jesus accomplishes what is written by the prophets (Lk. 18:31). It is the accomplishment of the rejected stone passages (Lk. 20:17-18; Ps. 118:22). Jesus is hailed at the Triumphal Entry with phrases of Psalms 118:26 though no specific fulfillment is claimed. The cleansing of the temple is explained by a combined citation of Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11.

The question of the Sadducees about the much-married woman is prefaced on Deuteronomy 25:5-10, and Jesus' answer is on Exodus 3:2, 6, 15, 16 (Lk. 20:28-38). Jesus' question about David's Lord cites Psalm 110:1 (Lk. 20:42-44). It is Jesus' affirmation that scripture must be fulfilled in him; and the words of Isaiah 53:12, "he was numbered with the transgressors," are echoed (Lk. 22:37). Following the resurrection, Jesus explained relevant scripture from Moses and all the prophets to the two on the way to Emmaus (Lk. 24:25-27). Back in Jerusalem the same day, he declared that he had taught that everything written in the Law of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled (Lk. 24:44-47). Jesus' death, resurrection, and the resulting proclamation are all a part.

For Luke, the hopes of the O.T. are an essential part of the Gospel. Their realization is to be found in the career of Jesus. It is a hope that began with a promise made to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3). The realization previously understood by the Jewish people and accomplished in the physical descendants of Abraham and those who were proselytized has its realization in a proclamation of the gospel to all nations beginning at Jerusalem--a proclamation to begin with the reception of the promised Holy Spirit (cf. Lk. 24:49). Luke stops at this point, but his story is continued in the Book of Acts.

THE TITLES OF JESUS

A part of what had taken place and its relevance is to be explained by the various epithets used for Jesus in the Gospel of Luke.

The Son of David. The son of David motif, a motif definitely connected with O.T. Messianic expectations, is featured less in Luke than in Matthew. Mary is promised that the Lord will give her child the throne of his ancestor David (Lk. 1:32). Without using the name David, Luke uses "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord" (Lk. 19:38) as the cry at the Triumphal Entry. Jesus asks, "How can they say that the Christ is David's son?" (Lk. 20:41-44). Paul takes up this expectation in the Book of Acts (Acts 13:34) and in his letters (Rom. 1:2; 2 Tim. 2:8).

The Christ. Luke uses the title *christos* seven times, beginning with the angel's announcement (Lk. 2:11). The council demands that Jesus tell them whether he is the Christ (Lk. 22:67). Luke has Jesus use the term only after his resurrection (Lk. 24:26, 46). Luke uses the Greek form "Christ" rather than the Semitic form "Messiah." The title develops out of the Semitic practice of anointing a person to be king (1 Sam. 10:1; 16:13; 2 Kings 9:1-7). The Psalms speak of the Lord and his anointed (Ps. 2:2). Luke has the motif of the suffering Christ. What most first century Jews were looking for is more represented by Akiba's recognizing the military leader Bar-Kokhba as the Messiah.

The Prophet Like Moses. Zechariah expects that his son will be called the prophet of the Most High (Lk. 1:76), and Jesus testified that John was a prophet and more (Lk. 7:26-28). But John denies that he is the Christ (Lk. 3:15-17). Rejected at Nazareth, Jesus spoke of a prophet's not being acceptable in his hometown (Lk. 4:24). Seeing his miracles the people reflected, "A great prophet has arisen among us" (Lk. 7:16); but the Pharisees thought that if Jesus were a prophet, he would know that a sinful woman was touching him (Lk. 7:39).

Jesus, anticipating his death, said that it was impossible for a prophet to be killed out of Jerusalem (Lk. 13:33). Following his death, the disciples expressed their disappointment while speaking of him as a prophet mighty in deed and word (Lk. 24:19).

The prophet motif looks back to the promise of a prophet like Moses (Deut. 18:15-19; 34:10), one who knew the Lord face to face (Num. 12:6-8). In the book of Acts Jesus is specifically connected with the prophet like Moses (Acts 3:22; 7:37). Remember that in Judaism prophecy was considered dead but future prophets could arise (1 Macc. 4:46; 9:27). We lack evidence that the passage of Deuteronomy was interpreted Messianically in early Judaism. [H.L. Ellison, *The Centrality of the Messianic Idea for the Old Testament* (London: The Tyndale Press, 1953), 16.]

The Son of Man. Luke has Jesus use the Semitism "Son of Man" twenty-five times. The term means "man"; Ezekiel is addressed that way ninety-three times, but the term probably will never be translated that way in the Gospels. The source of this designation is Daniel 7:13, where after the description of four world empires in animal figures, a human figure comes on the clouds of glory to the Ancient of Days to receive a kingdom. The term has a history in the Jewish apocalypses 1 Enoch and 4th Ezra, but it is not certain that Jesus was influenced by them. Jesus depicts a suffering career for the Son of Man, yet his disciples fail to grasp the significance of what he is saying. In the Gospel of John, people reflect how strange the idea of suffering is by asking, "Who is this Son of Man?" and by saying that they have heard that the Messiah remains forever (Jn. 12:34).

The Son of God. "Son" is used in various senses in the New Testament. There is physical descent, immediate or remote. "Son of" is also a Semitism describing personality, character, or occupation. James and John are Boanerges ("sons of thunder"), and disobedient people are "sons of the devil" (Jn. 8:44; Acts 13:10; 1 Jn. 3:8). Righteous people by their conduct are "sons of the Most High" (Lk.

6:35). Mary is told that her child will be called "Son of God" (Lk. 1:35).

Jesus did not become "Son of God" by the virgin birth. He has been that from all eternity. It was the Son of God who took on human form. In his use of the term "My Father," he, from childhood (Lk. 2:49), reflects consciousness of a special relation to God (cf. Lk. 10:22). He addressed God in prayer as "Father." He was acknowledged at baptism as "My son, the Beloved" (Lk. 3:22). He is challenged in the temptation, "If you are God's Son" (Lk. 4:3, 9). The demons hailed him as "the Son of God" (Lk. 4:41; 8:28). The voice at the transfiguration said, "This is my Son, my Chosen" (Lk. 9:35). The parable of the Wicked Tenants has the landowner finally sending his beloved son (Lk. 20:13). When on trial before the council, Jesus is asked, "Are you, then, the Son of God?" His reply was "You say that I am" (Lk. 22:70.) Jesus' cry from the cross was, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit" (Lk. 23:46). Though every Christian is a son of God, there can be no question that Jesus was "Son of God" in a special sense.

Lord. The term Lord has a wide variety of meanings in the biblical world. Sometimes it is polite address, sometimes it is used in addressing a superior. It is the Greek translation of the personal name of the God of Israel as can be seen in the quotation, "The Lord said to my Lord" (Ps. 110:1; Lk. 20:42-43), in Zechariah's "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel" (Lk. 1:68), and in other cases.

But already Elizabeth speaks of "the mother of my Lord" (Lk. 1:43) and the angels of the Savior who is "Christ, the Lord" (Lk. 2:11). Jesus is regularly addressed in the vocative by his followers as "Lord" (Lk. 5:8; 9:54, 59; 61; etc.). He also is repeatedly spoken of by the writer of the Gospel as "the Lord" (Lk. 7:13; 10:1, 41; 17:5; etc.). The writer uses the expression "the word of the Lord" (Lk. 22:61).

In the mystery cults and in emperor worship, "Lord" was an expression of divinity as in "My Lord Serapis" and "My Lord

Caesar." While one must determine the import of the epithet in each use, the Lord's Christ (Lk. 9:20) is Christ, the Lord (Lk. 2:11).

Savior. The name "savior" occurs in the Gospel of Luke only in Mary's song of praise where she speaks of "God my Savior" (Lk. 1:47) and in the announcement of the angels of the birth of a "Savior, who is Christ, the Lord" (Lk. 2:11). The term "salvation" is more frequent (Lk. 1:69, 71; 76-77). Jesus uses it only when he tells the crowd that salvation is come to the house of Zacchaeus (Lk. 19:9). The verb "save" is used for various deliverances--from disease (Lk. 8:48), from death (Lk. 8:50), from possession of demons (Lk. 8:36), and even for possible deliverance from the cross (Lk. 23:37, 39). But it is also used for salvation from sin. "The Son of man has not come to destroy lives of people but to save them" (Lk. 9:56). Jesus describes his mission as that of seeking out and saving the lost (Lk. 19:10).

Jesus. The name "Jesus," the Greek form of "Joshua" meaning "The Lord Saves," was borne by many people in the first century. The name was supplied by the angel in the vision and given at the time of circumcision (Lk. 1:31; 2:21). Jesus is frequently addressed by this name in Luke with nine cases unique to Luke's account. It is used by the thief on the cross (Lk. 23:42) and by the two on the way to Emmaus (Lk. 24:19). A few cases identify him as "Jesus of Nazareth" (Lk. 4:34). He is also called "Jesus" by the writer of the book (Lk. 7:3; 9:36; 19:5).

Master (*epistates*). Rather than calling Jesus "Rabbi," Luke in nine occurrences has him addressed as "Master," a term unique in the N.T. to Luke's Gospel. In Greek literature the term has a wide range of uses for leadership functions.

Teacher (*Didaskalos*). The student attached himself to a teacher for learning purposes. John the Baptist and the Pharisees had their disciples also (Lk. 5:33). The verb "to teach" is frequent for Jesus' activity (Lk. 4:15, 31). His teaching is called *didache* (Lk. 4:32). He uses *logos* (word) for the message (Lk. 1:2, 4).

The term "disciple" (*mathetes*) is used for the learner. Luke has both synoptic and non-synoptic usages of this term. He also uses the term "apostle" six times (Lk. 6:13; 9:10; 11:49; 17:5; 22:14; 24:10). The alternate term "the twelve" occurs eight times. These terms should suggest on-going learning as the program for the follower of Jesus.

THE OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND OF JESUS' MINISTRY

Every crucial point in the life and career of Jesus is connected in some way with the Old Testament. Though Luke wrote in Greek for Greek readers, the church has claimed the heritage of Israel. His story is the climax of the divine plan for human salvation. We have earlier looked at the O.T. connections in the birth, the infancy narratives, the temptation scenes, and his reading in the synagogue at Nazareth.

Jesus' actions in his early ministry are patterned on what God's Servant should do. When John sent disciples to Jesus to ask if he were the one to come, his deeds which are his answer are patterned after words of Isaiah 35:5 (cf. Lk. 7:21-22). The Servant makes intercession for transgressors (Is. 53:12), and there is the prayer on the cross (Lk. 23:34). Following the resurrection he calls his disciples' attention to the correspondence of his deeds with predictions of the prophets (Lk. 24:25, 44). Even where attention is not called to it, his career is to be understood in this frame of reference.

THE OLD TESTAMENT IN JESUS' TEACHING

The teaching of Jesus as presented in Luke shows the Lord to be thoroughly familiar with and moved by events and teaching of the Old Testament. The events came easily and naturally to his mind. He

alludes to martyrs from Abel to Zechariah (Lk. 11:50, 51), to the days of Noah (Lk. 17:26), and to Lot and his wife (Lk. 17:28-29, 32).

There are also numerous, less-direct allusions such as in the story of the prodigal, the changing of clothing reflecting a new status (Lk. 15:22; cf. Gen. 41:14, 42; Zech. 3:4). The law provided that the man who had married a wife was free from obligations for a year (Lk. 14:20; Deut. 24:5). The birds in the branches of the tree reflect its size (Lk. 13:19; cf. Dan. 4:12).

The expression "the finger of God" (Lk. 11:20) occurs in the magicians' description of the plagues of Egypt (Ex. 8:19). Stones crying out (Lk. 19:40) echoes Hab. 2:11. The concept of names written in heaven (Lk. 10:20) goes all the way back to Ex. 32:32. There are numerous other cases.

Luke not only notices fulfillment of O.T. predictions, but he also (as the other Synoptic writers) gives space to Jesus' own predictions. His coming death is noticed three times (Lk. 9:21-22; 9:44; 18:31-33). After the resurrection attention is called to its fulfillment (Lk. 24:6-8, 44). The word "must" is important in describing what was to happen.

THE MARCH TO THE CROSS

As presented in Luke, already in Nazareth the two attitudes toward Jesus' ministry and person are suggested. Some marvel at his words; others mistreat him. His allusion to the widow of Zarephath and to Naaman (Lk. 4:26-27) are illustrations of acceptance where rejection is experienced. He was set for a sign to be spoken against (Lk. 2:34).

Distinctive to Luke is the "Lucan Travel Narrative" covering Luke 9:51-19:27 which is three times longer than the parallels in other Gospels. His face was set to go to Jerusalem (Lk. 9:51). Various notices suggest progress along the way as he passes through Jericho and comes to Bethany, Bethpage, and finally to Jerusalem

itself. His suffering and death are interpreted as the accomplishment of a divine mission.

The women find the tomb empty and are informed that Jesus is risen. He appears to the two on the way to Emmaus, and then to the twelve in Jerusalem. Luke narrates in his Gospel only appearances on the first day of the resurrection in the Jerusalem area where Jesus demonstrates that he is no phantom. The resurrection is the climax of Luke's story. He ends on a triumphant note. Though Jesus is taken to heaven in the ascension, the convinced disciples, charged with remaining in Jerusalem until they are empowered, are continually in the temple praising God (Lk. 24:53).

These are the "things that have been fulfilled [accomplished] among us." Other things that have been accomplished are narrated in the Book of Acts, Luke's second volume.

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EDWARD P. MYERS

Our modern world is apt to sneer at the idea of the existence of spirit beings. The philosophy of Naturalism has become so accepted that many educated people do not acknowledge anything but what eye can see and ear can hear. The people in lands where education is plentiful are not apt to believe in spirit beings.

In a study of spirit beings one is naturally lead to a study of angelology; i.e., a study of angels. Since angels make up the greater number of beings in the heavenly realm and since they are seen to have a very definite part in heaven's concern and care in God's plan of redemption for fallen man, this study of what God has revealed about these heavenly beings may well be a great source of faith and hope.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

Jesus said that our state in heaven will be as the angels (Mk. 12:25), but the apostle John declares that it does not yet appear what we shall be (1 Jn. 3:2). We must conclude, therefore, that there is much about angels that is beyond our capacities to know. The Bible does, however, reveal much that is most enlightening.

The words in the Hebrew and Greek from which the English word "angel" is derived appear some 300 times and simply means "messenger." Notwithstanding, our modern day Sadducees who deny the existence of angels (cf. Acts 23:8), the Bible clearly teaches the doctrine of angels. It teaches that they are real, actual, literal personalities that exist in heaven's court. Sometimes human messengers are referred to as they are in Haggai 1:33 and Luke 7:24, though usually they denote the heavenly order above men.

Angels as heavenly messengers are counted as "legions," "multitudes," and "innumerable" (Matt. 26:53; Lk. 2:13; Heb. 12:22). They are called "Sons of God" and are designated as Stars of God, or of heaven (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; Rev. 12:4, 7). The individual names of only two of God's faithful angels are revealed to us, that of Michael and Gabriel. Michael is designated as one of the "chief princes" and is said to stand for the people of God (Dan. 10:13; 12:1). He is called the "Archangel" and is over an order of angels (Jude. 9; Rev. 12:7). Gabriel is named and is said to stand in the presence of God (Lk. 1:19, 26; Dan. 8:16; 9:21).

Other indications of the order and rank of angels are the terms "Seraphim" and "Cherubim." The Seraphim are said to be above the throne of God, while the Cherubim and the Seraphim and are so represented in the Tabernacle (Ps. 80:1; 99:1; Ex. 37:6-9; 1 Sam. 4:4). The Cherubim were set to guard the gate to the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:24). Angels no doubt constitute "dominions, principalities, and powers" in heaven (Col. 1:16; Eph. 1:21). They are a creation of God, by Jesus Christ, before the foundations of the world were laid (Ps. 148:2-5; Neh. 9:6; Jn. 1:3; Col. 1:15-17).

Angels are of a higher order than man and are greater in power and might, for man is made a "little lower than the angels" (2 Pet. 2:11; Heb. 2:7). They are, however, not to be worshipped by man, for God forbids such, and the angel himself forbade that the apostle John should bow down in worship to him (Col. 2:18). From this we learn that God alone is to be the object of our worship, and to designate saints, or angels, or any other of God's creations, as objects of worship, is sinful. Angels are not omnipotent like God for they do not know the time of the coming of Christ spoken of in Matthew 24:36. Also, angels are not omnipotent because they desired to look into the gospel which was already revealed by those who preached (1 Pet. 1:12). Neither are they omnipresent, for they are said to go from place to place (Dan. 9:21-23). They do not die as do men, and they neither marry nor are given in marriage (Lk. 20:35-36; Mk. 12:23-

25). Angels are spirit beings, for God made his angels spirits, and they are ministering spirits.

TIME OF CREATION AND NUMBER

Genesis 2:1 speaks of the finishing of the heavens and earth with all the host of them. Some have thought that the host refers to the angels of heaven. They thus conclude that the angels were created when the heavens and earth were created. However, the word host does not always mean angels; it may also mean stars. This latter meaning is apparently what is referred to in Genesis 2:1.

Perhaps the best view is seen in Job 38:7. Before the foundations of the earth were laid, the angels were there to rejoice. Thus, angels were created (or in existence) sometime before the creation of the world.

While a definite number of angels is never given, it is very great. In fact, they are said to be innumerable (Dan. 7:10; Heb. 12:22).

THE CLASSIFICATION OF ANGELS

Two classes of angels are revealed in the Word of God: wicked and righteous or faithful angels. That angels are capable of being wicked is seen in 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6; and Revelation 12:7. Good angels seem to operate in conjunction with the Holy Spirit in bringing God's message to man. The Word of God now furnishes completely, and should an angel bring another message, he would bear the curse of God (Gal. 1:8-9). In like manner, neither can an evil spirit take over man's being in the same manner as once he could (Matt. 12:44; Mk. 5:1-9). Still Satan can come as an angel of light, and his ministers as ministers of righteousness, in a most deceiving and powerful way (2 Cor. 11:14-15).

THE WORK AND DESTINY OF WICKED ANGELS

The Devil has angels and is the ruler over an order of wicked angels (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 12:7). He is called the prince of the power of the air, the prince of this world, and no doubt is the prince of the "rulers of the darkness of this world" against whom we fight (Eph. 2:2; 6:12). He had power to deliver the kingdoms of this world to Jesus (Matt. 4:8-9). He was equal in rank to Michael, one of the prince angels of God, an archangel (Rev. 12:7). This leads us to believe the Devil was a prince angel, or archangel, in heaven before he was cast out and overcome by the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 12:10-11).

Satan resisted Michael in disputing over the body of Moses, and in the days of Joshua the high priest, Satan stood before the angel of the Lord to resist him (Jude 9; Zech. 3:1). We read of the word of the Lord preached to the high priest, urging him to go to Jerusalem to rebuild the Lord's house (Hag. 1:1-9). Cyrus the king was stirred by the spirit of the Lord when the word by Jeremiah was preached to him by Daniel; and evidently as Daniel fasted and prayed, the angel Michael withstood Satan's influence in the heart of the king (Ezra 1:1-2; Dan. 10:13). When the Word of God is preached today Satan is there to resist the Word and take it out of the heart of the hearer lest he believe (Lk. 8:11-12). Every excuse that one uses for not following God's word is Satan inspired.

As to the destiny of wicked angels, they have been cast out of heaven because of the victory won by the blood of Jesus (Rev. 12:7-12). By this defeat Satan now knows that his time is short. Devils believe and tremble (Jas. 2:19). Christ before his death spoke of the fall of Satan from heaven as though it had already taken place (Lk. 10:18). Wicked angels are now cast down, reserved unto the judgment to be punished (2 Pet. 2:4). In some way we will judge angels (1 Cor. 6:3). The grave warning is that God will loose Satan again for a little season. Satan and his angels will be finally cast into

the lake of fire which God has prepared for them (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:10).

THE WORK AND DESTINY OF GOOD ANGELS

It is taught in scripture that angels have a very definite part to play in God's order in heaven, and that archangels have certain responsibilities over angels of their order (Rev. 12:4-7). We have learned that God created angels (Ps. 148:2-5) by Christ Jesus (Col. 1:15-17) before the foundations of the world (Job 38:4-7), and that they are of a higher order than man (Heb. 2:7). Jesus tells us that in our redeemed state we will be "as the angels" (Mk. 12:25).

Righteous angels perform the work of God "Bless ye the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word" (Ps. 103:20). They affect the vengeance and wrath of God upon the disobedient, as is seen in the scourge of Israel (2 Sam. 24:16); upon Balaam (Num. 22:31); and when Jesus shall come again with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel (2 Thess. 1:7-10).

Righteous angels administered God's message to man in giving the Law of Moses, (Gal. 3:19; Heb. 2:2); and they appeared as men in the revelation of God's messages to the Patriarchs (Gen. 18:1-19:5). We are admonished to "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" (Heb. 13:2). Angels brought the message to Mary before the birth of Jesus (Lk. 1:26-28) and in multitudes sang at his birth (Lk. 2:13-15). Angels ministered to Jesus after his temptation (Matt. 4:11) and appeared at his resurrection and his ascension (Matt. 28:1-7; Acts 1:11). Angels are now subject to Christ and will administer his mission when he comes again (1 Pet. 3:22; 1 Thess. 4:16; Matt. 25:31).

Angels work in the destiny of nations for the good of God's people. Good angels withstood Satan while the Word of God was

being preached to the king of Persia (Zech. 3:1). By this we know that angels are concerned and active when God's Word is being proclaimed. They protect the righteous and encamp about those who fear the Lord (Ps. 34:7). Angels delivered Peter from prison, and reassured Paul in the great storm at sea (Acts 12:7; 27:23). They are given charge to keep the righteous in all his ways, and are ministering spirits to those who are heirs of salvation (Ps. 91:11; Heb. 1:14). Angels represent individuals before the throne of God (Matt. 18:10), and if heavenly angels are meant in Revelation chapters 2 and 3, then they are given specific assignments to congregations of the church of the Lord. They definitely stand for the people of God before the throne of God (Dan. 12:1).

Angels are active in the prayers of the righteous, and such prayers avail much before God and through the work of the Holy Spirit (Dan. 9:21-23; Rom. 8:26). This does not mean that miraculous contact is made today as in former times, for such has been done away. But it is most encouraging to know that all heaven is moved to consider the prayer of the righteous. Angels are in some way involved in our assemblies of worship (1 Cor. 11:10). Angels rejoice over every sinner that repents (Lk. 15:10).

How wonderful to know that as an heir of God's wonderful salvation, his uncountable host of angels are dedicated ministers for our good and assist in our protection and care.

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PARABLES IN LUKE: AT THE TABLE

EDDIE RANDOLPH

Few social rules in the ancient world were more tenaciously observed than the sharing of a meal, especially in ancient Judaism. Such associations in table fellowship meant the acceptance of the guest by the host as a social equal and visa versa. A pointed example of this is in Acts 11 where Peter and his companions are questioned, not for taking the gospel to the Gentiles, but for eating with them (Acts 11:3).

The theme of table fellowship is prominent in Luke, as is seen in the Last Supper (Lk. 22:1-38) and the Emmaus account (Lk. 24:14-35). The table is also the setting of Jesus' teaching and criticism of his actions. Upon becoming a disciple, Levi gives a feast in Jesus' honor, to which other "sinners" and tax collectors are included (Lk. 5:29). It is the criticism of Jesus' continued association and table fellowship with the irreligious that prompts the parables of the lost sheep, coin, and son. The issue comes up again when he invites himself to share Zacchaeus' hospitality (Lk. 19:5-7).

While Jesus does not accept criticism from those who believe themselves to be too good to share meals with the impious, he himself readily accepts the hospitality of the Pharisees. At a dinner in the house of Simon, Jesus is approached by a woman with a known sinful reputation. Entering against norms of etiquette and hospitality, she bathes Jesus' feet with her tears, dries them with her hair, and anoints them with perfume. The dialogue sparked by the event leads Jesus to challenge Simon on the issue of forgiveness and gratitude. To do this, Jesus tells an easily understood parable of two debtors and makes a contrast between Simon and the woman.

Jesus is again at a Pharisee's table in Luke 11:37-53. Criticized this time for failing to observe ritual washing before eating, Jesus responds by leveling a sweeping attack on the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and teachers of the law. One point in Jesus' harsh critique focuses on the Pharisees' love of status by seeking the most important seats in the synagogue and marketplace.

This desire for prominence is raised in another Pharisee-sponsored meal (Lk. 14:1). When the Pharisees took their places, Jesus observes the quest for the seats of high status at the table (Lk. 14:7). What seems on the surface to be points on proper manners actually carries a much deeper message, summarized in Luke 14:11 as, "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (see also, Lk. 18:14). For Jesus this is the paradigm of the heavenly kingdom.

The application comes in Jesus' words to the host (Lk. 14:12-14) and another parable (Lk. 14:15-24). The former plays on the basic assumption that the synagogue (and the church) is fundamentally committed to the care of the poor and disabled. Jesus offers a radical notion by calling on God's people to invite the disabled to dinner, not just provide for their meals, but to treat them as valued peers.

This theme is driven home in the parable. The invited offered excuses why they could not attend the banquet -- excuses that were honored in their society and were perfectly acceptable. The jolt of Jesus' story was not in the excuses, but in the invitation of others. Instead of inviting others of the same social status as the original list, the order of the host was to bring in the poor, maimed, lame, and blind, as well as the transients.

In the context of one of the more important social conventions (table fellowship), Jesus consistently challenges spiritual and personal arrogance by drawing on images of forgiveness, humility, and the heavenly feast. In all, Jesus shows how God's rule of exalting and humbling (14:11) is working itself out in Jesus' ministry and how

human action can imitate divine action by inviting the poor, while relating all these themes to the banquet of God's reign" (Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation, Volume 1: The Gospel of Luke*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986: p. 185).

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PARABLES IN LUKE: LOST AND FOUND

EDDIE RANDOLPH

The parables Jesus told were not just simple tales with rather obvious meanings, familiar morals, acceptable common sense, and general respectability. They were not stories easily transported into contexts outside faith in God where one can expect them to be comprehended by anyone with a small amount of discernment. Christ would never have been crucified for such "niceness." The cross came, at least from the notion of the Jewish leaders, because Jesus' teaching ran afoul of the powers that be. They considered him a significant threat to their religious paradigm and expectations (Lk. 20:19-20; 22:52-53; 23:5). Jesus' audience did more than ponder the meaning of his parables; they often were offended by them.

In Luke 15, Jesus offers a challenge to the religious paradigm that is part of the heightening of the conflict between him and the religious leaders. Bluntly setting the stage for the teaching, Luke shows Jesus answering criticism about those gathering to hear him (Lk. 15:1-2), raising again the perennial problem of the Pharisees who disapprove of Jesus' eating with "sinners."

This setting raises a question for the modern church that is no less piercing than the one inferred by the Pharisees' grumbling: Why be concerned with sinners? Why "defile" yourself by associating with them? Who really cares? Contemporary disciples wrestle with the same tendency in seeking the best candidates for membership in their community. It is easier to reach out to the "better people," rather than the openly immoral, those in dishonorable positions, or the irreligious. This tendency, however, is far from God's heart.

Jesus challenges the grumbling religious leaders with three stories connected by the theme of "lost and found." Each parable in Luke 15 depicts an active concern for the lost: the shepherd diligently searches for the wayward sheep, the woman frantically searches for the missing coin, and the father patiently watches for the rebellious son.

The point to the stories of the lost sheep and coin are easy enough to grasp. In the poverty of Palestinian peasants, one sheep or a single coin represented a significant asset. To lose one would be costly, indeed. J. Stanley Glen contemporizes the parables in this way: "Which of you, if your child fails to return at night, do not contact the police and rush frantically about until search parties are organized and public announcements made, and the whole country is aroused to the fact that your child is lost? And when the child is found, which of you do not rejoice with your friends and neighbors and thousands of others that the lost is found? (*The Parables of Conflict in Luke*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962: p. 18).

The opening questions for the first two parables (Lk. 15:4, 8) had a similar connection with Jesus' audience. Yet, this is precisely the point missed by the Pharisees and company. They understood the issue of celebrating over a found valuable, but could not understand the value of "sinners" and the heavenly party to celebrate their recovery.

Having made his point about the value of the lost, Jesus shifts to a story of a lost son, who purposefully rebelled by asking for his portion of the father's estate and wasting it. He returned to his father's house with only a wishful thought of becoming a hired servant -- he could expect no more. The unexpected twist is the reception of the rebel by a loving father eager to re-establish him to "sonship" status. Joy is once again the theme as the son is honored with a celebration.

The chagrined older brother protests based on his continued faithfulness: "How can you accept the rebel with such fanfare, when

you did nothing to honor my faithful presence?" Such unconditional welcome offended the older brother, the Pharisees and teachers of the law, and offends us, too.

God's (and thus, Jesus') interest in the lost is not a rejection of those in covenant with him, but it raises the painful reality that God seeks to find and recover every lost one. The result is a heavenly party. Such is God's love, but we find it difficult not to be offended by God's grace toward another, especially if we have serious questions about that person's conduct and character (Fred B. Craddock, *Luke*, Interpretation. Louisville, KY: John Knox, 190: p. 188).

Jesus' challenge is to see the value of all God's creatures, quit complaining, and join the party.

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PARABLES IN LUKE: A TOPSY-TURVY WORLD

EDDIE RANDOLPH

Hospitality. Heavenly banquet. Conversion. Faith. Joy. Grace. Jerusalem. Kingship. Mercy. Prayer. Discipleship. Reversals. Poverty. Salvation. Universal acceptance. Women.

These are some of the threads in the tapestry of Luke's gospel. The bold, colorful themes are also carefully stitched into Jesus' parables in Luke. Told in scenes of everyday life, the parables in Luke have a dramatic realism as they reveal much about humanity -- and even more about God. Their appeal is not only to scholars, but to the common person -- anyone who hears their drama, understands his point(s), and reacts (positively or negatively) to what was said.

Of Luke's recurring themes, the "great reversal" stands out. Repeatedly, Jesus shows just how different his understanding of greatness, prominence, and blessing is from what society expects and the way society is ordered. This disruptive reversal is summarized as "there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last" (Lk. 13:30). However, the principle is established early in Luke as Mary explains the basis of God's new action: "He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty" (Lk. 1: 51-53).

The reversal theme is seen when the young Jesus is in dialogue with the learned (Lk. 2:46) -- the unschooled teaches the teachers. The poor and rich are reversed in the beatitudes where the hungry will be fed and those weeping will laugh (Lk. 6:20-23). The

wise and little children trade places (Lk. 10:21), as do the exalted and humble (Lk. 14:11; 18:14; see also Lk. 16:15) and the least and the greatest (Lk. 9:46-48; 22:24-27). This theme is most clearly seen in Jesus who, after reversing the fortune of the thief on the cross (Lk. 23:43), had his own fortune reversed by God who made him "both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36).

Many of the parables in Luke dramatize the reversal theme. The Parable of the Great Banquet (Lk. 14:15-24) is one of them. Calling already invited guests to a banquet, all refused. The original guest list was scrapped and a multitude of social misfits receive invitations to the feast. The parable is preceded by teaching about who to invite to dinner -- not friends, relatives, or the rich; but the poor, maimed, lame, and blind (Lk. 14:12-13). The parable illustrates the same contrast. The original list had people of property; the revised list, people of the street.

The reversal takes place after death in the Parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man (Lk. 16:19-31). To an audience of Pharisees (Lk. 16:14), Jesus challenges their materialism. He illustrates this with a story of one who, rejected and neglected on earth, is found at Abraham's side in the next world. The rich man, after a life of opulence, looks across the chasm from hellish torment. Even though John has issued warnings to the contrary (Lk. 3:8), the rich man, while in Hades, boldly claims Abraham as his father on three occasions (Lk. 16:24, 27, 30) -- a genealogy that makes little difference to change the reversal.

Focusing on the issue of self-righteousness, Jesus makes his point with the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Lk. 18:9-14), who found themselves together praying in the temple. Expectations of Jesus' contemporaries -- the goodness and righteousness of the Pharisees verses the badness and unrighteousness of the tax collectors -- demanded a different ending for the parables. In Jesus' story, the one who realized his utter dependence on God was declared justified before Him, regardless of the social perceptions.

The reversal theme rises to the surface of the parables of the Lost Son (Lk. 15:11-32) and Good Samaritan (Lk. 10:29-37), as well. The son who abandons his father's house and squanders the family fortune, in the end shares his father's joy and feast. The son who remained faithfully at home senses the whole affair is unjust. The Samaritan, while not reversing the situation, upsets Jewish expectations by surprisingly filling the role of one who understands how to love one's neighbor.

Jerome Neyrey observes that Luke was not saying that Jesus condemned those whose lives were happy, who enjoyed honor in society, who were learned, or who had status. He did not banish them from the map of God's covenant members. Rather he rearranged the lines of the map so that those on the outer circles of the map were now closer to the center (" The Symbolic Universe of Luke-Acts: 'They Turned the World Upside Down,'" in *The Social World of Luke-Acts*, ed. by Jerome H. Neyrey. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991, p. 298).

Affirming the basic sense of God's justice, Jesus did not come to rubber-stamp the existing society and its norms. He came to transform it with his vision and, in doing so, bring life.

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JESUS' PERSPECTIVES ON POSSESSIONS

DUANE WARDEN

Through the length of his Gospel, Luke returns repeatedly to the following theme: No one's worth, no one's significance, no one's standing with God has anything to do with wealth or pedigree or power. He sometimes makes the point with sledgehammer directness, and sometimes with subtle nuances that one can easily overlook. Luke wants his reader to know that God works his will through the lowly and the poor.

A SURVEY OF THE PASSAGES

The humble people who worked on the land, who sold fish in the markets, who collected taxes for the Romans are at the center of Luke's story about Jesus. Like a theme in a great piece of music? Luke's love for the poor and his disdain for ostentatious wealth, sometimes fade quietly in the background and can hardly be heard at all. But it is always there. Luke will not let us forget.

THE BIRTH NARRATIVE

The story begins in Luke, not with the birth of Jesus, but with John the Baptist. The parents of John were an old couple from the priestly tribe. Nothing commended them to the world. They were childless. But Luke says of them, "They were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord

blameless" (Lk. 1:6). A poor priest's wife, shamed for her failure to bear children, receives the first blessing in Luke's Gospel.

The story moves from Elizabeth to a peasant girl, pregnant with no husband. After hearing the angel's message, Mary hurried to the hill country of Judah where she and Elizabeth celebrated together. Mary's song is filled with the praises of the God who remembers the poor: "He has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden. For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.... He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent empty away" (Lk. 1:48b, 52-53).

As Jesus' birth nears, the reader is introduced to Joseph. No comfortable accommodations awaited Joseph and his bride in Bethlehem. They lodged in a stable, and there, with the livestock, the Savior of the world was born. In Luke there are no wise men, no kings from the East with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. It was shepherds in the field who heard the greeting of the angels: "You will find a babe wrapped in swaddling cloth and lying in a manger" (Lk. 2:12). The story has the irony of great literature. He was Son of David, he was Son of God; he was Savior and Lord. His birth was unheralded by men but announced by angels to shepherds. Possessions and the power of men do not drive this story. God works his will among the lowly.

JESUS' EARLY MINISTRY

At the beginning of John's ministry only in Luke did the multitudes ask, "What shall we do?" John answered, "He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none, and he who has food, let him do likewise" (Lk. 3:10-11). He told tax collectors, "Collect no more than is appointed you." Soldiers heard "Rob no one by violence or by false accusation, and be content with your wages" (Lk. 3:13, 14). By comparison, there is nothing in Matthew or Mark's story

about John that gives such attention to possessions. Luke's later description of John describes a prophet disdainful of possessions and might.

"What then did you go out to see?" Luke writes, "A man clothed in soft clothing? Behold, those who are gorgeously appareled and live in luxury are in king's courts" (Lk. 7:25).

Jesus' temptations in Matthew and Luke are similar, but there is a significant difference. The second and third temptations are reversed. Perhaps that means nothing; however, notice that both the turning of stones to bread and the offering of authority to Jesus over the nations have to do with material things-with possessions. Perhaps Luke placed them together in order to emphasize that the temptation to trust in possessions pull men and women away from God more than any other force within the devil's control.

In Luke's gospel, unlike Matthew and Mark, Jesus began his ministry with a trip to Nazareth. In the synagogue he opened to Isaiah 61: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor" (Lk. 4:18). There is no comparable citation in Matthew and Mark. Further, only Luke in the same context mentioned the trip of Elijah to the poor widow in Zarephath.

The beatitudes of Luke are striking when compared to Matthew. For Matthew's "Blessed are the poor in spirit," Luke has, "Blessed are you poor," (Lk. 6:20-21). Matthew's "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness" becomes simply "Blessed are you that hunger." In addition, he follows both blessings with "Woe to you that are rich, for you have received your consolation," and "Woe to you that are full now, for you shall be hungry" (Lk. 6:24-25).

Only Luke tells of Jesus entering the house of a wealthy Pharisee and of an outcast woman who came in from the street to wash his feet with her tears and wipe them with her hair (Lk. 7:38). Only Luke tells of the women who provided for Jesus and his disciples out of their means (Lk. 8:1-3).

THE TRAVEL NARRATIVE

Luke 9:51 - 18:14 is a long section often called "The Travel Narrative." It is filled with details of Jesus teaching and ministry that are not in Matthew and Mark. The disciple and his possessions are never far in the background. Of himself Jesus said, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head" (Lk. 9:58). When a follower hesitates to leave his family and possessions, the Lord responds, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God" (Lk. 9:60). Then he sent out seventy with the words "Carry no purse no bag, no sandals" (Lk. 10:4).

Only Luke relates the occasion when two sisters Mary and Martha invited Jesus into their house, where Martha was distracted with much serving. When Martha complained, Jesus replied, "Martha, Martha you are anxious and troubled about many things; one thing is needful. Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her" (Lk. 10:41-42).

Striking in the Travel Narrative are the parables on possessions. When a man insisted "Teacher bid my brother divide the inheritance with me" Jesus responded "Take heed and beware of all covetousness; for a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Lk. 12:15). There follows the story of a rich fool whose lands brought forth plentifully but whose greed resulted in the loss of his soul.

In Luke 16 there are two parables about possessions. The first tells the story of a dishonest steward who used possessions to provide for himself. The Lord concluded by saying "And I tell you make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal habitations" (Lk. 16:9). Details of the parable are difficult, but Jesus himself drew out its implications. "If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous

mammon, who will entrust to you the true riches?" And then "No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon" (Lk. 16:11, 13). When the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, objected the Lord said, "...what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God" (Lk. 16:15).

The parable of the rich man and Lazarus is particularly interesting. The rich man is merely rich. Nothing is said of his dishonesty, his cruelty or his neglect of Lazarus. Lazarus, on the other hand, is poor. Nothing is said of his spiritual qualities. To the rich man Abraham said, "Son remember that you in your lifetime received your good things and Lazarus in like manner evil things" (Lk. 16:25). Clearly the parable is about a rich man and a poor man, not an evil man and a good man.

In addition to the distinctive teaching in Luke about possessions, the Gospel also includes several items common to Matthew. Jesus told the disciples to consider the way God provides for the lilies (Lk. 12:27-31). Further, he admonished, "Sell your possessions and give alms; provide yourselves with purses that do not grow old with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is there will your heart be also" (Lk. 12:33-34).

Luke shares with Matthew and Mark the story of a ruler who came with the question, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Lk. 18:18ff). For all our attempts to soften the impact of the story, it stands there in all its starkness. "Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven; and come follow me," Jesus said. (Lk. 18:22) After the rich man went away, Jesus lamented "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

THE CHRISTIAN AND HIS POSSESSIONS

Jesus taught a great deal about the folly of relying on possessions for security. What are we to do with this teaching? How does it inform us? How can the teaching make us more godlike? If we are wise, we will listen to the warning. To young people I sometimes say, "There are temptations that you have now which will not be a big problem in later life. But the temptation to love things will never go away. It tends to become more powerful the longer we live." What can we learn from Jesus?

POSSESSIONS ARE SPIRITUAL LIABILITIES

Jesus didn't teach the weaker proposition; i.e., the possession of great quantities of things may be spiritual liabilities. He taught the stronger one; i.e., they are spiritual liabilities. Possessions are the downfall of the rich man in the parable and the downfall of the rich young ruler. In neither case is anything said of the sins either had committed. Their downfall was that they possessed riches and possessing them, they loved them. The possession of great amounts of things offer temptations that are difficult to resist. Perhaps Jesus wants to know that few are successful at resisting the temptation to love possessions.

Of course one may possess great riches and not love them. One may be godly, generous, and righteous and at the same time rich. Jesus did not close the door on the possibility that a rich man might enter the kingdom of heaven. But may we never be guilty of dismissing the warnings once we have made that concession. The accumulation of possessions may be, perhaps often is, the cause of an otherwise faithful Christian's selling out to the god of the powers of the air.

GOD'S BLESSINGS ARE FOR THE POOR

There are places in the Bible where "the poor" are virtually equivalent to "the godly." Psalm 86 begins, "Incline thy ear, O Lord, and answer me, for I am poor and needy. Preserve my life, for I am godly." Ecclesiastes 9:15 tells about the poor wise man whose advice saved a city but who received no recognition. James 2:5 adds, "Has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which he has promised to those who love him. The rich are arrogant and strong; the poor, lowly and compliant. The rich need nothing beyond their riches; the poor need everything."

In Luke's Gospel God works his will through the poor, the outcast, the disreputable. The poor came to hear him. He preached the gospel to the poor and he healed the poor. Dare we suggest that he continues to work among the poor. Not by our impressive buildings, not by means of all the towers we build to the heavens, will the world learn of the Lord and experience salvation. Life is found only through humble acceptance, a characteristic of the poor.

POSSESSIONS ARE TO BE SHARED GENEROUSLY

Paul listed different gifts within the body, among them the gift of liberality (Rom. 12:8). Blessed is the person who gives generously. Luke's gospel offers some wonderful examples of the blessing. A wealthy Pharisee named Simon invited Jesus to dinner. While Jesus was dining in the courtyard, a disreputable woman turned into the house from the street. She brought an expensive alabaster box of ointment. In the presence of Simon and guests she wet Jesus' feet with her tears and anointed them with the ointment. Jesus commended her because her love resulted in an outpouring of generosity (Lk. 7:36-50).

John the Baptist told the multitudes who came to him that they ought to be generous. Jesus illustrated the same precept

negatively with the parable of the Rich Fool (Lk. 12:13-21). When the rich man's land brought forth plentifully, he didn't know how to give; he knew only how to hoard. In the end, when he died, the Lord asks, "... and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?"

Only once does Luke say that the teaching of the Lord brought sadness. A ruler of the Jews asked the Lord what he needed to do to have life. He was apparently a good man, zealous for the Law. Jesus told him that he needed to sell all and to follow him. He needed to learn generosity. Luke writes, "And when he heard this he became sad, for he was very rich" (Lk. 18:23). Matthew adds that he went away sorrowfully.

The possession of things can rob a person of life's greatest joys. Possessions rob us of joys when we hoard what we have, when we do not experience the joy of giving.

POSSESSIONS CALL FOR ASSESSMENT OF PRIORITIES

A man came to Jesus, ready to follow him, but not quite yet. There were home matters to care for. His father was old. Jesus' answer was simple: "Leave the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God" (Lk. 9:60). Jesus seems always to be saying that possessions do not give life.

One of the best loved stories comes from the time when Mary and Martha received Jesus into their home. Martha was distracted with serving. Things had to be just right. The Lord was with them. But Mary sat near Jesus and listened. When Martha complained, the Lord taught a lesson about priorities and possessions. Possessions and things cannot take first place for one who chooses to serve the Christ.

CONCLUSION

An age like ours, obsessed as we are with things, with what we can own and spend, has difficulty accepting what Jesus taught

concerning possessions. Typically, a Bible class studying the rich ruler who went away sorrowfully because he had many possessions spends much of its efforts explaining why it is alright to be a rich Christian. I don't want to argue that it is not all right. I do want to argue that such discussion diverts our attention from the warning Jesus made. The possession of things and the desire for possessions can be and often is one of life's great spiritual handicaps.

Jesus is the example. He has shown his people the pattern for what brings life. He says of himself that he had no possessions, not even a place to lay his head (Lk. 9:58). Perhaps the teachings of Christ do not require each one to impoverish himself, but his teachings will require less love of this world and its things. He will require us to place our values and our estimation of the worth of self and others on some other basis than possessions.

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THE GOOD NEWS OF THE KINGDOM

WENDELL WILLIS

JESUS: HERALD OF THE GOOD NEWS OF THE KINGDOM

To a degree that we can barely imagine, there was a great expectation among the Jewish people in the days of Jesus for a redemption of their occupied land. While some looked for this redemption to come through the success of human efforts (as under the Maccabees), many others looked for an act of God himself to redeem and restore Israel's lost blessings (as with the Essenes). This burning expectation was for the "Kingdom of God" to appear. This deep longing is illustrated in Acts 1:3, where the disciples ask their risen Lord, "Will you at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?"

The Kingdom of God is fundamentally the reign of God over his people. In Israel the popular expectation was that this reign would be manifested in the government of their land and over the Jewish people. These assumptions seemed only obvious because a King assumes the existence of subjects and, to a degree, a place also. Jesus both assumes this popular expectation and corrects it in the gospels, especially in Luke.

In the gospel of Luke, as also in Mark and Matthew, the focus of Jesus' preaching ministry is the Kingdom of God. This focus is clear in the "parables of the kingdom" (most of which do not include the interpretive phrase "the kingdom of God is like . . ."), and it is also found in Jesus' deeds. In the first class, we will look at Jesus as the Herald of the Kingdom in his preaching, in the second at Jesus' deeds which embody the kingdom, and in the last lesson will look at Jesus' instructions to his followers as citizens of the Kingdom.

In Mark 1:14f., following the arrest of John, Jesus begins a public ministry "proclaiming the good news of God" --namely, "The Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news." In this concise statement, three things can be easily seen: that Jesus' message was the "gospel of God," that this is also the "kingdom of God," and that its arrival demands a response by those who hear it-- "Repent." It is strikingly clear in the gospels, and especially Luke, that Jesus did not preach himself, but the kingdom of God.

We begin with Mark because his statement is so clear and succinct. But the gospel of Luke presents the same truth. Indeed, Luke alone gives us a detailed picture of Jesus' first synagogue sermon, in his home town of Nazareth. Luke 4 begins with the temptation stories of Jesus in the desert, which includes Satan's offer of "all the kingdoms of the world" and then moves to his synagogue sermon in Nazareth.

Jesus selects Isaiah 61:1,2 (one of the "Servant Songs" in Isaiah) as his text in which the preaching of the gospel is promised and then described in marvelous events (freedom to prisoners, sight to the blind, release of the oppressed). This "gospel" hope has now occurred, Jesus says, and he receives popular acclamation. Of course, popular adulation quickly turns to attempted murder (crowds are like that), and Jesus goes forth to heal. (Lk. 4:31-41, also recalls Luke 1: 51, 52 where Mary anticipates the coming of the Savior.) Looking back over these events, the Lord summarizes, "I must preach the good news of the Kingdom of God to the other town also, because that is why I was sent." Indeed, Luke makes it very clear that Jesus' ministry is most distinct from that of John the Baptist in that John belonged to the time before the Kingdom, and Jesus to the time of the Kingdom (Lk. 16:16).

Thus in both word and deed, Jesus saw his ministry as the bringing of the gospel of the Kingdom. In two brief parables this is very explicit (Lk. 13: 18-21). Jesus asks rhetorically, "What is the kingdom of God like? What shall I compare it to?" He then gives the

two short parables of the mustard seed and the yeast in the dough. The point of both is that God's kingdom comes in modest and unexpected ways--but its success is certain.

A supporting evaluation of the Kingdom is found in Jesus' beatitudes in Luke 6: 20-22. There Jesus comforts his disciples with the words, "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God." This assessment of the poor as "blessed" or "favored" was as unexpected in Jesus' day as in our own. His contemporaries, like our own, assumed that wealth and success were marks of God's favor, and that God would naturally bless materially those who confessed him.

It is also the Kingdom which is the primary subject of the petition of Jesus' followers, in what has come to be known as the "Lord's prayer" (Lk. 11:2-4). This prayer reminds us that Jesus urged his followers to put the Kingdom first in their petitions (although we seldom do so today), and also reminds us that the kingdom is God's gift, not our success.

JESUS : THE EMBODIMENT OF THE KINGDOM

One of the decisive tests of a religious leader is the integrity seen between word and deed. It is on this basis that Jesus' teaching about the gospel of God's rule has such power. Not only did Jesus herald the coming Kingdom of God by his teaching, but also in his actions. He invited people to accept the coming Kingdom by word and also by deed.

One way in which Jesus embodies the rule of God is in his miraculous deeds of healing and in his exorcisms of demons. An excellent example of this is in Luke 11, when Jesus is accused by religious opponents of having made a covenant with "Beelzebub, the prince of demons" which empowered him to cast out other demons (Lk. 11:14-16). In response, Jesus points to his healing acts as demonstrations that the Kingdom of God has come (Lk. 11:20). Thus

his work is an embodiment of the struggle between God and Satan, and Jesus' success over the demons proves the power of God is active in him.

Such powerful deeds grab our attention (just as they did the people of Jesus' days on earth), but there are other less sensational deeds which also manifest the presence of the Kingdom. In the programmatic sermon that Jesus gives in Luke 4, one key point is the preaching of the "gospel" to the lowly. Especially in Luke, Jesus brings the kingdom of God to the most unlikely people (beginning with Mary and Joseph!). Thus the poor are pronounced as blessed by God (Lk. 6:20).

In Luke 18 we find four cameo stories, all of which show that those least likely (by human standards) are those whom God accepts. The first two stories are parables (vs. 1-8, the persistent widow and vs. 9-15, the Pharisee and the tax collector) which lead to a summary statement by Jesus regarding the priority given to children in the coming Kingdom (vs. 16-17). Then this truth is illustrated with the discussion between Jesus and the ruler about "inheriting eternal life" (vs. 18-25) in which the Lord warns of the great difficulty facing the rich in regard to the Kingdom. Jesus' disciples were as shocked by this assessment as the ruler was, and they said with despair, "Who then can be saved?" In his reply, Jesus tells his followers, ourselves included, that nothing sacrificed for the Kingdom is too dear a cost (vs. 29f.).

More so in Luke than the other gospels, Jesus associates the Kingdom with meals. In doing so, he uses a common metaphor of salvation as being God's guest at the banquet of the Messiah (i.e. Lk. 13:28f.). At the Last Supper, Jesus also points to this image of the Kingdom of God as a banquet when he promises his disciples their place in this greatly anticipated banquet (Lk. 22:27-30).

On one occasion Jesus had been invited to eat with a prominent Pharisee, and during the meal one of his fellow diners, drawing on this popular analogy, said to him, "Blessed is the man who will eat

at the feast in the kingdom of God!" (Lk. 14:15). In response, the Lord reflected on this anticipated Kingdom banquet by telling a parable. In this parable Jesus predicts that those who had been previously invited to this meal treated it too lightly and so missed it. But those who were unlikely to be invited, "the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame" (Lk. 14:21) actually were able to attend!

The great power of this particular parable is that Jesus tells it in response to self-serving conduct by the guests at this banquet as they maneuvered for prestigious places at the table. Jesus first warns them against seeking places of honor and then instructs them about whom to invite to their own dinner parties--"the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind" (Lk. 14:13).

The same image of the heavenly banquet may well be alluded to in the feeding of the multitudes (Lk. 9: 10-17), for immediately after this miraculous meal, there is the confession that Jesus is the Christ of God (Lk. 9:20). And it is surely behind the post-resurrection meal at Emmaus, where during the meal the Cleopas and an unnamed disciple recognize Jesus (Lk. 24: 30, 32).

The decisive point is that the Jewish expectation of the Kingdom as being a banquet with God is appointed by Jesus and redirected to illustrate the gospel by his word and deed. He did not just sermonize on God's acceptance of the outcast; he ate meals with those people himself. Thus by deeds accompanying his word, Jesus is the embodiment of the kingdom he announces.

JESUS: THE KING OF THE KINGDOM

So far we have seen that the key topic of Jesus' preaching was the good news of the coming Kingdom of God. Even in many teachings where the phrase "kingdom of God" is not used, there is a strong commitment to the coming Kingdom in Jesus' message. Secondly, the kingdom is more than the key topic of Jesus' teaching, he also embodied it in his ministry. From his birth to his resurrection,

Jesus acted in accord with the Kingdom's character. Now finally, we shall look at the subjects of the Kingdom which Jesus' brought.

A kingdom can do without a number of things, but one thing it must have is subjects! So it comes as no surprise to us that Jesus invites people to accept the gospel of the coming kingdom and to live out the gospel. He describes those who have followed him as those who have been given the "knowledge of the secrets of the Kingdom of God" (Lk. 8:10). In the next chapter of Luke, Jesus sends out twelve of these followers as heralds of the gospel, and they do what Jesus has been doing, "preaching the gospel and healing people everywhere." (Lk. 9: 1-6). When these men returned to the Lord, Jesus welcomed them, received a large crowd, and "spoke to them about the kingdom of God" (Lk. 9:11). Only a chapter later when he repeats this mission with seventy-two disciples and entrusts to them the message that "The kingdom of God is near you" (Lk. 10:1-10). From these events we can easily see that the gospel and the Kingdom are the same topic, and that Jesus is greatly concerned that the gospel of the Kingdom be spread and people urged to accept it.

But Jesus also makes clear that this Kingdom is an alternative one to the kingdoms of the world. Just as it is a different message or "gospel," so it also assumes different measures of status. While many people expend considerable effort to gain recognition as great men in the city ("benefactors") and jockey for high-profile positions among peers, the reverse is true in the Kingdom Jesus represents. In that Kingdom servants are esteemed and valued most highly. This is not surprising, for the Lord himself was a servant (Lk. 22: 25-27).

As the Lord of the coming Kingdom, Jesus also warns the subjects of this kingdom that its demands are strenuous. The cost of the kingdom may include lack of the basic necessities of life (Lk. 9:57ff.) and may interfere with family loyalties and responsibilities (Lk. 9:60). Jesus accepts nothing less than single-minded loyalties (Lk. 9:62).

One of the decisive tests of whether we believe Jesus' portrayal of this kingdom is whether we are able to put this kingdom above other allurements. Thus the Lord characterizes anxiety about even the essentials of "food and drink" as a sign of lack of faith, indeed of paganism (Lk. 12:27-30). Faithfulness to the kingdom liberates us from miserliness, even leads us to sacrificial generosity, because we are convinced that the Father has "been pleased to give you the kingdom." (Lk. 12:32f.).

And the Lord encourages no illusions about the seriousness of such demands. Most people will be unable to trust God to this degree of self-forgetfulness and thus will turn away from the Kingdom in sorrow (Lk. 18:23-26). Only with God's gift of grace will we accept this kingdom.

The kingdom that Jesus brings involves a great reversal of values. It tells us that things are not as we may think they are when observed. Thus despite popular opinion, the "last will be first" and the outcasts are welcome to the table. The chief criterion for entering the kingdom is to become childlike before God.

The temptation is to regard Jesus' presentation of the Kingdom as basically a cognitive issue. But this underestimates how much Jesus sees faith in the Kingdom as a matter of how one lives and how one accepts as true what Jesus says about the rule of God. What would happen if Christians determined to live in accordance with the kingdom of God as Jesus presents it to us? Then God would indeed "rule over us," and we would become subjects of the Kingdom.

Let one example of the last point suffice. The legislation of this kingdom is defined by Jesus in Luke 10:25-27, the "great commandment." In Luke's abbreviated account of this encounter, there is no reference to the "first commandment" (as in Matthew and Mark), and the one who asked the question seems really to know the answer. If we had not heard this story before, we might think that after Jesus complemented his answer (Lk. 10:28) the story would have a happy ending. But instead, the story turns badly, when the man

sought to justify himself by knowledge, and Jesus tells the famous story of the "good Samaritan," ending with the challenge to live out this Kingdom truth--"Go and do likewise!"

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KURT PICKER

THE CONTROVERSY ANALYZED

When considering the vehement reaction of the Jews to the activities of Jesus on the Sabbath, we might scratch our heads and wonder, "what's the big deal?" As F. F. Bruce so plainly concludes,

Since the Sabbath was made for man, he whom God has ordained to be man's representative before him is authorized to dispose of the Sabbath at his own discretion. [F. F. Bruce, *The Hard Sayings of Jesus* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1983), 34.]

If "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath" (Lk.6:5), surely He defines the acceptable interpretation of the Sabbath. As believers two thousand years removed from the situation, we see little need for controversy.

But for the Jews, He was the new hermeneutic they wanted no part of! As Edersheim observes, "Indeed, all that Jesus taught must have seemed to these Pharisees strangely un-Jewish" [Alfred Edersheim, *THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JESUS THE MESSIAH*, Part 2 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), 52.] To them, His interpretation of the Sabbath was an abomination. The controversy was over interpretation, the interpretation of one of the Ten Commandments no less! And of those holy commands, this one left the most room for interpretation. The rabbis had listed thirty-nine works

forbidden on the Sabbath, with six minor categories under each of these thirty-nine. [William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987), 318.] The rigid observance of the Sabbath day during the Maccabean period was so extreme that a large number of ultra-orthodox Jews were killed on the Sabbath because they refused to offer any resistance on the holy day of rest! [Samuel Macauley Jackson, ed., *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, Vol. X (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1969), 136.]

With that in mind, the supposed Sabbath infractions by Jesus and His disciples (Lk. 6:1-11; 13:10-17; 14:1-6) take on a whole new meaning. When the disciples pick some grain and eat it on the Sabbath, they are immediately confronted with the interrogation of the Pharisees, "Why are you doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?" (Lk. 6:2). As Bruce observes,

Harmless enough actions, it might be supposed today, but plucking the ears was technically regarded by the interpreters of the law as a form of reaping, and rubbing them to extract the kernel as a form of grinding, and reaping and grinding were two kinds of work that were forbidden on the Sabbath (Bruce, *Hard Sayings*, 32.)

When Jesus heals on the Sabbath, what we might interpret as a powerful act of compassion, the synagogue ruler responds with indignation, "There are six days for work. So come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath" (Lk. 13:14b).

For the devout Jew, these activities were genuinely regarded as desecrating the Holy Day. And according to the Jewish *Mishnah*, Sabbath-desecration was among those most heinous crimes for which a man was to be stoned (Edersheim, 52). No wonder the text says, "But they were furious and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus" (Lk. 6:11). This undoubtedly was the

breaking point for many who could draw no other conclusion but that Jesus was not the Messiah because He did not honor the Sabbath.

THE CONTROVERSY ANSWERED

Why does it seem that Jesus intentionally raised this controversy? Could He not have acted more discreetly and simply told the man with the shriveled hand in Luke 6, the infirmed woman of Luke 13, or the man suffering from dropsy in Luke 14, "Meet me here tomorrow, and I'll heal you when it won't cause such a ruckus." But instead He heals very publicly and even tells the man of Luke 6, "Get up and stand in front of everyone" (Lk. 6:8b). And as He heals the man of Luke 14, it says, "He was being carefully watched" (Lk. 14:1b). Why does He address this explosive controversy so forthrightly? As Lenski says, "He had come to help these men by freeing them from their false ideas." [R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 767.] The enemies of Christ were burying the real law of God under the mountain of their own man-made, foolish traditions.

Jesus asks the penetrating question, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?" (Lk. 14:3b). His question is answered with their timid silence. Finally, Jesus answers His own question with action! "So taking hold of the man, he healed him" (Lk. 14:4b). The actions of Jesus emphatically proclaimed the answer, "No, it is not unlawful to heal on the Sabbath!"

Their response? "And they had nothing to say" (Lk. 14:6). Instead of questioning their own stubborn traditional interpretations of the Sabbath, they allowed their humiliation to cause them to become indignant (Lk. 13:14-17).

THE CONTROVERSY APPLIED

So what is the application for us? First, we need to be certain that Jesus is our first hermeneutical consideration when interpreting scripture. Does the life and teaching of Jesus shed any light on my understanding of this truth? Obviously we have to know Jesus before we can answer that question.

Second, we need to be careful not to draw unwarranted conclusions based upon the teaching and actions of Jesus and His disciples regarding the Sabbath. Some have stretched this teaching to draw some false conclusions. One such false conclusion reasons as follows: since Jesus taught, 'The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath' (Mk. 2:27), therefore the laws of God are subject to what is beneficial to man; i.e., marriage was made for man and not man for marriage. Such reasoning is contrary to the very teaching of Jesus and is wrong. Jesus, the Word that became flesh, was in a position of authority to interpret what was intended by the law of the Sabbath. We are in no such position of authority.

Third, we learn from this passage how great scholars of God's word can be blinded by their own egos and traditions. One interpreter of Hebrew literature had this to say about the Jewish religious scholars:

They felt and believed that all duty for the guidance of man was found in the Bible either directly or inferentially. Their motto was then, "Search the Scriptures," and they did search them with a literalness and a painstaking thoroughness never since repeated. Not a word, not a letter escaped them. Every redundancy of expression was freighted with meaning, every repetition was made to give birth to new truth. Some of the inferences were logical and natural, some artificial and far-fetched, but all ingenious. [*Hebraic Literature* trans. M H.

Harris (New York: Tudor Publishing Co. 1946), Special Introduction, 2.]

Does it sound like anyone we might know? Our search of the scriptures must always be painstakingly thorough but always with the intent of drawing us nearer to God and His will for our lives, never leading us to an arrogance that would blind us from seeing the God we study to know.

We conclude our study by asking the obvious question, "Is the Lord of the Sabbath the Lord of my life?"

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JUST-IN-TIME

LUKE 12:13-21

SCOTT MCDOWELL

Lee Iacocca may not have been its pioneer, but he has been credited with perfecting something called the "just-in-time" approach to auto production. Rather than tie up huge amounts of capital in parts inventories, Chrysler, and now Saturn and just about everyone else in the auto industry, maintains just enough materials to build a few day's (and in some cases, a few hour's) cars. They get their new materials "just-in-time" for production and thereby maximize the liquidity of their assets while at the same time saving on storage costs.

What Iacocca and the others discovered was that the small benefits offered by carrying the inventories (independence from suppliers, hedging against strikes, etc.) was not worth the headaches involved in maintaining and financing them. They had to give something up to make the change, but the benefits outweighed the cost. Today "just-in-time" has become the industry standard in a "leaner and meaner" business environment.

In Luke 12, Jesus advocates what could be called a "just-in-time" approach to life. Particularly in the parable of the rich fool related in Luke 12: 13-21, Jesus exposes the fallacy of the often unchallenged idea that "more is always better." The rich fool's story comes on the heels of Christ's statement in Luke 12:15 that "a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions," and portrays him as someone almost obsessed with "storing up things" (the idea is expressed four times in five verses).

The rich fool's fallacy suggests several advantages to the "just-in-time" approach to living.

More Time for Other People Luke 12:17-19. The rich man thought to himself and talked to himself, and his thoughts and conversations even centered on himself. He uses personal pronouns thirteen times in these three short verses. As people made in the image of God, we are social beings. As early as Genesis 2:18 we learn that "it is not good for man to be alone." Just-in-time living frees us up to pursue relationships with others.

More Meaningful Existence Luke 12:19. "Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry," may sound good, but it is ultimately empty. As Stephen Covey observed in his book *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, "many so-called mental and emotional illnesses are really symptoms of an underlying sense of meaninglessness or emptiness" (p. 108). Real meaning is found in worthwhile pursuits and in living lives of purpose. The restlessness we witness in America today when we have more in the way of material possessions than at any time in our history is ample testimony to the emptiness of the easy life.

More Than You Bargained For Luke 12:20-21. Less is more! All the rich man's preparations were for this life, and so when he died and went to the next life, he had nothing. The just-in-time person will find out that the rewards simplicity brought to this life won't compare to the treasures he'll experience in heaven.

CHARLES HODGE

INTRODUCTION

"God is not willing that any should perish!" What an awesome statement! Jesus died for the ungodly, for sinners (Rom. 5:5-10). "I qualify!" We all qualify. Jesus saves only the unworthy. Jesus came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). He came not for the healthy but for the sick (Matt. 9:13). He lived as a servant (Lk. 22:27). He died outside the gate (Heb. 13:12,13). We are saved by this glorious Gospel. This is why Christians must preach the Gospel to themselves every day. What a Savior! Jesus lived directly opposite to culture. He was meek, humble, poor, politically helpless. Jesus has historically identified with the outcast. Jesus fulfilled Isaiah in Luke 4, "... the poor have the Gospel preached to them."

THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS

The birth of Christ came from a genealogy that included outcasts ... fallen men, women, outcast women like Tamar, Rahab the Harlot, Bathsheba, Ruth the foreigner. Jesus was born outcast in a barn. He identified with the poor, not the rich; the powerless, not the mighty. He was reared as a nobody in a town with a bad rap (Nazareth).

JESUS WAS MOVED WITH COMPASSION

Compassion was the hallmark of Jesus (Matt. 9:36; 20:34; Mk. 1:41). The compassion was so deep this expression is only used in scripture to describe Jesus. He touched the leper (Matt. 8:3). He touched the coffin (Lk. 7:14). He healed Legion (Mk. 5). He fed the seekers. He was always available, thoughtful, serving.

He also healed on the Sabbath Day! This provoked His death. He did not ask the hurting to "catch up with me on Tuesday." He was angered when enemies watched to see if He would heal the man with a handicapped arm. He healed a lady who had been bound by Satan 18 years. He gave a blind boy his eyes back. Jesus stood up for and defended the outcast.

This is profoundly demonstrated with His defense of the woman caught in adultery (Jn. 8). In Luke 15 Jesus gave precedence to a son too bad over a son too good. A Samaritan was made a hero in Luke 10. The prayers of the publican was heard, not the Pharisee's (Lk. 18). Zaccheus, the publican outcast, was rescued in Luke 19. In an interesting conversation the daughter of a foreign woman was healed (Matt. 15). Jesus thanked God that truth was given to the common, not the elite. He further angrily told the disciples to go "to the highways and byways." He said sinful cities would have repented before Jewish religious cities! Jesus reminds us that God is at His best when man is at his worst.

THE TWELVE

In any evaluation the twelve were a motley crew. Jesus didn't seek His apostles at Harvard nor down at the seminary. He went to the outcast -- out to the lakes. He called uneducated fishermen to "drop their nets" and follow Him. They were not priests, scribes, known men. They were, simply, nobodies.

It is also fascinating to see Jesus rescue the outcasts the disciples tried to "run off." They rejected children brought by mothers (Matt. 19:13-15). James and John wanted to burn out Samaria (Lk. 9:51-56). The disciples equally were upset with the Syro-Phoenician mother (Matt. 15:21-28). A man healing in the name of Jesus was rejected (Lk. 9:49-50) by James and John. Jesus rebuked them, "Forbid him not."

WOMEN

Jesus saved men. He doubly saved women. He not only saved their souls; He restored their dignity. Women were included in His ministry (Lk. 8:1-4). They are listed among His most trusted friends. Women were last at the cross and first at the tomb. Jesus appeared risen first to a woman (Mary Magdalene).

WHAT A SAVIOR!

Jesus is a Savior, not a do-gooder. His interest was fallen man, not spotted-owls. He established the church, not the Salvation Army. He died for sinners -- not victims. He does not solve our problems to change our hearts; He changes our hearts to solve our problems. Although Jesus did solve felt needs, he was interested primarily in their souls. He did not come to give good self-esteem nor make sinners feel good.

Jesus is a Savior. Grace is not "cheap grace." Jesus was into the sin/salvation business. We were lost, helpless, and damned. Jesus died that we might live. Jesus is the Savior; the church is the saved. It is never too late for a new beginning.

FIRST CENTURY CHURCH'S CONCERN FOR THE OUTCAST

CHARLES HODGE

INTRODUCTION

History has to be kind to Christianity. Wherever Jesus has gone, education thrives, slaves are freed, the widows and orphans are cared for, justice prevails, and freedom rings. Other religions do not have this track record! God is alive; God is good. We tend to forget this. God determined to improve the world simply by saving one soul at a time. This is too anemic and archaic for modern culture. We are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Money fails . . . more laws fail. . . novelty actions are silly! The Bible, the Gospel, the church are the most practical things on earth. Biblical faith is wisdom; wisdom is still practical. The greatest one thing the church can do for the world is simply to be the church. A lost world obviously needs a holy church. There are no instant, short-cut, painless answers. God created the world. He, alone, knows best for the world. The world must humble itself under God. "God is not willing that any should perish!"

The early church did not think itself too divine to join the human race. They did not withdraw in monasticism to the mountains. They were not afraid to get their hands dirty. With profound urgency they carried the gospel to the entire world. "Not many mighty or noble" were called (1 Cor. 1:26). The "Church of Nobodies" went out to the outcast with the gospel of a risen Lord. "Whosoever will may come." "The gospel is for all."

GRACE IS FOR THE OUTCAST

The early church preached a God who is far more willing to forgive than we might think. God is far more willing to enter broken lives than most think. Spirituality is not independence; the essence of spirituality is dependency. Sinners are lost, helpless. The gospel is only for them. No man is too evil for God to save; no man is too good for God to make better. Our God is the Father who welcomes the return of the Prodigal Son. God doesn't need men on the mountain not willing to go down into the valley. He cannot use men in the valley who have not been up on the mountain. God wants men serving in the valley with the mountain in their hearts.

CONVERT THE CHURCH/PREACHERS FIRST

It must happen to us before it can be done through us. The early church was outcasts saved by grace (1 Tim. 1:16). Paul claimed to be a debtor -- not to God -- but to the Greeks and barbarians. The early church was nothing but beggars who found bread -- sharing that with other beggars.

It was a long, painful lesson, yet the early church learned to accept yea rejoice in the different. The greatest division was in the Jew and Gentile. Jesus removed all barriers dividing man (Eph. 2). The ground is level at the cross. Only in Christ can the Jew/Gentile be one! What a Savior!

Peter had to be converted first. He did not understand in his Pentecost sermon a promise was made to the Gentiles (Acts 2:39). In Acts 6 Peter saw Grecian Jews being accepted as equals in Christ. Mission work in Samaria (Acts 8) came from these Grecian Jews (Philip). It takes outcasts to serve/save outcasts. Peter and John went to Samaria to check it out. They approved and gave the Holy Spirit. They did not preach to the Samaritans going down; they did going

back. Peter was in God's "slow learner class." But he learned. Fast forward to Acts 10. Jewish Peter can live at Simon the Tanner's house. Simon tanned hides from the dead. No self-respecting Jew would touch that! Yet in Acts 10 when God told Peter to kill and eat -- Peter rebelled! Yet he was learning. He perceived God to be no respecter of persons. Peter had opened the church to the Jews (Acts 2); he now opens the church to the Gentiles!

This is the great power of Christianity! Unity is found only at the cross. Segregation contradicts Christianity! Elitism destroys Christianity! The early church had a MESSAGE not a method. Literally, the MESSAGE had them. They knew their MESSAGE! They believed their MESSAGE! They preached their MESSAGE! They lived their MESSAGE! They died for their MESSAGE!

WHAT SHOULD BE OUR CONCERN FOR THE OUTCAST?

CHARLES HODGE

HUMILITY BEFORE GOD

God! Everything begins with God! We sometimes pray an unscriptural prayer, "God humble us!" We know what we mean, but only man can humble himself. God can provide the circumstances, but only man can make the decision. Every command/promise of God is conditional. The church, the preachers, the leaders must be converted first! Revival begins with the church repenting. The battle belongs to the Lord! When Israel humbled themselves God used them mightily; when Israel worked under their own power, catastrophe came. We don't need new ideas, methods necessarily. People not faithful with old ideas will not be with new ideas. God's method is people. Anything will work when people work. Ideas do not work themselves. God can bless only a holy, faithful, sacrificial church.

"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and I will heal their land" (2 Chron. 7:14). Notice the arresting statement, "heal their land." God must save the church before He can save the outcast. We don't need more members . . . we need more disciples. We build men not churches. A sick church cannot save an outcast world.

PRAY FIRST

The disciples' great request? "Teach us to pray" (Lk. 11). We cannot do God's will under human power. **PRAY FIRST!** Preachers pray little or none. Too much church- growth prayer is last and least. The apostles gave themselves first to prayer (Acts 6:4). Prayer (Acts 1) preceded Pentecost (Acts 2). God can do nothing except by prayer. I am now old. Thomas Jefferson well said, "The strength of an old man is prayer." The young rely upon strength, quickness, time, cleverness. Now old, I know my strength is in God. I don't believe in prayer! I believe in God, so I pray! **PRAY FIRST!** Jesus cried over Jerusalem and He died for Jerusalem. We must be weak before we are strong (2 Cor. 12).

A WILLINGNESS TO SUFFER

The familiar in the Bible must be read more closely; the unfamiliar must be read. We glory in the apostle Paul. That is OK. But read to what God called him: "... how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." Paul was called to suffer. We are called to suffer. A church without a cross is not **THE** church. Making the church last and least fails. Dedication, sacrifice are the names of the game.

Too many churches are not ready for sinners! Sinners, like babies, create a mess. It takes time, effort, frustration. Whom will we convert? People just like us! We must mature to reach out to the different, the troubled, the outcast. Two problems paralyze us: (1) Biblical ignorance, (2) Spiritual immaturity. In our ministries we do not have enough sinners present.

Churches now for all practical purposes have abandoned evangelism. Converting sinners is not politically correct! We, in tolerance, dare not offend. We have abandoned sin and salvation. Felt

needs are "in." Conversion is "out." We forget the real work of the Holy Spirit is to convert (Jn. 16:7-11).

Evangelism means that at a certain point we like Paul, "turn to the Gentiles." We have "hogged" the gospel not shared it. We "crossed the tracks." Now we need to move back. 11:00 a.m. on Sunday is the most segregated hour of the week. We cater to the rich not the poor. Nashville now has a great work with the inner city. Churches can be planted there. The Baptists in Texas have "Operation 2000." They intend to knock on every door in Texas by the year 2000! Inner-city apartments welcome "Jule Miller Films." They will not come to our church houses; we can go to theirs. Jesus said, "Go to the highways and byways!" We must sacrifice our time, talents, and resources to reach the outcast.

The world is lost.

Jesus is the only Savior.

The Gospel is still God's power to save.

We can still save souls if we want to.

We are not here to build bigger buildings and have more numbers! We are here to realize every accountable person is lost. This is worse than cancer, a tragedy. Our community is lost. We then must determine the best ways to preach Jesus to them. The outcast need Jesus. Only we can give them Jesus! Save the outcast by preaching to and serving the outcast! We have forgotten who we are and why we are here. **REMEMBER!** "There are no problems in the church a few baptisms will not cure!"

Can we make a difference?

Do we want to make a difference?

Will we make a difference?

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LUKE 18:1-8

KURT PICKER

In Luke 18:1-8 Jesus presents a somewhat humorous but also puzzling parable. It's a story about a crotchety old judge who has no respect for God or man and a nagging widow who won't leave the judge alone until he brings her adversary to justice. To get rid of the pesky woman, he finally gives in and grants her unrelenting petition!

What prompted such a strange story? It had to do with a desire the disciples had expressed earlier in Luke 11. Of all their requests, this had to be one of the finest, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Lk. 11:1b). There was something they observed in His communication with the Father that was uniquely different from any prayers they had ever heard or offered. Jesus spends the rest of his ministry honoring this request.

This parable could be just one more lesson in prayer. A vital lesson that had to be learned if they were to survive once He was physically gone. Prayer would be their link to Him and His power.

So what's the lesson? At first glance, verse one seems to answer that question sufficiently: "Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up" (Lk. 18:1). After observing the uninspired chapter heading "The Parable of the Persistent Widow," we're ready to move on to the next lesson. This one seems obvious; if a wicked judge will eventually give in to the continual requests of a persistent woman, imagine how God will give in to our petitions if we will just be persistent. And so

we preach, "Pray, pray, pray, pray, and if you don't get, pray some more!"

It's a nice tidy message until life begins to force some conclusions that just don't add up. What do you tell the young couple who prayed and prayed for a child and never got one? Or the wife who prayed without ceasing that God would heal her husband of cancer but didn't? After teaching this neat message on the results of persistent prayer, what do you say to the teenage girl who prayed every day that God would get her parents back together, but they're still divorced?

What strange conclusions do we begin to twist so life might fit our hasty interpretation of this parable? Do we cruelly suggest that the prayers must not have been persistent enough? Or would we propose that there must not have been enough faith behind the requests? Maybe like Job's so-called friends, we imply that somebody is not living right! Would anyone like to share those conclusions with the Apostle Paul to explain why God didn't remove his thorn in the flesh after he prayed repeatedly for such deliverance? Surely we wouldn't conclude that God reneged on His end of the deal!

So where do we go from here? On to the next lesson? No, we patiently go back to learn the lesson Jesus intended!

A key to unlocking the meaning of this parable seems to be found in what Jesus says immediately following the story: "And the Lord said, 'Listen to what the unjust judge says'" (Lk. 18:6). Jesus gives us the benefit of looking inside this man's head and heart: "He said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care about men, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!'"

This parable has to do with a specific prayer -- a prayer for justice! Here is an unjust judge who gives justice to a woman he cares nothing about simply because she is persistent. Jesus makes the application for an audience that is about to experience a significant amount of injustice at the hands of their adversaries: "And will not

God bring about justice for His chosen ones, who cry out to Him day and night? Will He keep putting them off? I tell you, He will see that they get justice, and quickly" (Lk. 18:7-8a).

In contrast to the characters in the parable, God is a loving and just judge who cares very much for His persistent "chosen ones"! History proves the words of Jesus to be very true when viewed in light of God's justice being imposed upon the Jewish and heathen persecutors of the first century. [See the works of Josephus on the destruction of Jerusalem and the discussion by Lactantius, "Of the Manner in Which the Persecutors Died," *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. VII (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951), 301-322.]

In the closing question, Jesus reveals the real issue: "When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?" (Lk. 18:8). It's all a matter of persistent faith in the midst of uncertainty and even persecution. Our prayers do not diminish, and we never give up because we are personal friends with the righteous Judge who has already ruled in our favor!

And so we add at the conclusion of our persistent prayer, "Not my will, but thine be done!" Maybe the cup we've asked to be removed is one we need to drink!

Kurt Picker graduated from Harding University in 1976 with a B.S. in Bible. After graduation, Kurt preached in Arkansas and then moved to Houston to work as a youth minister. Kurt helped start the West Houston congregation where he now serves as pulpit minister. The church now has a membership of over 700. Kurt has preached meetings in twenty-one states. He and his wife, Roxy, have two children.

LUKE 8:46

JEFF PAYNE

No doubt, she was frustrated and embarrassed. But most of all she was desperate! For twelve long years this illness had lingered. Her problem? She had a continual bleeding. We're not sure of the exact nature of the illness, but some scholars speculate that she was constantly in menstruation. Her agony was compounded because, according to the Jewish idea of that time (see regulations of Leviticus 15), this woman was an utter outcast on account of her disease. She was not allowed to take part in any religious proceedings, could not come into the temple, could not touch other persons, and had to be separated from her husband.

At times, situations can become so bleak and desperate that we will do just about anything to get relief. Already this lady had spent every available penny she possessed on doctors, seeking a cure. Finally, in a last ditch effort, this woman decided that if she could just touch the edge of Jesus' robe, she might be healed. She had heard of this man Jesus and the healing connected to him. Her mind began to spin. Could he help her? Could her years of isolation and frustration come to an end? Touching his robe sounds strange, but what else could she do?

Lost in the swelling crowd, she quietly forced her way to the middle. Finally, she got close enough to Jesus to reach out and lightly touch his robe. Instantly, the bleeding stopped. She knew it. She could feel it. She was cured! Then the Lord did a curious thing. He

asked, "Who touched me?" What's so odd about that? Well, for one thing, he's in a bustling and jostling crowd. Don't you suspect that many people were touching him? This is the precise point which Peter made. So, Jesus clarified his question. Someone touched him, and as a result, power had left him. This was no ordinary touch. It was a touch that sought healing power.

No one admits to being the one who touched Jesus. Finally, the woman could stand it no longer. With a mixture of fear, humility, and wonder, she confessed that she was the one. Once she starts talking, the whole story spills out, every detail of her disease and healing.

I like how Eugene Peterson, in *The Message*, translates Jesus' response to the woman: "Daughter, you took a risk trusting me, and now you're healed and whole. Live well, live blessed!" Did you know that this is the only woman in the entire New Testament whom Jesus addresses with the tender term daughter?

Jesus did not see what this woman had done as anything less than a movement generated by faith. And it made a profound impression on him. So he said to her, "You took a risk trusting me, and now you're healed and whole." Don't overlook that phrase, "you took a risk." Mark it down; that is the key phrase! You see, faith and risk are inseparable.

How many of us desperately need the power of Jesus in our lives? What stands in our way? How many of us would have to say honestly that we just need to exercise greater faith by reaching out and touching Jesus? How many of us need to take a risk? Yes, we might appear simple and foolish, but we just might find the wholeness we've been seeking!

Are you fed-up? Have you come to the end of your rope? Have you hurt long enough? It's okay to feel afraid, but don't let it stand in your way. Go ahead, reach out and touch Jesus! You will not regret it!

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MARY, THE MOTHER OF JESUS

LUKE 1:3

MIKE JONES

MARY - THE MIRACLE

The miracle had been hidden in the mind of God. It was part of God's eternal purpose. Before the creation He knew what would happen to man and what He would do about it. It surfaced in Genesis as "her Seed" (Gen. 3:15). It was stated in Isaiah 7:14, "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son and shall call His name Immanuel [God with us]." Finally it becomes specific in Matthew 1:23. It's Mary! It's as incredulous to Mary as it would be to any woman. Mary asked the angel Gabriel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" (Lk. 1:34). Mary, that's the miracle! There would be no Messiah without a mother, and there would be no mother without a miracle.

MARY - THE MOTHER

What goes through a young woman's mind when she finds out that she is pregnant? Joy? Fear? Wonder? Multiply that by a million for Mary! She was a virgin! Add to that fact all that Gabriel told Mary about this son she would have. Can we even begin to imagine the burden and blessing of being the mother of Jesus? From conception to the cradle -- from the cradle to the cross -- Mary was indeed his mother.

MARY - THE MYTH

Mary found favor with God. She had to be a woman of great faith. Hers was a special role to play in man's redemption. I suppose it was inevitable that over the years Mary would be magnified beyond her wildest imagination. Long after her death a whole system of Maryolatry was developed: Mary our intercessor, Mary our advocate. We're told that even God Himself obeys her! Traditions can be dangerous things especially when they are elevated above truth! We struggle with some of that even in the church.

CONCLUSION

Mary said it well in John 2:5, "Whatever he says to you, do it." Jesus is Savior and Sovereign. He came and reached out to the outcasts, one of whom was Mary! Let us respect her and reverence him. Let us project Mary as an example of motherhood and preach Christ as the Savior of the world.

Mike Jones has served as the pulpit minister at the Senatobia church of Christ for the past ten of his twenty-five years as a preacher. He was born in Birmingham, Alabama and attended the Memphis School of Preaching and Harding University. He and his wife, Gail, have two sons.

LUKE 1:26 - 2:40

ROY SMALLING

THERE WAS NO ROOM!

On December 24th, 1979, the Broadmoor hotel in Colorado Springs had completely booked all rooms. A man and his wife, great with child, appeared in the lobby asking for a room. They were turned away. A guest, upon hearing what had happened, rushed to the parking lot offering his room. When asked why he was willing to give up his room he replied, "Nearly two thousand years ago another woman, great with child, was required to sleep in a manger. I will not let it happen again if I can help it."

Leo Buscaglia, professor of LOVE at USC tells of the years he lived among the boat people of Cambodia. The first December he was in Cambodia he told the people the story of the birth of Christ. They were greatly impressed with the fact that God could love them so much. Even the virgin- birth story caused little concern. Luke 2:7 caused the greatest concern. They asked, "How much room did he need?" The idea of a woman needing room to give birth was strange to them. When the time comes for them to give birth, they simply lie down where they are and give birth.

What kind of image do you have of the events occurring in Luke 2:1-7? It's easy to see Joseph and Mary arriving late at the Bethlehem Holiday Inn, and since they have not made advance reservations, being forced to take what is left. The Inn at Bethlehem

was not as we may imagine. The inn would be a large room built of rough stones, with a dirt floor. One scholar suggests that the real difference between the inn and the stable was rather in the company than in the accommodation.

In some ways, the stable had its advantages. It was quieter; it certainly was more secluded; and it had more room available for a newborn baby and therefore was safer.

THE GROUP SURROUNDING THE INFANT

Shepherds. Outside of Mary's own family, the first group of people to hear about the birth of Christ were the shepherds living out in the fields. Have you ever wondered why God chose to reveal such a powerful message to a group of common everyday shepherds? We know the obvious role of shepherds, don't we? Their job was to care for sheep. The wool of sheep was used in the making of clothes, and the meat was used to feed the people. Lambs were also used in the daily sacrifices, and it was the duty of the shepherds to provide a lamb for the daily sacrifice. Who in Israel, besides the priests, would think daily of the promised lamb who would come and take away the sins of the world.

Anna & Simeon. Every Jewish boy underwent three ancient ceremonies during the first forty days of his life. The second chapter of Luke gives us all three. The first was circumcision. This was done on the 8th day, and it was at his circumcision that the boy was given a name (Lk. 1:59).

The second ceremony was the Redemption of the First Born (Cf. Ex. 13:2,14-15). This ceremony took place on the 31st day in the life of the firstborn male child. The third ceremony took place on the 40th day. (Cf. Lev. 12:1-8). After Mary's purification was ended (Lk. 2:22), Joseph and Mary took Jesus to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, (Lk. 2:23-24) and to make the proper sacrifice (Lev. 12:8).

Simeon, in answer to his many prayers, had received a secret promise that he would not die until he had seen the Messiah. Suddenly, with the help of the Holy Spirit, Simeon entered the temple courts and met the Messiah. Taking him in his arms, Simeon praised God for the advent of the Light to lighten the Gentiles and the Glory of His people Israel. It was on this occasion that Simeon gave Mary a quick glimpse into the future: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too" (Lk. 2:34-36).

While Simeon was still speaking, another witness joined the group. It was 84-year-old Anna, a saintly widow, who literally dwelled in the courts of the Lord. Anna became the first woman to proclaim Jesus as the Christ.

Let's jump ahead thirty-three years. Jesus is about to be hung on the cross for our sins. John's gospel tells us that Mary is at the cross. Can you imagine the thoughts that are flashing through her mind? Remember what Gabriel told her in Luke 1:26-33?

In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

At this point, she could understand the words Simeon told her when Jesus was but a baby.

THREE THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND ABOUT THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

The birth of Christ was a time of joy. "Do not be afraid, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people" (Lk. 2:10). *It was also a time of peace.* "Peace on earth; goodwill toward men" (Lk. 2:14). The prophets had said long ago that when Messiah comes, he will bring peace (Is. 9:6-9). *The birth of Christ produced a sense of good will toward men.* Remember the angels said, "Goodwill to men--Men with whom God is well pleased."

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MARK PUGH

The first three rules for success in business are: #1. Location, #2. Location, #3. Location. John the Baptist blatantly broke all the rules by establishing his ministry in the Desert of Judea. Despite that, he was enormously successful, if we are to judge by the crowds that came out to hear him preach.

What was there about John the Baptist that drew such huge crowds? Surely it was not his camel's hair clothes or his strange diet of locusts and wild honey. Yet there was a genuine intrigue among the people about this rather odd personage. The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were spoken of as going out to him (Mk. 1 :5).

John's appeal was what eventually cost him his life. He was willing to take a stand and challenge the accepted lifestyles of his day. For John, there was no such thing as business as usual, or maintaining the status quo; Every fiber of his being cried out against the complacency and apathy of life in first-century Israel. He called people to repentance. It was a message once preached by the prophets but long since silenced by the trivializing of God's word among the Pharisees and Sadducees. His was a message that is greatly needed today. The kingdom today needs men of courage who will firmly and lovingly call people to repentance. In a world of situational ethics and amorality, where political correctness is the order of the day, there is a great need for a message of repentance. People need to know that God's word is clear that there are moral absolutes. They need to hear

that sin will be punished by a righteous and just God. They need to hear that a repentant heart will be forgiven by a loving and merciful God. There is a God-shaped void within each of us that longs to be filled. The clarion call, "Repent!" allows for that void to be filled.

In addition to calling those who were sincere to repentance, John challenged the hypocrisy of those who had insincere motives. He called the Pharisees and Sadducees "a brood of vipers." What a stunning blow that must have been to these pretentious keepers of orthodoxy. Yet John's proclamation of their serpent heritage was intended to be redemptive, not just damning. He told them to "produce fruit in keeping with repentance" (Lk. 3:8). He continued with the orchard analogy in 3:9 when he referred to the ax being at the root of the tree which did not produce good fruit.

The impact of John's powerful message is seen in the response of the people. It should remind us that people are drawn to a powerful message, not repulsed by it. In verse 10, their question is reminiscent of the question of the Pentecost crowd in Acts 2:37. On both occasions, the people wanted to know, "What should we do?" John, then gave them the specifics of his message of repentance. In the same way today, people need to hear that repentance means the cessation of specific sins in their lives.

John initially addresses those in the crowd who were blessed with extra material possessions. Specifically, he mentions the one having an extra tunic or extra food. Virtually all of us today would have to say, "That is me!" We live in houses with closets overflowing with clothes and pantries overflowing with food. Do we really fulfill the intent of this command by making the occasional trip to Goodwill to dispose of our unwanted clothes or by bringing the occasional can of food to the church food pantry? How much of a sacrifice are we making for the kingdom when we send our old song books to a mission church? Not that they do not need them and are not thrilled to receive them, but how much of a sacrifice is that? One missionary related how he wished just once that some congregation, desiring to

have new song books, would buy new ones and send them on to a mission congregation while keeping the old ones for themselves! John addresses the age-old question: Is there justice in the world when some live without the bare necessities while others live in material prosperity? He says in effect, "Do something about it...share!"

Next, he addressed the tax collectors who wanted to be baptized. This group of notorious men was widely hated by their fellow citizens. They were considered traitors and cheats by their countrymen. John gives them an ethically specific command: "Be scrupulously honest!" (something rather new for most of them). Interestingly, John's ministry to the tax collectors prepared the way for Jesus, whose ministry also involved tax collectors in a prominent way. To say that tax collectors were among the social marginals of the first century is an understatement. They were hated social marginals. Though tax-collecting has risen ever so slightly in modern day esteem, we have other groups that are social marginals that are largely unreached by today's church. How many of our church families include someone who has left prostitution? How many include someone who is HIV positive? How many include someone who has been in prison?

Next, John addressed the soldiers who wanted to repent. Their case-specific advice included three things. Evidently soldiers in the first century were known to practice all three of these things. Much as today in some countries, soldiers are considered among some of the most corrupt in the society. First, they were told not to extort money. The old adage, "Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely," certainly applied to soldiers who were in a very powerful position. Along with position comes the responsibility to use that power fairly. So often in the church today, problems can be traced to those who use their position for personal advantage. Elders and preachers are particularly vulnerable to this abuse. Our temptation may not be to extort money, but it may be to manipulate opinion and

sway sentiment for our favor. John would call us specifically to repentance for such misconduct.

Second, soldiers were told not to accuse anyone falsely (Lk. 3:14). In the first century, this kind of false accusation could lead to an innocent person's execution. In fact, that is exactly what happened to Jesus. The trumped up charges of false accusers became the basis for accusing him of blasphemy and ultimately led to his crucifixion. Though a false accusation today might not result in someone's death, it certainly can lead to character assassination. John would call for swift repentance.

Third, soldiers were instructed to be content with their pay. Soldiers have always been on the low end of the pay scale, especially when you take into account the hazardous nature of their duty. John calls to repentance those malcontents who made life miserable for themselves and everyone around them by being unhappy with their pay. Oh how this applies to us today. It may be our salary or a myriad of other things that we allow to steal our contentment. John's instruction here underlines the importance of contentment later dealt with at length by Paul in Philippians 4. Much of today's unhappiness can be traced to a desire to have more, as if this will bring contentment. Wrong! Contentment begins in the heart with an attitude Paul captured when he said, "I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want" (Phil. 4:12). God's man or woman today who would call people to repentance must focus on this very important point.

Luke describes how the hearers were enthralled as they listened to John give his call to repentance. They even began to wonder if he might be the Christ. Surely no greater compliment could have been given to this "voice calling in the desert." The combination of his powerful message and powerful life certainly led to the thought that John might be the Christ. We need today to have a similar balance to work effectively in the cause of the kingdom. Some do a

great job of proclamation but a sorry job of demonstration. Others do well in demonstrating what Christianity is all about but fail at proclamation. We have a lot to learn from the model of ministry offered by John the Baptist.

In answer to the question of whether he might be the Christ, John responded in characteristic humility. He pointed out that the Christ was such a powerful personage that he would not even be worthy to untie the thongs of his sandals. Luke would later record the words of Jesus that among those born of women, none was greater than John (Lk. 7:28). If John felt so unworthy in the presence of the Son of God, where does that put us? We could learn a lot about humility from the Baptist. There is so much focus today on pride: "take pride in your work," "believe in who you are," and "the few, the proud, the Marines." Our message might have a greater ring of authenticity if we demonstrated the spirit of John, namely, humility.

John continued preaching to the crowd, though Luke does not record the specifics of the rest of his message. We do know that it involved exhortation and good news (Lk. 3:18). While John's message was challenging in its call to repentance, it was not a negative message. It was a message of hope. The message of a Savior is a message of good news. That is the essence of the Gospel. Wherever gloom and doom preachers find their message, they do not find it in John the Baptist or Jesus. May God grant us the courage to preach the good news today as John did in the desert. We might be surprised to find that people today may respond like they did in John's day-- with repentance.

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LUKE 4:1-14

G. SCOT CRENSHAW

INTRODUCTION

The triumph of Christ over the forces of evil is vividly illustrated in Luke's account of the temptation of Jesus (Lk. 4:1-14; Cf. Matt. 4:1-11; and Mk. 1:12-13). Certainly scores of insightful lessons can be gleaned from this episode by believers striving to overcome temptations in their own lives. While identification with a tempted Christ yields encouragement (Heb. 4:15), the uniqueness of Jesus' temptation is not to be overlooked—he is tempted as Messiah. (Geldenhuys, pp. 157-58). In the wilderness the devil strives "to frustrate the divine plan of salvation" (Fitzmyer, p. 514). The force of Satan's challenge is not whether Jesus is the Son of God, but what kind of Messiah he is to be. (Holst, p. 343).

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

The temptation periscope is closely linked to the baptism scene and in Luke's case to the genealogy. Having been declared the Son of God, now Jesus is treated as such (Fitzmyer, p. 506). When hunger and exhaustion reach their respective heights, the devil seeks to capitalize via temptation. Christ's presence in the wilderness, coupled with his responding citations from Deuteronomy, draw a

contrast to the experiences of Israel in the wilderness. Whereas, Israel failed the testing, Jesus is successful.

SYNOPTIC VARIATIONS AND LUCAN THEMES

Underscoring the variations between the temptation accounts of the synoptic writers may help identify certain themes Luke wishes to emphasize.¹ In keeping with the baptismal emphasis of the activity of the Holy Spirit in the life of Christ, Luke alone asserts that Jesus is "full of the Holy Spirit." Luke and Matthew mention that Jesus is "led by the Spirit," while Mark describes Jesus "being driven out of the Spirit."² Luke seems to underscore the Spirit as more of an internal force in the heart of Christ in this case.

Matthew and Luke, in contrast to Mark, detail three separate temptation scenes. While agreeing on the content of the scenes, they differ on the order. Both begin with Satan's tempting Jesus to transform stone into bread. The second and third scenes, however, are reversed. Matthew describes the scene at the Temple second and concludes with Jesus' temptation on the mountain. Luke, on the other hand, relates the temptations on the mountain second before concluding in Jerusalem. While the content is essentially the same, the change in order may be due to Luke's emphasis on Jerusalem and the Temple. In Luke the temple temptation has been assigned the climactic position. (Fitzmyer, p. 507; Hester, pp. 55-56). Swanston argues that the Lucan order is patterned after the experiences of Israel in the wilderness as referred to in Psalms 106:14-15; 19-20; 32-33. He also cites 1 Corinthians 10:6-9 in support of this view (Swanston, p. 71).

THE TEMPTATIONS

One Does Not Live By Bread Alone. Attacking Jesus at a perceived point of susceptibility, the devil tempted him basically to

put the material ahead of the spiritual by turning a stone into a loaf of bread (plural in Matthew). The Messiah is tempted to use his power for selfish reasons. The absence of onlookers suggests that the temptation is not one of pride, of impressing others. Citing Deuteronomy 8:3, Jesus responds, "One does not live by bread alone," the context of which is the wilderness experience of Israel. Despite God's providing manna and quail, the Jews murmured against Moses and Aaron. Their failure is contrasted with the success of Christ who overcame temptation through trust in God and obedience to him. His food is to do the will of his Father (Jn. 4:34).

Worship the Lord Your God and Serve Him Only. Next, Jesus is taken to a high place and offered authority over all the kingdoms on earth, provided that he worship the devil. Jesus again responds by quoting Deuteronomy 6:13, "Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him." The context again deals with Israel's wilderness experience, this time drawing from a command for Israel to avoid the attraction of Canaanite deities and to remain true to Jehovah. Again the failure of the Jews stands in stark contrast to the success of Jesus. Jesus refuses to worship any other God or to bypass the course set for him by God. Such power and authority does not belong to Satan to give to whom he chooses. Jesus avoids the temptation to seek any shortcuts regarding his mission.

Do Not Put the Lord Your God to the Test. The temptation of Jesus comes to a climax in Luke's account with the devil's taking him to Jerusalem to the pinnacle of the Temple.³ There Satan challenges him to throw himself down and presume upon God to save him, proof-testing Psalms 91:11-12 from the Septuagint (which was given a Messianic interpretation by the rabbis) with the exception of the words "on all your paths." Jesus responds by quoting Deuteronomy 6:16, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test," a passage originally referring to Israel's putting God to the test at Massah and Meribah. Jesus does not follow the failure of Israel; he refuses to put God to the test by creating a crisis and expecting his Father to come

to the rescue. Hence the command cited by Jesus is one he intends to obey, not one directed to the devil. Jesus obeys and trusts God completely; putting God to the test would undermine genuine trust.⁴

CONCLUSION

As stated above, the issue in the temptation is not whether Jesus is the Son of God; instead, the issue is what type of Messiah he would be. Jesus refuses to function as a Messiah based on a compromise with the devil. Jesus neither defends his Sonship nor argues with the assumptions of Satan in launching the temptations. Christ simply trusts and obeys the Father; he does not fulfill his messianic purpose without suffering. Satan departs, but continues to attack his efforts and those of his disciples (Cf. Lk. 22:31-32).

Regarding preaching and teaching, Luke's version of the temptation of Jesus can stand on its own. Preachers should avoid the homiletical tendency to synthesize the temptation scenes with the lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh, and the pride of life in 1 John 2:16 or with the original temptation of Genesis 3:6 (Hester, p.54; Fitzmyer, p. 512). The three point-sermon which highlights each scene as a lesson in overcoming temptation may detract from the story as a literary whole. While Christians can gain tremendous insight from this passage regarding handling temptation, the uniqueness of Jesus' being tempted as the Son of God is not to be overlooked. The manner in which Christ overcomes the devil, however, is relevant to all Christians--trust in God and obedience to him.

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ENDNOTES

1. One obvious difference in the respective accounts is the shorter version of Mark. Many agree that Matthew and Luke used Mark and a third source to construct their longer versions. Cf. Marshall, pp. 166-67.
2. General agreement exists that Luke and Matthew demonstrate an improvement in Greek style here. Cf. Stein, p. 53.
3. Though Luke has a specific part of the Temple in mind, one cannot be certain to which point he refers. For possibilities, see Marshall, pp. 172-73; Morris, pp. 103-4.

4. Luke's first century audience may have been familiar with a rabbinical tradition which held that the messiah would manifest himself on the roof of the Temple. No spectators were present to witness the event, however.

LUKE 4:14-30

ROSS COCHRAN

I remember watching football as a child with my Dad. We only had a black and white television then, and I always rooted for the team in the dark jerseys. They looked the most intimidating. Dad always pulled for the underdogs, the team not expected to win. Now as an adult, even with color television and bright-colored jerseys, I find myself on Dad's side, rooting for the underdogs. There is something about doing so that levels the game's playing field. Such contests are both more exciting and more significant if the participants start out as equals.

Luke begins his Gospel with many important preliminaries to the ministry of Jesus. From Luke 1:1 through Luke 4:13, he weaves an introduction to the ministry of Jesus that is unique among the Gospels. Some of what he includes in this section occurs only in this Gospel, such as the story of Jess in the Temple at age twelve. What is more noteworthy, however, is the content of what Luke records in his preliminary material. He prefaces his portrait of Jesus with a series of clues that the good news of God is universal in scope not limited to Jews alone. For example, when John the Baptist steps onto the first century stage, Luke interprets his ministry through the eyes of Isaiah who said, "A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, . . . And *all mankind* will see God's salvation'" (Lk. 3:4-6; Is.. 40:3-5; emphasis mine).

A second example that the Gentiles matter to God is found in Simeon's statement upon holding the eight-day-old Jesus. He exclaims, "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your Servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, . . . a light for revelation to the *Gentiles* ..." (Lk. 2:5-35; emphasis mine).

In Gospel studies, we can safely assume that theme, more than chronology, determines the arrangement of the gospel narratives. If one intends to tell about the infancy, boyhood, baptism, and temptation of Jesus, there is understandable logic in placing these things in front of a telling of the ministry of Jesus. Luke does so, but it is his choice of what to include next that is so intriguing. Not being bound by strict chronology, what incident in the life of Jesus best sets the stage for the portrait of him Luke wants his readers to see? Luke's choice is the rejection of Jesus by the members of the synagogue in his hometown, Nazareth.

THE REJECTION OF JESUS IN THE NAZARETH SYNAGOGUE

To understand this story, several observations are in order. First, while Matthew and Mark record a rejection of Jesus in Nazareth (see Matt. 13:53-58 and Mk. 6:1-6), Luke includes greater detail and is the only writer to include the mention of the stories involving Elijah and Elisha. Combined, their early placement in Luke's detailed re-telling of this narrative may imply that he has a particular interest in them. Second, when Jesus enters the synagogue in Nazareth, this clearly isn't the first thing which occurs in his ministry (see Lk. 4:15, 23). He has been traveling and teaching elsewhere prior to this event. This observation demonstrates that Luke's placement of this narrative is strategic. Third, Jesus chooses a particular passage in Isaiah before reading it. Our question is, why this selection? The Isaiah passage is clearly a messianic text (Lk. 4:17-19). What does Jesus have in mind by reading it? After reading this messianic passage, Jesus declares

that he is the fulfillment of it (Lk. 4:21). When the people hear Jesus declare himself to be the Messiah, their initial feelings towards him are extremely positive (Lk. 4:22). This mood will change quickly, however, just after Jesus makes his next move. Jesus acknowledges that no prophet is welcome in his hometown, and then he tells two quick, but meaning-laden stories (Lk. 4:24-27). The people immediately became red-faced with rage and quickly attempted, though unsuccessfully, to seize Jesus and throw him off a cliff (Lk. 4:28-30).

In response to these initial observations, our questions are two: (1) What was there about these stories that made the people so furious? and (2) What does Luke hope to accomplish by including this narrative in his Gospel and by placing it as the introductory incident to the ministry of Jesus?

The two stories Jesus tells initially appear to be about Elijah and Elisha, inarguably two of Israel's most beloved prophets. A closer look, however, reveals that the stories are not about these prophets but rather about the other people Jesus mentions in conjunction with them; namely, the widow of Zarephath and Naaman, the leper from Syria. In both stories the apparent point is that God is concerned for Gentiles. It is the emphasis by Jesus on the Gentiles in the work of God that turns the people's response to Jesus from favorable to unfavorable. This brings us to the second question. What does Luke hope to accomplish by including this narrative in his Gospel? In other words, how does this story function in Luke's Gospel?

THE FUNCTION OF THIS NARRATIVE IN LUKE'S GOSPEL

The early church encountered numerous questions as they struggled to understand all of the implications of their new identity as Christians. For the first Christians, the Jews, these struggles were tied inextricably to their identity as people who had been in a covenantal relationship with God for centuries. This long-standing relationship

naturally led them to think of themselves as holding a special place in the plan of Jehovah and, consequently, a place of preeminence in the world.

When Gentiles began to become Christians, they came into a movement dominated by Jews. Thus, in the early decades of Christianity, Gentile converts likely were viewed by Jewish Christians as second class Christians because the first Christians were Jews, who had been thinking for many centuries that they had a unique relationship with God. It takes little imagination to conclude that they had fallen into the trap of thinking too highly of themselves.

The question naturally arose within the minds of both Jews and Gentiles, "Now that we are Christians, what should be our self-understanding and our relationship with each other?" Many sections of Christian Scripture came to be written in an attempt to address this question. For example, the Jerusalem conference recorded in Acts 15 was convened to sort out what should be expected of these non-Jewish adherents to the Christian gospel. A second example is the vision of the sheet full of unclean animals presented to Peter, thus signaling him to welcome the Gentiles, beginning with Cornelius, into Christianity as brothers (Acts 10). A third example is the entire book of Galatians, where Paul argues that there is no Jew and Gentile distinctions in Christ (Galatians 3:27). It is reasonable to assume that Paul makes this assertion because such distinctions were being made within the Galatian churches.

Luke is a Gentile, writing to a Gentile (Theophilus). When he writes his Gospel, it is a captivating hypothesis that he is "leveling the playing field" between Jewish and Gentile Christians as they struggled to understand themselves and their relationship to each other in the early Church. Certainly that would explain many of the narratives of Luke which are unique to that Gospel. Over and over, Luke selects stories from the life of Jesus in which the underdogs of his day (Samaritans, women, widows, tax collectors, and "sinners")

are continually held up as heroic models of faith and discipleship. Among those stories, what better one to begin with than the one which recalls the day Jesus stood up in the Nazareth synagogue and proclaimed himself as Messiah. Then quickly Jesus defined the nature of his Messiahship as being for Gentiles too as he recalls two stories from Israel's past in which Gentiles were the objects of God's concern.

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addiction injection, there are innocent victims. The innocent spouse of a philandering mate can get the disease in the "security" of her home. Doctors and nurses may get AIDS from the infected blood of an AIDS patient while they are trying to minister to his sickness. Contact with the body fluids of a patient with AIDS should be avoided because the HIV virus is carried in body fluids.

Jesus touched the lepers, and we can touch the AIDS victim. I believe that God expects us to use good judgement and not touch the blood or a sore of anyone without gloves. Condoms can not be expected to protect against AIDS. To imply that the use of condoms can protect against AIDS is medical quackery. After all, doctors use much thicker or double gloves when touching a patient with the HIV virus.

Our attitude to the HIV infected and the AIDS patients should be COMPASSION! Even if they got the disease by sin, we should still be compassionate toward them. Is their sin any worse than backbiting, jealousy, and an unforgiving spirit?

"AS THE FATHER HAS SENT ME, I AM SENDING YOU"

(Jn. 20:21)

This commission by Jesus has the elements of what we call the great commission and is parallel to the accounts of the other gospels. First, the assertion in Matthew that "All authority has been given Me," (Matt. 28:15) is indicated by Jesus' showing His hands and side which proved He had the authority by conquering death! Second, by saying, "As the Father has sent me, am sending you," as recorded by John, Jesus is saying essentially what is recorded by Matthew, Mark and Luke: Make disciples, teach them, preach repentance and remission of sins, preach the gospel everywhere, and be my witnesses to the ends of the earth (Matt. 28:16). Third, there is the promise of the Holy Spirit in John 20:22, which is parallel to

Jesus' promise in Matthew, "Lo, I will be with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:16). He had promised earlier that the Holy Spirit would take His place.

Therefore John 20:21 is John's account of the "great commission" and it applies to us today. We are told in 1 Peter 2:21, "To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps." Walking in His steps means doing as He did, and Jesus' agenda was PREACH, TEACH, HEAL. Matthew 4:23: "Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people."

HEALING AS JESUS DID

Of course we cannot preach and teach as Jesus did, because we do NOT have miraculous knowledge; but in following His footsteps, we must preach and teach the best we can. The same applies to healing. While we lack miraculous powers, we can and must heal people if we walk in the steps of Christ's compassion!

"If you will, you can make me clean," the leper, fallen on his knees with his face to the ground, entreated Jesus. Let me assure you that today, many are entreating you and me. I returned from Nigeria, West Africa last month. Often people came to us, begging, "If you will, you can remove my cancer." "If you will, you can remove my goiter." "If you will, you can heal my child's malaria." We CAN do those things and we do! Sometimes they expect too much of us, and we cannot cure AIDS or far advanced cancer or many such things. Thousands of people have been helped at the Nigerian Christian Hospital because members of churches of Christ had the compassion to send out missionaries to do as Jesus did: preach, teach, and heal.

Christian healing is more than healing the body. When a doctor sets out to heal a disease, he fails if the patient dies or gets physically worse. But the health professional motivated by the

compassion of Christ succeeds in every case. Why? Because there is an attempt to heal the sin-sick soul as well as the body. If the patient's physical condition gets worse, and even if he dies, the Christian doctor has succeeded if the patient is brought to a saving knowledge of the Lord. Even if the patient rejects Jesus, at least the Christian health worker has taught God's word. After all, our Savior did not convert every one; but He tried, and if we try, we are more like Him.

"If you will, you can make me clean," is the entreaty of millions who live a life without hope. People are asking us to come and help them in Russia and Africa and everywhere. Like the leper, they are thinking mainly about relief from their PHYSICAL condition--poverty, hunger, illness. Jesus did help their physical problems and He helps us too, but Jesus gave them the big bonus of salvation from the second death and from hopelessness. In the same way, we answer the call for help, and while we are there, they ask the question, "WHY DID YOU HELP ME?" This opens the door for us to tell them about Jesus.

IF YOU WILL, you can do great things for Jesus.

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LUKE 6:37-42

JIM MCDONIEL

INTRODUCTION

On the day of judgment, Jesus will be our judge. Until that day, Jesus refuses to judge, according to John 3:17, and we must follow the example of Jesus. The message of my assigned text, Luke 6:37-42, is that the people of the Lord must refuse to be in the judging business.

DO NOT JUDGE

The word "judge" is used in the Bible most often to mean judge adversely or condemn. We can and must condemn the sinful activity which God condemns, but this passage is dealing with a basic approach to relationships and attitudes for life.

The six verses in the assigned text are related, and all speak of a Christ-like attitude. Jesus says, "Don't condemn. Forgive. Give. Be like your guide." Even the humorous verses 41-42 are designed to illustrate the folly of judging. I believe that all of these verses should be used in context, including verse 38.

In a class taught by Joe Glen, he suggests four reasons why people should not judge. He says, "We never know all the facts. Impartiality is almost impossible. No person is good enough to judge. Often, the issue is not any of our business."

WAYS PEOPLE JUDGE

The word "judge" can be understood to refer to impugning motives. Several commentaries begin explaining judging by talking about attempts to read hearts, especially when a less-than-noble motive is assigned by the one judging.

H. Leo Boles says that these verses deal with harsh, censorious judgment. He calls for Christians not to judge hastily, to use no unkind words, and to make sure our judgments are not based on jealousy and suspicion.

E. A. Elam sees judging as showing the opposite of mercy. Bro. Boles, Charles Erdman, and other commentators point to 1 Corinthians 13, especially the phrase, "...thinks no evil..." *Spence and Excell's Pulpit Commentary* points to haughty attitudes of many leaders of that day, suggesting that these attitudes are condemned, and that they are the opposite of love.

WE GET WHAT WE GIVE

There is an eternal principle in sowing and reaping. The principle is seen in judging, condemning, and giving. The giving under consideration, according to the context, is the kindness with which we should view others. Give mercy, not judgment.

Luke 6:38 says that the retribution will come from other people. The passage is not teaching primarily about the day of judgment and God's reaction to human judging as much as it is referring to the basic response of others. Humans tend to treat a person the way he treats them. When we are merciful to others, they will be generous with us.

JESUS IS THE EXAMPLE

Jesus taught against judging, and he demonstrated the difficult art of showing mercy instead of judging. Jesus' treatment of the woman in John 8 may be the best example of not judging. Much of his teaching and his life show the way to treat others.

WHAT THE PASSAGE DOES NOT TEACH

Jesus was not saying that we can not form an opinion on issues. In fact, we are obligated to be against some teachings.

This text must not be used to say that we should never withdraw fellowship. The Bible never contradicts itself. Since the Bible commands withdrawal in some instances, the judging condemned in this text must be different. John 7:24 will be helpful in this distinction.

Jesus is not telling us in Luke 6 that we cannot choose one group of people over another. This passage does not say that a preacher cannot move. It does say that he must watch carefully what he says about the brethren he leaves.

CONCLUSION

Attitude is the issue under consideration in Luke 6:37-42. The question is, "How do we look at others?" The attitude of the Christian must be love, not judgment.

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LUKE 9:37-43

KURT PICKER

As Americans, we have inherited a rugged individualism that disdains help from almost anyone. There is a certain pride that comes from making it on our own and conversely an undeniable dishonor for those who can't. But even more disgraceful are those who resort to begging!

How desperate would things have to get before we would chokingly swallow our pride and -- beg? If we were starving? If we or our family were in desperate need of medical help? If someone were about to harm us or a loved one? What would it take to beg? The answer is the same for us all -- LIFE! None of us would be too proud to beg for our lives or the life of one we love!

In Luke 9:37-43 we are confronted with some beggars. They all have this in common: they're begging for life!

THE BEGGING CROWD--THE FACTS OF LIFE

After the electrifying experience of the transfiguration, Luke tells us, "The next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met him" (Lk. 9:37). Mark's gospel account tells us more about this unlikely group of beggars, "When the crowd saw Jesus they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet Him" (Mk. 9:15). These people were Jews, and certainly the chosen people of God were too proud to beg! Those in the crowd would argue that they only ran to greet Jesus, not to beg from Him.

While traveling in the Holy Lands, my wife and I were initially impressed with the children who were so friendly and would run up to us and greet us so openly on the street. Impressed, that is, until we realized the friendly greeting was only another opportunity to beg for candy, gum, or money. Their begging had to do with the simple facts of life. We had something they wanted, and the only way they knew to get it was to beg politely.

That motive was subtly behind the friendly greeting the crowd gave Jesus. The unfortunate facts of life are sometimes hard to tolerate. Barely eking out a living, trying to provide for the basic necessities, and maybe even getting ahead in life are all a part of the daily grind we would like to beg out of!

Mark says the crowd was "overwhelmed with wonder." Of course they were! Earlier in Luke 9, this same crowd had been given a miraculous "free lunch." The hard facts of life tell us there is no such thing. We can't fault the Jews for not being too proud to beg for this easier life. We're right there with them!

THE BEGGING FATHER--THE FEARS OF LIFE

The next beggar we meet is a frightened father: A man in the crowd called out, "Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child. A spirit seizes him and he suddenly screams; it throws him into convulsions so that he foams at the mouth. It scarcely ever leaves him and is destroying him" (Lk. 9:38-39).

We can excuse begging if it is on behalf of our children. There just aren't many things loving parents won't do for their children. A walk through Texas Children's Hospital in Houston would reveal some unashamed beggars who are gripped by the fears of life. It's written all over the faces of anxious parents!

"But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us" (Mk. 9:22b). Nothing else seems to matter. The fears of life push us well beyond embarrassment, and pride isn't even an issue anymore.

THE BEGGING SON--THE FORCES OF LIFE

Mark gives the painful details regarding the third beggar we encounter. The father tells Jesus that the evil spirit has *often* tried to kill his son by throwing him in the fire and the water. How often is "*often*"? Four, eight, maybe a dozen or more times the father has had to rescue his son from the evil forces of life. Who had the most scares? Who was more haggard and worn? Can you imagine the begging eyes of the son as he looked anxiously at Jesus?

As long as we feel that we are in control of our lives, we don't mind touting our independence. When turbulent forces beyond our power slam us to the ground, we frantically begin looking for help. In those helpless moments none of us is too proud to beg!

THE BEGGING DISCIPLES--THE FAILURES OF LIFE

The disciples had been on a roll! Jesus had sent them out with His miraculous power. How thrilling it must have been to have experienced the success that came with such power. Jesus told them to, "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons" (Matt. 10:8). Wow! Talk about an ego trip!

But then failure brutally and embarrassingly interrupts their blinding success. How many times had they commanded the demon to come out and still no miracle? It seems they conveniently forgot to tell Jesus of this failure. The desperate father exposed them, "I begged your disciples to drive it out, but they could not" (Lk. 9:40). They had been reduced to beggars, hungry for more power and success.

The sweet taste of success *is* addicting. We like it and we crave more! When failure comes and egos have been severely wounded, we look to the real source of any success; and with swallowed pride, we beg for more. The words of Jesus echo

hauntingly over the centuries, "O unbelieving and perverse generation, how long shall I stay with you and put up with you?" (Lk. 9:41).

THE BEGGING GIVER--THE FAITHFULNESS OF LIFE

Finally, we are confronted with a strangely different kind of beggar. Instead of begging to have, he begs to give! Instead of begging for life, he begs to give life. What a contrast! He is the only one who understands life because He is *the Life*! He teaches that real happiness comes from sacrifice, not attainment. So He begs to give rest to those running from the facts of life. He begs to give security to those intimidated by the fears of life. He begs to give endurance over the forces of life. And He begs to give real success in the face of all the failures of life. In life, He is the only faithful one to be found.

Jesus said, "Everything is possible for him who believes." Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!" When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the evil spirit. "You deaf and mute spirit," he said, "I command you, come out of him and never enter him again." The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out (Mk. 9:23b-26a).

What is the end to the story of beggars? "And they were all amazed at the greatness of God" (Lk. 9:43).

Surely none of us is too proud to beg, "Lord help my unbelief!"

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TAKE NEITHER PURSE, BAG NOR SANDALS

LUKE 10: 1-24

PHIL SANDERS

The Twelve had returned from their limited commission in Galilee (Matt.10; Lk. 9:1-11). Now Jesus was sending out seventy others to the people of Judea. Some similarities between the two efforts should be expected since both were doing the same basic work. While we do not know the identity of the seventy, we do know that they are trusted disciples. There was a price to pay to serve Jesus, and the Lord wanted them to come into their work with eyes open (Lk. 9:57-62).

Only Luke records this mission to Judea. Why Jesus chose seventy men is not known. Some suggest that this was in accordance with the seventy nations of Genesis 10 or the seventy who serve in the Sanhedrin, but these suggestions are by no means certain. Some of the earliest manuscripts read seventy-two rather than seventy. Bruce Metzger notes that the textual evidence is almost evenly divided (*A Textual Commentary of the Greek New Testament*, p. 150). Whether He sent seventy or seventy-two, Jesus loved the people of Judah and wanted their names written in heaven.

Explanation (1-12): Their calling was a dignified one. These seventy men are not the twelve, nor are they called "apostles," but they were still sent with a message (*ἀποστελλω*) to represent the Lord. They were therefore truly ambassadors of the King. As ambassadors their responsibility was to deliver not their own, but His message. Not only were they sent by Him, they were sent before Him to prepare the way for His coming. Two by two they were going

ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come.

Their calling was also a difficult calling (Lk. 10:2). Harvesting is hard work, even when there are many people helping you, but these men were sent over a vast field with very few workers to help them reap a great harvest. Instead of praying for an easier job, they were to pray for more laborers to work with them. Today we ought to pray the same prayer. The church does not need spectators; it needs laborers! Far too many Christians are praying for somebody else to do a job that they themselves are unwilling to do.

Their calling was a dangerous one (Lk. 10:3). They were to go their way as "lambs in the midst of wolves." They would learn to rely on the Lord to guard and keep them while they were in the midst of their enemies. Anyone who takes faith in Christ seriously and preaches the gospel will face persecution (2 Tim. 3:12). Nearly all the apostles, according to tradition, died a violent death for their faith. At a later time they endured warnings (Acts 4:18) and beatings (Acts 5:40). Preachers of the gospel must make sacrifices. There is a price for proclaiming righteousness, justice, and the age to come.

Satan is now and has always been our enemy (1 Pet. 5:8). We need to be aware of the devil's schemes, because we struggle against the "rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Eph. 6:12). We must be reminded that "everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed" (Jn. 3:20). This hatred is not a snobbish ignoring of the light but an aggressive, violent abhorrence.

As heirs of a religiously tolerant society content with pluralism, we are never quite prepared for the anger expressed towards our unbending convictions. The world is indeed worldly, and evil people will always oppose Christian morality and absolute truth. They want room in the kingdom of God to continue in their moral and doctrinal sins. There isn't any. Jesus demands repentance or else (Lk.

13:3, 5). We should not be surprised then at the painful trial we may suffer, as though some strange thing were happening to us (1 Pet. 4:12).

Their calling demanded discipline (Lk. 10:4-8). There was an urgency about their commission to take the message of the Messiah who was coming to their cities. Nothing was to encumber or detain them. Jesus did not want them to be overburdened with extra supplies or to be delayed on the road by elaborate, long-winded Eastern greetings. He was encouraging them to be discourteous. In the East salutations along the road are of extremely long duration. They had to hurry to the places where they had been sent and had to see that nothing hindered the faithful and immediate accomplishment of their task. They had to trust God to provide homes and food for them, and they were not to be embarrassed to accept hospitality. After all, they were laboring for the Lord and bringing blessing into the home. The "laborer is worthy of his hire" (Lk. 10:7; cf. 1 Cor. 9:14; 1 Tim. 5:18).

Like the twelve they were limited in what they could take with them. They were told not to carry a purse (a moneybag); a bag (a knapsack or bag such as a traveler would use for carrying food or clothes); or sandals. Certainly they were expected to wear sandals. They were not to carry an extra pair. This parallels the instruction to the twelve in Luke 9:3 concerning an extra tunic. The instruction is intended to strip Jesus' representatives of the things on which they might normally depend. Only when we realize we are defenseless are we likely to depend truly on God.

Denunciation (13-16): We don't expect harsh language from the Prince of Peace, but Jesus singled out and pronounced a "woe" against three cities: Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. Jesus had already announced that it would "be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town" which does not welcome the disciples (10:11, 12). One can hardly imagine anything worse than the "burning sulfur" which rained down on Sodom (Gen. 19:24).

Abraham saw dense smoke rise from the land, like smoke from a furnace. Sodom's refusal to repent brought a disastrous end. Any city that was unwilling to accept the "peace" Christ's messengers were commissioned to spread abroad would find themselves condemned for rejecting God Himself.

These Galilean inhabitants of Chorazin (located just two miles north of Capernaum, and Bethsaida, found about five miles east of Capernaum) had already shown that they rejected Jesus, the Messiah of God, even though they had plenty of opportunity to believe in Him. Indeed, Chorazin and Bethsaida will have a harder time "at the judgment" than the pagan cities of Tyre and Sidon. Tyre and Sidon had already been judged by God (Ez. 26-28; Is. 23) for their sins; but the pagans "would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes" had they seen the miracles Chorazin and Bethsaida had witnessed. Greater opportunity brings greater responsibility, and rejection in spite of greater opportunity leads to greater condemnation. These two cities can expect from God the same intolerable spirit that they gave to God. When men reject God, they can expect to be rejected.

Capernaum would not be lifted up to the skies; no, "you will go down to the depths" (Lk. 10:15). Capernaum was the home of Andrew, Peter, and Philip (Jn. 1:44; 12:21); it was near the place where Jesus miraculously fed the five thousand (Lk. 9:10); and it was the village where Jesus healed a blind man (Mk. 8:22-26). Capernaum had been given abundant opportunity to recognize Jesus as the Messiah (Matt. 4:18-22; 9:1; Jn. 2:12) but now can only expect a fate worse than Sodom, Tyre, or Sidon. Capernaum was destroyed in the Roman-Jewish War (A.D. 66-70), and this may be a partial fulfillment of the prophecy that Capernaum was to be "brought down to Hades" (Matt. 11:23). Jesus said that if the mighty works had been done in Sodom, then Sodom would have remained until this day. Capernaum had rejected the miraculous proofs and did not deserve to

remain as a town. In spite of this, the real punishment for rejecting Jesus will come on the day of judgment.

Whether men repent matters to God. God expected compliance with His will from those who were His chosen people. Jesus cried, "He who listens to you, listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me" (10:16). All sin is sin against God; sin is personally offensive to God. Sin is not merely the breaking of a law but the breaking of His law. Impenitent men who reject the gospel of love and the desire of God for their salvation are left to perish by their own choosing. Jesus' familiar ultimatum that we repent or perish would literally come to pass on these impenitent villages.

To reject God's messenger is to reject God Himself. Christ's disciples go as representatives of Christ Himself, just as Christ goes as a representative of the Father. The rejection of Christ's disciples is ultimately the rejection of God Himself. After all, they had gone out in His name and by His authority.

Jesus did not change His message to win the favor of the people. Jesus explained, "For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it. I know that His command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say" (Jn. 12:49, 50). This is in contrast to those who are tempted to dilute the message or compromise. When the people rejected Him, He did not smooth it over or apologize. His message was not to be edited or adjusted to fit popular opinion. Jesus was interested in being doctrinally correct, not politically correct. Those who marry the spirit of an age soon find themselves widows. In Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, Jesus lost the opinion polls; but He was never regulated by the polls.

Occasionally someone says that "people are more important than rules." Apparently Jesus did not share that view. The miraculous proofs of His Messiahship demanded acceptance. He required people to buy the truth and did not change His rules for anyone.

When they rejected Him, they were rejected. God is no respecter of persons but has one gospel for all (Acts 10:34, 35).

While it is true that rules were made for people and not people for rules, mankind could not exist peaceably without rules. The days of the judges of Israel were chaotic when every man did what was right in his own eyes (Judges 17:6; 21:25). Rules, laws, or commandments are a kindness. They bring order and peace to an otherwise insane society. There is no proof that lawlessness ever improved any culture or people. Israel was a favored nation in the eyes of others because it had a God whose laws were wise and righteous (Deut. 4:5-8). The laws God gave were for the good of the people (Deut. 6:24; 10:13). Those who kept God's laws would live long in the land and prosper (Deut. 6:1-3). Laws are important because people are important. God's laws are a means by which He loves people; keeping His commandments are the means by which we show our love for Him (Jn. 14:15).

Jubilation (17-24): There is a threefold joy: the joy of service (17-19), the joy of salvation (20), and the joy of knowing the gospel about Jesus (21-24).

We can well understand the joy of the seventy as they returned to report their victories to Jesus. He had given them power and authority to preach the Word, to heal, to trample on snakes and scorpions, and to cast out demons. They could "overcome all the power of the enemy"; and "nothing" would harm them (Lk. 10:19). The seventy joyfully reported great success, "Even the demons submitted to us in your name."

Jesus regarded their successes as victories in the war against Satan. The seventy had seen their individual victories from city to city, but Jesus saw "Satan fall like lightning from heaven" (10:18). Satan was not strong enough to defeat the empowered disciples called to do God's work. "The prince of this world" is to be driven out (Jn. 12:31); Jesus had come to "destroy the devil's work" (1 Jn. 3:8). Satan will be judged finally when he is thrown into the "lake of

burning sulfur," where he "will be tormented day and night forever and ever" (Rev. 20:10).

Paul instructs us to "be strong in the Lord, and in His mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes" (Eph. 6:10, 11). Yet he also assures us that after we "have done everything," we are able "to stand," i.e., to be the winner in a fight to the death (6:13). As believers we are weak in ourselves; we must find our strength in the Lord and in His might. The seventy were victors because God had empowered them.

Each victory is important to the Lord, even if we consider the matter insignificant. The winning of any soul is important to the Lord. The choices men make to do right and to cease evil always receives the attention of God. Jesus said, "There is more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent" (Lk. 15:7). Our Father is "not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9). God further takes notice of the temptation of His children and their response to that temptation. He is willing to regulate the amount of temptation we receive and to provide a way of escape so we can endure when the temptation might overcome us (1 Cor. 10:13). God is intently aware of and involved in our battles with Satan. He rejoices in our victories!

The most important victory is our salvation. Jesus told his disciples, "Do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven" (Lk. 10:20). More important than the miraculous power over demons was the record in heaven that God approved of them. This statement by the Lord must have been reassuring to these messengers of the Kingdom. It is because we have been cleansed by the blood of Christ and wear white garments that our names are written there (Rev. 3:5). "If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:15).

There are but two ways and two destinies (Matt. 7:13, 14). While God rejoices at the sinner who repents, He never takes pleasure in the loss of any soul (Jer. 18:32). God could never rejoice that any sinner was blinded to the truth. Paul argues, "This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:3, 4). Considering that our eternal destiny is at stake, we know no victory can compare with the salvation of our souls. At the same time, no loss can equal the loss of our souls. The urgency of any soul's salvation must never be minimized.

Jesus praised God for the understanding of that truth given to little children. Jesus at the time the disciples returned was full of joy through the Holy Spirit (Lk. 10:21). He praised the Father, Lord of heaven and earth, "because You have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure." Those who would know the Father are the ones to whom "the Son wills to reveal Him" (10:22).

The Father hid "these things" from the wise and intelligent. When the Twelve and the seventy were preaching, they did not see the wise and learned people humbling themselves to receive God's truth and grace, but they did see the common people believing the Word and obeying (Lk. 7:29-30; cf. 1 Cor. 1:26-29). The religious leaders of Israel should have understood God's purpose and plan, but by their rejection of God's Son and His kingdom they were proved otherwise. This was due not to God's failure to reveal but was the inevitable result of the leader's failure to apprehend. If God had "hidden" these truths, it was by His giving a revelation which they rejected and refused to follow. Isaiah's prophecy in 6:9, 10 proved to be true. They heard but did not understand; they saw but did not perceive, because the "heart of this people has become dull, and with their ears they scarcely hear, and they have closed their eyes; lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart and turn again, and I should heal them." Theirs was

a problem of heart and attitude; they had no room for the Lord. Jesus' first beatitude concerning the "poor in spirit" had proven true; they were to receive the kingdom of heaven. God has ordained that sinners must humble themselves before they can be lifted up (Jas. 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:6). This is why the publican, not the Pharisee, went home justified (Lk. 18:9-14).

God had chosen to reveal his will to "little children," who were willing and eager to receive it. The simple, common people who professed no wisdom of God's ways, were open to Jesus and His gospel of the Kingdom. It was God's gracious will that they know the truth. People who had been overburdened by the traditions of the "wise and intelligent" (Matt. 23:13-28) were now finding an opportunity to enter into the genuine Kingdom of the Messiah.

Jesus revealed the blessing of understanding the gospel. To His disciples He privately turned and said, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. For I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it" (Lk. 10:24). The disciples were indeed privileged to know the Messiah about whom the prophets in all the Scriptures had spoken. One can only imagine the yearning in the hearts of Abraham, Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, or Daniel to know who the coming King and Prophet was. Peter said, "It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves in these things but you in these things which now have been announced to you. . . ." (1 Pet. 1:10-12). How blessed we are today to understand the suffering of Christ for our sins and His resurrection for our justification.

CONCLUSION

Jesus loved the people of Judah; He sent seventy disciples throughout the cities of Judea with a message of love, of repentance, and of hope. Jesus took the initiative to reach out to His own people, offering them the opportunity to have their names written in heaven.

He endowed the seventy with power to overcome Satan, and the people were blessed. The demons were cast out, the sick were healed, and the common people heard the gospel.

Today we have an abundant opportunity to bless the lives of people with the gospel of Jesus Christ. We have a more complete gospel than the seventy. The power of Jesus to free us from sin and guilt by His blood is a life-giving message. The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is filled with hope. The love of the cross makes a monumental difference in every person it touches. Let us renew in our hearts the urgency of taking this eternal message to every corner of our world.

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LUKE 10: 38 - 42**RON BONTRAGER**

Only Luke records this particular story of Mary and Martha. How fortunate we are that he did.

LISTENING TO JESUS: A BETTER CHOICE

Martha had opened her home to Jesus. While she cooked in one room, Jesus was giving the main course in another. Mary was eating it up, while Martha was heating up. Jesus said, "Mary has chosen the good part" (Lk. 10:42). Martha was doing well, but she could have done better.

Serving the needs of others is always commendable. Jesus was not critical of this, for He "did not come to be served, but to serve" (Mk. 10:45). There is no better example of service than His. Martha was distracted, having her priorities mixed up. Jesus said, "Martha, dear Martha, you're fussing far too much and getting yourself worked up over nothing" (Lk. 10:41) (Peterson, p. 146).

What Martha needed most, what Mary understood well, was to listen to her guest as He taught. "Attention to the word of God supplies an integrating center and makes possible a singleness of vision" (Nolland, p. 605).

It is rare when such a choice between serving and listening has to be made. The greater in importance of the two, though, is listening

to Jesus. As Jesus gently rebuked Martha, He was in essence saying, "Don't let ordinary dinners spoil your appetite for the real dinner" (Ellis, p. 162). The Luke 10:42 periscope is "another of the precious jewels which only Luke has preserved for us" (Geldenhuys, p. 315). We admire its brilliance, but like all of Scripture, it is more than just beauty to be observed. This story shows further footsteps of Jesus that we are to follow.

In keeping with one of the many themes of Luke, Jesus at home with Mary and Martha is one more scene in which we see people who were touched by the Master.

WOMEN, TOUCHED BY THE MASTER

No one was exempt; He came for all, He loved all, and He reached out to all . . . much to the surprise and disgust of religious leaders. The Master was not ashamed to touch anyone who was sick, sinful, demon-possessed, or grieving. We might call them the outcasts of society. Women were included in that group. (For a detailed study of the treatment of women in society, see Kittel, pp. 776-789). But that low societal estimation of women didn't keep Jesus away from Martha's home.

While there, Mary is not in the kitchen, but at the feet of Jesus. And He will not send her away. Her decision to listen to Him is the better choice. Jesus' words to Martha serve to vindicate Mary's exceptional presence in space not expected of her; the story consciously upsets the native perception of how things ought to be" (Neyrey, p. 62).

It is possible that Martha was angry at her sister for two reasons: because she was not helping and because she had "crossed the line" of a cultural norm. Although Judaism did not forbid a rabbi to teach a woman, it was very unusual for a rabbi to lower himself to this. In the social system of the time women were a "rejected group" (Ellis, p. 162). Still, Jesus came to teach. "Luke emphasizes

again and again that the message of Jesus . . . consistently reached peasants and the rural precincts (Neyrey, p. 170).

Women, too, were touched by the Master. As we see Jesus at home with Mary and Martha, we are once again reminded that He came to seek and to save the lost. In our efforts to imitate Him and His work, we must be willing to lower ourselves to any outcast of society so that they too might be able to listen to the words of the Lord.

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LUKE 4:11

DOUG LAWYER

Being forgiven and forgiving others is a universal need. Everyone who has reached accountability stands in the awesome predicament of condemnation without forgiveness (Matt. 6:14-15; 18:35; Rom. 3:23; 1 Pet. 2:25).

From Luke's gospel comes the center of the cross's eternal grace, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Lk. 23:34).

Our Savior did not wait until Calvary to find the strength to face it. His total life was preparatory to this event. When I lost my four-year-old son to leukemia, I was able to deal with the tragedy because of my previous experience with Jesus.

Those forgiving words of Jesus from the cross permeated His life (Lk. 11:4; Jn. 8:11). It was part of His universal pronouncement in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." We are not saved from past or current sins unless we practice forgiving forever and forever forgiving.

Dianne Hale in the May, 1995, issue of *The Reader's Digest* states, "'I forgive you' could be the most powerful thing you'll ever do." You see, the term "forgiveness" has been described as the most beautiful word in the world, in any language. Love is the greatest of Christian elements, but forgiveness is love in action.

Not only is forgiveness the most tender and beautiful word in our language, but it is the most far-reaching in its consequences. For it involves the destiny of the soul.

From the mouths of youngsters come words from which we learn. Preacher friend, Brad Carman, told about his four-year-old daughter, Dani Gail, who was playing with some of her friends. One little boy had a skateboard that she seemed to think she had a right to possess. So, right in the middle of one of his trick maneuvers, Dani kicked the skateboard right out from under him causing the young fellow to go sprawling on the driveway. Dani knew, having done similar things before, that she was in trouble. Seeking to avert the ensuing discipline, she said, "Daddy, I pushed him, but I already told him that I forgive him."

However, putting it more pungently, a small boy in praying said, "...and forgive us our debts as we forgive those who are dead against us."

We remember what Mark Twain said: "Forgiveness is the fragrance the violet sheds on the heel that has crushed it."

Laurence Sterne succinctly wrote, "It is true that only the brave know how to forgive; it is the most refined and generous pitch of virtue that human nature can arrive at. A coward never forgave; it is not in his nature."

The best way to get even is to forgive, or, as Henry Ward Beecher asserted, "They who say, 'I can forgive, but I cannot forget,' is only another way of saying, 'I cannot forgive.'" That is like the person who consents to forget and forgive but never drops the habit of referring to the matter now and then.

Clara Barton, founder of the American Red Cross, was reminded one day of a vicious deed that someone had done to her years before. But she acted as if she had never heard of the incident. "Don't you remember it?" her friend asked. "No," came Barton's reply. "I *distinctly* remember forgetting it."

Forgiving forever and forever forgiving is a Biblical concept that touches the entire human race. Citing the Great Commission in chapter 24, Luke is but echoing what had been prophesied (Is. 53:4-6; Ps. 103:10-12; 2 Cor. 5:21). "God made him who had no sin, to be

sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God."

From Joseph's example of forgiving his brothers in Genesis 45 to David's heart-tripping prayer of Psalms 51, we begin to grasp God's willingness to obliterate sin.

The two men cited above have their types fulfilled in our wonderful Savior. In Luke's narration of Christ's life, he delights in focusing on live examples. When this lady sinner learned of Jesus' presence at a Pharisee's house, she went directly to Him (Lk. 7:36-48). As she came up behind him with alabaster ointment, she dropped down and, with tears, using her hair as a rag, and kissing His dirty feet, she anointed His feet with the ointment. Following the Pharisee's indignant reaction, Christ presented a parable on forgiveness. He then turned to the sinful woman and said unto her, "Thy sins are forgiven" (Lk. 7:48).

Hallelujah! That's where we come in. Maybe we don't commit the same sins she did, but our shortcomings cast us in a similar category. We are sinners! (Jas. 2:10). "You see, God offers two answers to our deepest anxieties. He is a forgiving God who recreates our pasts by forgiving them. He is a promising god who controls our future by making and keeping promises. By forgiving us, He changes our past. By promising, He secures our future (Lewis B.Smedes, "Forgiveness: The Power To Change the Past," *Christianity*, Jan. 7, 1991: 22-26).

What the Master did for that female sinner He has done for us through the gospel. When Luke records, "That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Lk. 24:47), he continues that life-saving message in Acts 2. What 3,000 did then, we must do now. In fact, the only way we get into the *modus-operandi* of forgiveness is to be baptized into Christ (1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:26, 27).

TOUCHED BY THE MASTER

Then forgiveness follows in our daily lives (1 John 1:7). Our being constantly forgiven continues to be contingent upon our forgiving others.

A meditative stroll through the cemetery, as John Greenleaf Whittier states, helps one to forgive.

...I strolled among the green mounds
of the village burial place;

Where, pondering how all human love
and hate find one sad level...

Awed for myself, and pitying my race,
depart,

Our common sorrow, like a mighty wave,

Swept all my pride away, and, trembling, I forgave!

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THE YEAST OF THE PHARISEES

LUKE 12:1

HAROLD REDD

One day a Pharisee invited Jesus to have a meal with him. Jesus accepted the invitation, went into the house, and sat down at the table to eat. Much to the Pharisee's surprise, Jesus did not first wash His hands before the dinner. While the Pharisee marveled at Jesus' neglect, Jesus perceived his thoughts and proceeded to teach why the Pharisees themselves were more suspect than was His failure to wash. After six scathing "woes" and a heated question and answer session, thousands of people gathered and listened as Jesus told His disciples, *"Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy."* Modern listeners can learn from Jesus too, if they understand what He meant by that statement. The statement implies Jesus' understanding of yeast and His knowledge of the Pharisees.

The Pharisees' roots trace back to the Hasidim, a Jewish sect founded two hundred years before Christ, which advocated a Judaism free from Hellenistic and other outside influences. In the New Testament period, the Pharisees, who wielded great influence, claimed to know and follow carefully all of the Jewish laws and customs. In the gospels, they appear as the chief opponents of Jesus. Although they were certainly mistaken in their views of life and God, it may be unfair to condemn the Pharisees as deliberate hypocrites. One man wrote of them, "These mistaken men dreamed that they possessed a holiness which was never theirs; unconscious hypocrites they doubtless were without possibly even suspecting it themselves." However, Jesus still opposed their views and pronounced upon them

a succession of woes. In Matthew 23, a parallel text, Jesus charged His disciples not to imitate their hypocrisy; then He said of them, "You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape the damnation of hell" (Matt. 23:33).

What bothered Jesus so much about the Pharisees and their approach to religion? The woes indicate why Jesus viewed them as inconsistent hypocrites. Like cups washed clean on the outside but filthy on the inside, the Pharisees' concern with externals left a major gap between their profession and practice. They would strictly do an external command, like tithing of herbs. But their hearts were not filled with love for God or compassion for the poor. They rigorously studied the prophets but did not pay any more attention to them than their fathers who killed them. They would uphold the oral traditions of Judaism and despise the written commandments of God! Then in the shroud of long garments with expanded phylacteries they piously pressed their traditions and strict views upon others, causing a burden that they would not lighten with one of their fingers! So Jesus, the True Bread of Life from the God of Heaven, unleavened and sincere, perceived the doctrine and practices of the Pharisees as yeast that had grown old and sour. Jesus' simple description of their approach was *hypocrisy*.

What should modern disciples learn from the context and the specific warning of Jesus? They must learn precisely what the older disciples learned--not to be like them. The issues that modern Pharisees become so tenacious about will change periodically and pressures will increase and decrease accordingly, but followers of Christ should always hear Him saying, "*Don't be inconsistent hypocrites!*"

Disciples should also learn that faithfulness to God implies consistency and balance. Certainly God is concerned about externals. Jesus said of the Pharisee's tithes, "*these you should have practiced.*" However, the God who made the outside of the cup is precisely the one who made the inside. Consequently, the Pharisees who tithed

should not have neglected justice, mercy, and faith. The balanced approach calls us to the model of Jesus, the unleavened Bread of Life!

THE GOOD CONFESSION

LUKE 12:8-9

BILL FLATT

Jesus said,

... everyone who confesses Me before men, the Son of Man shall confess him also before the angels of God; but he who denies Me before men shall be denied before the angels of God (Lk. 12:8-9, NASV).

When Jesus said these words, the Jews had already put people to the test: Confess Jesus as the Christ and you will be put out of the synagogue (Jn. 9:22). Some Jewish leaders believed but would not confess him because of that threat (Jn 12:42-43). So, Jesus says, fair enough. Make your decision, and I will ratify it.

John tells us who Jesus is. He is the Word, He is God, the Lamb of God, the Son of God, the Christ (Messiah), Rabbi, and the Son of Man. Peter confessed him as the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matt. 16:13-18).

The good confession was a distinct dividing line between Christians and non-Christians for several hundred years.

Pliny, a subordinate Roman ruler, wrote during the early days of Christian persecution to Trajan (98-117 A.D.), the Emperor, that when people were brought before him accused of the crime of being a Christian that he asked them if they believed that Christ is the Son of God. If they answered yes, he had them scourged and warned them of the danger of persisting in that cause. He then repeated the question with similar results and warned them that they had but one more opportunity for their lives. He asked them the question the third

time, and if they answered affirmatively, he hurried them away to execution to make room for the next.

The confession of Polycarp in the second century is well known. Instead of denying Christ and going free, he replied, "Fourscore and six years have I been His servant, and He hath done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?" (*On the Martyrdom of S. Polycarp*, 112).

Paul said, "They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient, and worthless for any good deed" (Tit. 1:16).

John stated, "Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also" (1 Jn. 2:23). The Hebrew writer admonished, "Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful" (Heb. 10:23, NIV).

What say ye? Do you confess Christ?

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LUKE 12:22-31

ROY SMALLING

Luke 12:22-23 (NIV) "Then Jesus said to his disciples: 'Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes.'"

THE TENDENCY TO WORRY IS GREAT

In our society today we are continually bombarded by deadlines, schedules, and pressures from almost every area of life. This age has been described as "the age of anxiety." Few people are unaffected by our fast pace and this "go, go, go" mentality. People in the business world, students, housewives, ministers, etc. all feel the pressure of our society and are often confronted with feelings of apprehension, uncertainty, and helplessness.

We worry about a multiplicity of things. We worry about how to get money; and once we have it, we worry about how to keep it. We worry about what we have, and we worry about what we don't have. We worry about our bodies, our health, about life, and we worry about death.

A brief survey of the Bible indicates that anxiety can, at times, be the lot of God's children. Job was a man who was severely

afflicted. He was described by God as a "perfect and upright man" (Job 1:8). But in the midst of his affliction Job cried out, "What I feared has come upon me; what I dreaded has happened to me. I have no peace, no quietness; I have no rest, but only turmoil" (Job 3:25-26). Peter also became fearful and anxious as he began to sink when walking on the water. Matthew 14 records that he took his eyes off the Lord: "But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and beginning to sink, cried out, 'Lord save me.'" Paul writes in Philippians 2:28 that he is concerned for his friends and that he carries with him the pressure of anxiety for the churches. In Philippians 4:6-9 Christians are exhorted to be anxious for nothing and then given practical information on how to deal with anxiety.

One of the clearest teachings on anxiety is found in the Sermon on the Mount (Lk. 12:22-31 and Matt. 6:25-34). Here Jesus gives an in-depth teaching on anxiety and why believers should not be anxious. In these two sections of scripture Jesus gives several reasons why Christians are not to be anxious. For the sake of our study we will confine our examination to the passages found in the gospel of Luke.

CHRISTIANS SHOULD NOT BE ANXIOUS

The following arguments given by Jesus in Luke 12:22-31 focus in on the sovereign care of God in providing for the needs of the believer.

God Created Life - He Also Sustains It (vs. 22-23) "Then Jesus said to his disciples: 'Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes.'"

This verse argues that God would not have created life if He had not also intended to sustain life. God will provide for the needs such as food, drink, and clothing because he is responsible as the originator of this life.

Consider the Birds! (v. 24) The second argument is found in verse 24. Here the Lord asks his disciples to look at the birds of the air. This passage is no argument for slackness as the birds are hard workers, but they have their needs provided by God: "Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds!" The point? God will not nourish his birds and forget his children. God's children are far superior in His eyes.

Consider the Profit! (vs. 25-26) In verse 25 Jesus asks an important question. "Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?" On the contrary, anxiety and worry can actually change the body chemistry and weaken the immune system causing a person to be sick more often. Anxiety does not profit the worrier.

Consider the Lilies of the Field (vs. 27-28) In verses 27-28 Christ points the minds of the disciples to the surrounding fields:

"Consider how the lilies grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith!"

God cares for the lilies of the field. These lilies mentioned may be in reference to the purple anemones. Jesus may have been drawing a comparison because the robes of Solomon were believed to be purple. Jesus would have been using Solomon because he was one of the greatest leaders in the minds of the Jews. The point--if God cares for the basic needs of flowers, he will certainly provide for the basic needs of his children.

Consider the Gentiles (vs. 29-30) This argument is found in verses 29-30: "And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them."

Christ is here contrasting the Gentiles with his own disciples and arguing that his followers are not to behave like the pagans.

Pagans have more excuse for anxiety because they have no sovereign God. There ought to be a noticeable difference between the way pagans and Christians handle stress.

Consider Your Heavenly Father (v. 30) "...your Father knows that you need them." Here the Lord argues that one is not be anxious because he has a heavenly father who knows what he needs, even before you ask him.

IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT OUR PRIORITIES BE RIGHT

In Luke 12:31 Jesus says, "But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well." We are to live our lives a day at a time. As Christians we are not to borrow troubles from either yesterday or tomorrow. Let us remember that God knows our every need and that he is able to fulfill our needs: "And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19). The Psalmist writes, "no good thing will he withhold from those whose walk is blameless" (Ps. 84:11). The Lord did not say that the father would give us everything we want, but that he would provide us with what we need. As David says in Psalms 37:25-26: "I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread. They are always generous and lend freely; their children will be blessed."

If our minds are continually on the earthly things of this world and seeking after them becomes our main exercise, we can expect anxiety. And the more anxiety we face, the weaker our faith in the Father becomes.

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LUKE 12: 47-48

EDWIN J. MYERS

Luke 12:47-48: And that slave who knew his master's will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, shall receive many lashes, but the one who did not know [it] and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few. And from everyone who has been given much shall much be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more. (NASB)

The subject we will discuss today has been the subject of much informal debate and provocative discussion in Bible study groups, Sunday school classes, and Question-Answer sessions in local congregations. Nothing has triggered the discussion any more than the passage under consideration, with the possible exception of Jesus' words in Matthew 11:21-24 regarding Chroazin and Bethsaida.

When a person thinks about the idea of eternal separation from God (that is, spending eternity in "hell"), it's an awful thought. The thought of hell is so unbearable for some that they deny its reality. Some call it an inhuman, barbarous, and cruel teaching. Nonetheless, scripture teaches that there is such punishment waiting for the sinner.

THE BIBLE TEACHES THERE IS A HELL

The word "Hell" comes from a description of the "valley of Hinnom" (Neh. 11:30) or the "valley of the sons of Hinnom" (2 Kgs. 23:10; 2 Chron. 28:3). It was the trash heap south and west of Jerusalem and consisted of dead carcasses, worms, and fire. It was the site of Baal worship where in the days of Ahaz and Manasseh the people murdered their children in sacrifice to the pagan deity, Molech. It was, therefore, a place continually avoided by the Jews.

The Bible uses several figures to describe the state of the unrighteous. It is called a place of "eternal fire" (Matt. 25:41); "outer darkness" where men will "weep and gnash their teeth" (Matt. 8:12). It is spoken of as eternal punishment (Matt. 25:46), "torment" (Rev. 14:10-11), "the bottomless pit" where one experiences "the second death" (Rev. 21:8). It is a condition where one experiences the wrath of God (Rom. 2:5), and eternal destruction and exclusion from the face of the Lord (2 Thess. 1:9).

We could pile passages upon passages which describe the reality of a punishment that awaits the unrighteous, and we would see a wide variety of images regarding its horror. (eg. Matt. 22:13; Mk. 9:44; Rev. 9:2; Lk. 3:17; Matt. 13:42; Jude 13; 2 Pet. 2:4; Rev. 14:10-11.) As a place, hell is sometimes literally designated by "hades" and sometimes by "gehenna." As a condition of suffering, it is literally designated by the description "wrath of God" in Romans 2:5, and "second death" in Revelation 21:8.

It is also interesting to notice what Jesus said about the place of punishment in Luke 16 where He told of the rich man and Lazarus. (I personally wouldn't spend a lot of time arguing whether it is a parable or not because the truth it teaches is the same, regardless of the position one takes.) In this account we learn that it is a place of torment where one cries for mercy; where one thirsts; and where there is memory; but there is a gulf that cannot be crossed to return to this life.

A good summary of it is given by A. H. Strong: "Summing up all, we may say that it is the loss of all good, whether physical or spiritual, and the misery of an evil conscience banished from God and from the society of the holy, and dwelling under God's positive curse forever" (p. 1034).

One basic characteristic of hell in contrast to heaven is that it is a place where one will experience the total absence of God. That is a condition hard for us to conceive because all humanity experiences benefits of God's presence at this time by virtue of His benevolent nature. We need to remember that hell was originally created for the Devil and his angels (Matt. 25:41). It was not God's intention that we who are created in His image should spend eternity in such company.

THE PUNISHMENT IN HELL

The text we are discussing follows two parables where the Lord is speaking of faithful and unfaithful servants, (cf. Lk. 12:35-46. In these parables Jesus is teaching the necessity of watchfulness. He speaks of those who are wise and faithfully fulfill their responsibilities and of those who foolishly exploit their assigned responsibilities with misconduct and malpractice.

The parable ends with verse 46; and following that, two additional conclusions or applications are made. Luke 12:46-47a contrast two servants who did not fulfill their master's will. One of them knew what the master wanted but deliberately did not do it (v. 47). The other one did not know what the master wanted and did not do it (v. 48a). Perhaps he was a lower servant who had received no explicit orders; we do not know for certain. However, both deserved and received punishment.

The text specifically states that the one who deliberately refused to do what the master asked received a severe beating (v. 47).

The other one, who because of ignorance failed to do what the master asked, received a light beating (v. 48a).

The conclusion from Jesus' words here is inescapable. The principle taught appears clear: the greater the knowledge, the greater is our responsibility; and the greater our responsibility, the greater will be our punishment if we fail in it. All sin is evil and sufficient to condemn one to hell, but there are some conditions that make one deserving greater punishment. This principle is recognized and followed even in this life. There are some crimes which result from greater depravity than others and are deserving of greater punishment.

Our Lord recognized this principle when He spoke of the cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida (Matt. 11:21-24). In the judgement it will be "more tolerable" for the cities of Tyre and Sidon than with the cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida because they had rejected their greater opportunities.

Our text clearly teaches that punishment will be given in proportion to the guilt which men possess, and their guilt will be determined by the amount of opportunity they had. It may be that the different degrees of punishment are not so much a matter of objective circumstances as they are of subjective awareness of the pain of separation from God. (That might be a parallel to the concept many have of varying degrees of reward in heaven.) In hell God confronts sinful man with the consequences of the character he fashioned for himself while he lived. The misery of hell will be compounded by having to live with one's wicked self eternally. That misery will be in proportion to his awareness of precisely what he was doing when he chose to do evil.

CONCLUSION

In this passage our Lord teaches that there are different degrees of knowledge possessed by people; there are different degrees of preparation; there are variations in the amount of service given;

and these differences will be a determining factor in the giving of punishment. In the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30 Jesus clearly teaches that *not as much was expected* of the one-talent man as the five-talent man. But he *was expected* to fulfill the measure of service of which he was capable. He was condemned, not because he did not do as much as the five-talent man, but because he did not measure up to the standard of the one talent of which he was capable. This is, perhaps, the "much sorer punishment" spoken of in Hebrews 10:29.

Listen again to the words of A.H. Strong:

By virtue of God's natural law, the sinner reaps as he has sown, and sooner or later is repaid by desertion or contempt, selfishness, hate, hurtfulness. Then the selfishness of one sinner is punished by the selfishness of another, the ambition of one by the ambition of another, the cruelty of one by the cruelty of another. The misery of the wicked hereafter will doubtless be due in part to the spirit of their companions. They dislike the good, whose presence and example is a continual reproof and reminder the height from which they have fallen, and they shut themselves out of their company. The Judgment will bring about a complete cessation of intercourse between the good and the bad (p. 1035).

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JESUS AND JERUSALEM

LUKE 13:31

BILL DILLON

One of the most emotionally charged scenes in the Bible occurs in Luke 13:34,35. A weeping Jesus beheld the wicked city of Jerusalem and cried, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto desolate...."

In addition, Luke 19:41 says, "and when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it." Jerusalem was the city of David, a city that Jesus loved. It was a love that brought tears to His eyes.

Why?

Why did Jesus weep over Jerusalem?

JESUS WEPT OVER JERUSALEM BECAUSE OF
FALSE RELIGION

The Pharisees and Sadducees (leading religious proponents in the city) with their legalism and liberalism were thorns in the flesh of the Son of God. Jesus referred to these religionists as "hypocrites" and "blind guides," among other things. They had lip-service but not life-service. To these religious people Jesus said, "Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Mk. 7:7).

Today, false religion is as plentiful as ever. Someone says, "I've got my religion." The reply is, "I don't!" God's religion is the

only one that counts. The words of men should never have precedence over the Word of God.

Paul's description of the Jews of his day is also fitting for the modern day religious world. Paul declared, "For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge" (Rom. 10:2).

How hopeless is the city that does not have true religion.

JESUS WEPT OVER JERUSALEM BECAUSE OF COLD RELIGION

The ancient Jews had ritual but no love, form but no substance, sound but no sense. The doctrine of the Jerusalem religionists was as straight as a gun-barrel but twice as empty!

The Jews had a lack of concern for the care of their parents (Mk.7:11), a lack of concern for other races (Lk.10:29-37), and a general lack of love for sinners. By contrast Luke says, "Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, 'This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them'" (Lk. 15:1-2).

In the past, the religious hierarchy of Jerusalem had rejected, ridiculed, abused, and persecuted the messengers of God. This perhaps was the most condemning sin of the city.

The people of Jerusalem had every opportunity imaginable, but they rejected Christ and all that he stood for. Their rejection was a deliberate decision. This brought tears to the Savior's eyes. Truly, Jesus said, "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (Jn. 12:48).

JESUS WEPT OVER JERUSALEM BECAUSE OF LOST SOULS

Jerusalem was a mighty metropolis of millions. When Jesus beheld the city, He did not see buildings and bank accounts. He did not see perfume and puffery, nor neckties and pretty dresses. He saw souls! He "was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd" (Matt. 9:36).

In Luke 12 the rich man saw bigger and better barns, but Jesus pointed out, "This night thy *soul* shall be required of thee" (emphasis mine). Jesus saw multitudes of men and women going headlong to hell!

The following, from an unknown source, demonstrates the Lord Jesus Christ's concern over the lost:

An ancient king, head of two millions of soldiers, halted his mighty host and sat down and wept -- it was because the thought occurred to him that in one hundred years all his mighty army would be dead. This was a very just reflection to be sure. But how sad that the king's vision extended no farther than the grave. He wept for his men's mortality as well as his own, but he had no tears to shed for the destiny of these two millions beyond the tomb.

From this view we turn to another king. This king draws near to Jerusalem and on the mountain overlooks the city and weeps. The tears of the Divine Redeemer fell, not because that in less than one hundred years Jerusalem would be desolate, without inhabitants and the thousands which thronged the streets should be dead -- but He looked beyond the tomb. His vision of men extended century upon century into infinity (the dwelling place of God) and Christ wept not just because a metropolis, but an entire nation, was rejecting

the truth sent from God. Thus, they were treasuring up for themselves the wrath of God upon their undying spirits. The reflections of one king were bounded by time; those of the other by eternity.

We need tears for the lost today. What do you see?

JESUS WEPT OVER JERUSALEM BECAUSE OF JUDGMENT TO COME

In A.D. 66 Titus, with the Roman army, besieged the city of Jerusalem for four years. The end came in A.D. 70 and thousands died of a growing food shortage and because fellow Jews would not let them escape. Josephus states, "...the upper rooms were full of women and children that were dying by famine, and the lanes of the city were full of dead bodies of the aged" (Book V, Chapter XII, p. 803). He also states, "... the famine confounded all natural passions; for those who were just going to die looked upon those that were gone to rest before them with dry eyes and open mouths. A deep silence also, and a kind of deadly night, had seized upon the city..." (Book V, Chapter XII, p. 804). In addition, some 97,000 Jews were sold into slavery.

Then in A.D. 135, after the Bar-Cochba revolt had been put down, Rome leveled the city, sowed it with salt, and would not allow the Jews to live in the territory. Truly an awful end came to the city of Jerusalem.

Jesus wept for the judgment of Jerusalem. Riding on the back of an ass-colt, he cried, "O Jerusalem, O Jerusalem, if only you had known ..." (Lk. 19:42).

Truly the Lord saw Jerusalem as lost and doomed!

Jesus wept over Jerusalem. Jesus still weeps. If we could see the world as Jesus saw Jerusalem, we would weep also.

Can you begin to imagine what being lost for all eternity means? If you are not a child of God, not safe in the Lamb of God, not washed in the blood of the Lamb of God; then I beg you to come today to a weeping Savior. Truly, Judgment draweth nigh.

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THE LAST WHO WILL BE FIRST AND THE FIRST WHO WILL BE LAST

LUKE 13: 30

STAN LITTLE

I saw a t-shirt on a teenager recently that said, "Second place is just another way of saying LOSER." That pretty much sums up the attitude of many in our culture. First place is the only place; all else is to fail. It's enough to give a nation a complex. Our measurement of success is based on hitting grand-slam home runs not sacrifice flies. Really it is not the people in the lime-light who make the world go round. It is usually the humble people in the shadows who may not be the front door but are the foundation and structure of success. They are not preoccupied with externals but understand the heart is what makes the individual. Where would the world be without those who are not worried about being first: without those who work and serve where recognition is not the motivation?

Here's my TOP TEN LIST of people who have behind the scenes positions but have a very significant impact on the outcome for others.

#10 Vanna White's dentist.

#9 Any elementary school secretary.

#8 Inspector number 42 at the Fruit of the Loom factory.

#7 The guy who tightens the lug nuts on Richard Petty's Formula One at Datona.

#6 The person who closes the gas cap on the Space Shuttle.

#5 Bill Clinton's investment counselor.

#4 The P R person for the state of Texas.

#3 The iceberg look-out on the Titanic.

#2 The deacon in charge of communion bread

And the #1 behind-the-scenes person who to me has the most significant impact is.....The good sister who is married to and takes care of Rubel Shelly.

This summer the movie *Crimson Tide* depicted a nuclear disaster scenario. The plot centered around the Captain of the submarine U.S.S. Alabama dispatched to launch a pre-emptive strike against nuclear capable rebels and his next in command who wanted to wait for completed additional orders. An undersea battle with another submarine disrupted additional orders by damaging, their communication equipment. With billions of lives hanging in the balance, the real (and unsung) hero of the movie, the radio technician, plugged in the light circuit boards and soldered the right circuits to get the radio working again and discovered with only seconds remaining before the launch that their previous orders had been countermanded. The rebels had already surrendered.

People like this save the world every day. They save lives, marriages, childhoods, emotions of senior adults; they save school systems, city treasuries, constitutional rights; and most importantly they save church families and souls. They do not seek to be first. They do not even realize they are. They are just doing what comes naturally to people who care. Ask a person who considers himself last, and he will say; "First or last? It's not important. To serve, to provide for, to comfort, to encourage, to make happy, to enjoy fellowship, to be there, and to make a difference -- these are what it is all about, but having a big #1 on my shirt does not make a difference."

Luke 13:30 is about the first being last and the last being first. It calls our attention to how skewed our human view can be from the divine. It calls to our attention how mistaken we can be in character and in purpose of religion if we have flip-flopped first and last. What Jesus says in Luke 13:30 is in response to the question in verse 23:

"Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?" Jesus answers this question by undermining two basic tenants of first century Jewish traditional theology, a theology deeply based in pride and heritage. He answers the question by causing us to ask ourselves two reflective questions.

CAN WE BE SAVED FROM THE FRONT PORCH ?

The Jews as a whole, but especially the Pharisees, scribes, and leaders had absorbed great amounts of pride and arrogance from the world. The Jews themselves had become the center of the universe with God merely their benefactor. Much of their religion was bent toward self-service. For some, this behavioral picture has been spiritually photocopied today. Far too often we think the world revolves around us and rationalize that arrogance as compatible with Christianity. We think we can become Christians and keep all our pride, self, and ego baggage and enter through the door to the Kingdom. Connecting Luke 13:30 to verse 24, Jesus says when we are like this, we are actually TOO BIG to get through the "narrow door." Until we empty ourselves, we will never be small enough to fit through it. The narrow door prevents any but the humble to enter. One of the Lord's answers to the question is this: those who are humble will be saved. It's not the first but the last. It's not the arrogant and self-willed but the humble. Then Jesus reminds us in verse 25 that while these individuals are still standing outside calling on the Lord to make the door bigger, He will shut the door. We have all been invited but also told, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and he will lift you up" (Jas. 4:10). We have been told; "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Lk. 9:23). In fact, these people are told, "I don't know you or where you come from." These folks thought they were accepted when in fact they were not. They would have thought they

were bearing the cross but in reality could not, because they had never denied themselves. We need to understand that we cannot receive the resurrection without first dying. Romans 4 says this death is essential and pre-requisite. Many struggle to live the Christian life without denying themselves. They find life frustratingly powerless, full of irresistible temptation, and without spiritual focus. WE MUST DIE! "For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it" (Lk. 9:24). There will be many who will stand outside on the porch, so near but refusing to die until the door is finally shut. Then they will face a death that will cause them to "weep and gnash their teeth." They asked, "Are only a few people going to be saved?" Jesus answers, "Get off the front porch and go through the door." Those that are humble will be saved.

CAN WE BE SAVED BECAUSE WE INHERITED THE HOUSE?

The Jews were born into the kingdom, then learned what it meant to die. Christians learn what it means to die, then are born again into the kingdom. Many Jews thought that being born a Jew was enough. But from Adam to Abraham, from David to Daniel, from Joel to John, all God has ever wanted was a faithful heart. Specifically Jesus relates the heritage issue to the Jews when he shows in Luke 13:28 the difference between them and faithful Israelites like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the prophets. Jesus is telling them they could not ride the coat-tails of their forefathers to glory. The family of FAITH is what really matters. All the Jewish genes in the world was not enough to save their souls. Our genes are no more important today. Faith must be owned by the individual, not received. It's got to be more to you than your "family religion." It's got to be stronger than flesh and blood. But the Jews were so wrapped up in pride and genes that Jesus adds, "People will come from east and west, north and south, and will sit down in the kingdom...." In other

words, Gentiles would humble themselves and enter before them. Acts 28:28 and other passages show this to be the case. Their arrogance and calloused hearts prevented them. The Jews understood the term GOD very well, but they understood LORD only a little.

I am concerned whether or not we have an understanding of true lordship today. I hope we understand that our death must be sure, our commitment total, our diligence complete, and our sincerity without question. We can never live perfectly. God understands that. This is why He sent the Christ. But He expects us to give our all, and He will settle for nothing less.

I created a small stir in the congregation where I preach a few years ago with a slight change in the format of confession before a baptism. I announced that I did not believe it is enough simply to confess that Jesus is the Son of God. After all, there are demons who have confessed this (Matt. 8:29). Of course this confession is necessary, but unless we are ready and willing to confess Him as LORD (ruler, king, owner) we are not ready nor are we able to go through the door to the kingdom. This abandonment of self and acceptance of the Lordship of Jesus is the death we pass through on our way to the resurrection and NEW LIFE in Romans 6:4-7.

I am also concerned about how much of our Christianity is family inheritance. Do we own our faith? How much of it do we own? Where do we go from here? These are serious questions that deserve a serious and personal answer. Why are you a member of the church? Why are you a member of the congregation where you are? What exactly is holding you there? Loyalty? To what, to whom? Of course you could easily verbalize an answer, but what is down deep in your heart? I hope a loving, humble, and personal relationship with your Lord. 1 Peter 3:15 says, "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have." (emphasis mine)

CONCLUSION

Are we first or last? The real question is this: Are we dead to self and alive unto Christ or alive unto self and dead to Christ? As in the first century, there is a real humility deficit in twentieth century America. Have we absorbed any of this into the church? This lack of death would not be hard to see. It would be reflected on the contribution board. It would show up in the number of teachers who volunteer for the education ministry. It could be seen in congregational outreach, evangelism, and fellowship involvement. It would show up in disputes and quarrels among brethren, a lack of forgiveness toward the lost, and in individuals who see everyone's errors and problems but their own. It would show up in broken marriages, church politics, and leadership problems. It could be seen in people who think they are the only ones going to heaven but can not really put into words why they think they are. It would show up in people who think that their traditions have been practiced long enough to be bound on everyone. It should also be noted that the only reason others may not want to practice some tradition might be the same kind of arrogance and selfishness.

WE MUST DIE! Standing outside death's door on the front porch is not good enough. Inheriting the house does not make it yours. Question: Who shall be first and who shall be last? Answer: "Whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it." Question: Will there be many people saved? Answer: Whoever is ready to die, please stand up.

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THE LAST WHO WILL BE FIRST AND
THE FIRST WHO WILL BE LAST

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THE SO-CALLED "DISHONEST" STEWARD OF LUKE

LUKE 16:1-13

J. PAUL POLLARD

INTRODUCTION

Dennis J. Ireland begins his extensive survey of the history of the interpretation of Luke 16:1-13 by saying, "There is little question that the parable of the unjust steward in Luke 16:1-13 is one of the most difficult of all Jesus' parables to interpret" ["A History of Recent Interpretation of the Parable of the Unjust Steward (Luke 16: 1-13)," *Westminster Theological Journal* 51 (Fall 1989), 293]. The story tells of a man--fired by his employer for squandering his goods--who decided to take matters into his own hands by ingratiating himself with his master's debtors by reducing the amount they owed. The owner, surprisingly, commended the shrewd action of the steward, and Jesus also used him as an example for the disciples. The words of both the owner and Jesus leave many questions unanswered concerning the parable.

The mainline interpretation of the parable is to understand the actions of the steward as fraudulent but the underlying wisdom he displayed as praiseworthy -- praiseworthy by both his master and Jesus. The lesson for the disciples was for them to use their wealth in terms of charity or almsgiving in general. Those they helped might one day help them. On another level there is an eschatological emphasis on preparing for the future in God's kingdom.

Another reading of the parable, based on understanding its social background, possibly indicates that the employer, rather than

the steward, was dishonest. J. D. M. Derrett argued that the owner had, contrary to the Old Testament teaching on usury, charged exorbitant interest on the debtor's accounts and the steward simply changed them back to what they should be. The master praised him both for his cunning and for making him (the owner) appear to be pious [J. D. M. Derrett, "Fresh Light on St. Luke XVI The Parable of the Unjust Steward," *New Testament Studies* 7 (April 1961), 98-219].

CONCLUSION

Several lessons for disciples derive from the parable, however it is interpreted. Disciples should, like those in the world, use their money wisely. They, in addition, need to learn forgiveness; and perhaps above all else Jesus' followers should learn from the steward the importance of preparing for the future (especially the coming judgment).

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LUKE 17:11-19

HAROLD REDD

Once while visiting in the home of a single mother of four children, I observed a marvelous lesson about appreciation. One of the teen-aged sons reminded his mother that he needed money to purchase a certain item. Upon receiving the needed money, the boy walked toward the door. I still remember how his mother, in a strong and sure tone, called "Reggie!" He stopped, turned sheepishly and said, "Oh, thank you, Mother." After the young man had gone, I commented on what I had observed. The mother in a humble, but sure voice, explained that she worked too hard and sacrificed too much to let her children take from her without saying *thanks*. As a caring parent, she was teaching her children to have a sense of gratitude.

A similar situation happened in the life of our Lord. According to Luke 17:11-19, Jesus revealed His identity by healing ten lepers. After their cleansing, only one of the ten returned to say, "*Oh, thank you, Jesus.*" Although Jesus never called them back, he reasonably asked the one who returned, "*Where are the nine?*" The rationale for Jesus' question is considered below.

The nine were among the ten who needed and begged for mercy. Jesus was going to Jerusalem when He encountered the lepers in the borderland of Galilee and Samaria. As a matter of fact, lepers were always in the borderland of some village because Jewish law required their isolation. They stood away from people and warned all who approached that they were "*unclean!*" In the *clean* world, the

publicans did not mingle with sinners, and the Jews had no dealings with Samaritans. But in the leper colony, the common affliction and subsequent need abolished the enmity and brought Samaritans and Jews together. In the leper colony, people from all walks of life recognized their condition, acknowledged it, and pleaded for mercy. Jesus listened to a mixed group of lepers cry, "*Jesus, Master, have pity on us!*" From such humility, how could a cleansed leper forget other lepers or fail to appreciate renewed health? So, Jesus asked, "*Where are the nine?*"

The nine were among the ten who were sent to the priest. Jesus told the lepers, "*Go show yourselves to the priest.*" Jesus' command must have sent a ray of hope into the leper camp! His words indicated that He was going to grant healing. The purpose of presenting oneself to the priest was to show evidence of healing and to obtain re-entry into the clean world. Perhaps these men had heard about how Jesus had cured other lepers (Lk. 5:12-15) and reasoned that He could help them also. Albert Barnes suggests,

It may also be observed that this required no small measure of faith on their part, for He did not first heal them and then tell them to go; He told them to go without expressly assuring them that they would be healed, and without any evidence to show the priest. (p. 122)

At the bottom of the leper colony, there are blessings that really count—life, faith, hope, etc. Yet, Anthony Lee Ash is probably right in his view that "the Lord's remarks show that gratitude completes faith... Blessings from God ought to engender thankfulness in any context. Presumably all ten had faith, but Jesus only commended the faith which said *thank you*" (p. 80). Faith without gratitude is incomplete and caused Jesus to ask, "*Where are the nine?*"

The nine were among the ten who were cleansed enroute to the priest. All ten lepers apparently had enough faith to effect the

power of Jesus for cleansing. Nine of them, eager for the priest's approval for re-socialization, hurried away in strict obedience to the Lord's command. Excited and a bit selfish about their cleansing, they were ready to get on with their renewed life. Ash suggests that, "the Jewish lepers may have been glad to see the Samaritan turn back, since their disease no longer bound them together" (pp. 79-80). While the nine went on, the one leper turned back and fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving Him thanks. Jesus' voice must have weakened with disappointment when He asked, "*Where are the nine?*" They were on their way to the priest, but the first order of the day should have been to fall prostrate at the feet of the Great Healer in thankful worship and consecration! There still would have been time for evidence, the priest, and purification.

The nine included Jews, who should have been more thankful. Paul wrote of his Jewish brothers, "Theirs is the adoption of sons...the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship, and the promises" (Rom. 9:4). Yet, as in the story of the good Samaritan and other examples, this foreigner's behavior shamed the blessed Jews. More gratitude is expected of those who have received more blessings. However, in this case, the most ardent adoration came from the least expected source. The ones most blessed caused Jesus to ask, "*Where are the nine?*"

Perhaps Jesus still asks, "*Where are the nine?*" and the nine still exist. They need, ask, and get positive responses. They may even possess enough faith to that God is their source of blessing, yet they rarely say thank you and praise the Lord...and they never hear God say, "*Your faith has saved you.*"

Nonetheless, there are still ones who are cleansed from sin and uncleanness and carry gratitude in their hearts as evidence. God's spiritual healings stimulate great joy in them. Unlike Reggie, the cleansed ones do not wait for someone or something to call them to a sense of appreciation. They just keep observing His blessings and voluntarily returning to say, "*thank you!*"

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LUKE 18:35-43

ANTHONY WOOD

Everyone rushed by him. They always did, it seemed. After all, Mark 10:46 says they did not even know his name, simply Bartimaeus, "son of Timeaus." He was just another blind beggar with his hand out. It's that way in the city. Nameless people with endless needs.

Those leading the crowd cleared the way through for King Jesus with their agendas clear in their minds. They checked their appointment books, certain of the time and place of Jesus' next appointment. The blind beggar called for the king, the Son of David. He called loudly. The crowd leaders wanted to pass by the beggar. He called louder. They could not contain their irritation. Their itinerary did not include a stop for a blind beggar. Jesus glanced back, hearing a faint calling of his name through the noise. But the crowd pulled him along. They shouted a rebuke to silence the nuisance. Jesus stopped.

When faced with the choice about the blind beggar, Jesus made a decision consistent with the focus of his mission. He hadn't forgotten that day in the Nazareth synagogue when he announced his ministry focus, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor" (Lk. 4:18-19). Possibly the time when John's disciples came to quiz Jesus about the authenticity of his Messiahship passed through his mind. Jesus simply told them to go back and report what they had seen--the blind receive

sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor (Lk. 7:18-30). Jesus could not pass by the blind beggar. Jesus was convinced that he was to be known for loving the poor and outcast.

Often we shove the poor to the side for what we believe to be more important church concerns. We don't stop at the sight of the poor. We rush on by the person at the red light with the "will work for food" sign. We close our eyes to the prostitute on the street corner in the questionable part of town. We plug our ears to the person ahead of us in the grocery line when asked for method of payment, "Cash or check?" Answers, "Food stamps." And, through it all, we believe we lead the way for Jesus. But Scripture says, "Jesus stopped and ordered the man to brought to him" (Lk. 18:40).

The poor present a whole new set of spiritual and human needs that can be met with the hope of Good News. Taking the Gospel to the poor and disenfranchised will present new ministry challenges and opportunities. Urbanization demands new approaches for the Gospel to be shared with the poor in settings previously unknown to us. Even rural poverty requires a fresh look at Scripture. To be as Christ, God's church needs to have the reputation of loving the impoverished.

The poor and outcast won't wait. They often have modest requests like Bartimaeus. He simply wanted to see again. Through that simple healing of the body came a renewal of healing for the soul. The text says that Bartimaeus received his sight "and followed Jesus" (Lk. 18: 43). Jesus met the needs of the beggar holistically that day outside Jericho. He treated Bartimaeus with dignity. The blind beggar received his sight and was praised for his faith. Jesus gained a disciple, and the blind beggar found hope. The blind beggar was touched by the Master.

While ministering with a small rural Arkansas church, I commuted to Harding Graduate School in Memphis weekly. As I emerged from the country setting into the urban world, my mind was

clogged with thoughts of a term paper, test, or a ministry concern back home. But every week as I hurried about my business, I never noticed the run-down, dirty housing developments of the third poorest city in the nation. Often we can become as blind to the needs of "the blind beggars" as Bartimaeus was to the people of Jericho.

Luke presents Jesus as a caring, compassionate God choosing to love the unwanted. The context surrounding our story in this Gospel to the poor provides two choices to the needs of "a blind beggar." On the one hand, when faced with selling all that he had and giving all to the poor, the rich young ruler went away sad because he was unwilling to part with his wealth. Losing his affluence was not what he had in mind for ministry. Personal agendas often become missed opportunities. On the other hand, Zaccheus' first response to the "salvation that came to his house that day" was to give half of what he owned to the poor (Lk. 19:1-10).

The churches of Christ are at a crossroads. With welfare reform proposed and poverty increasing with population growth, God's church must choose a Christ-centered response. The "blind beggars" call. Loudly. Will we pass by or stop to care for them? Will we help them find faith, or proceed with personal agendas? In helping us choose an answer, Jesus provides some suggestions for us and our church:

1. Have Mercy on the Poor and Needy. Jesus said, "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful" (Lk. 6:36). It's an attitude. Reread Luke and consider Jesus' teaching and compassion on the poor. Be like the Samaritan on the road (10:25-37). Re-examine the Luke's insights to a proper perspective concerning wealth and poverty.

2. Seek Out the Poor and Hurting. Jesus "came to seek and save the lost" (Lk. 19:10). Don't expect the poor to come to us. The social and financial barriers are obvious. Cross the barriers and God will do His work.

3. Begin a Relationship With a Poor or Handicapped Person. Treat that person as a human being created in God's image -- to be loved

and saved -- not as a burden, like the crowd did Bartimaeus. Befriend a person that society has forgotten (Lk. 8:26-39). The blessing will be mutual.

4. *Re-examine the Church's Benevolence Ministry and Budget.*

Does the church simply give handouts to strangers? What does the "benevolence room" have to offer? Luke continues in Acts to record the church's response to the needs of the poor (2:44-47; 3:1-10; 4:32-37; 5:1-11; 5:12-16). Review how personal relationship can be established through what the church has to extend to the poor. Start a ministry that reaches out to the poor or handicapped.

Will we hear the cries for mercy from the "blind beggars" that come our way? The crowd leading the way for Jesus rebuked the beggar and wanted to silence him. Jesus, in healing him and making him a disciple, rebuked the crowd. Let Christ set the church's agenda for the poor, outcast, and handicapped. Help a "blind beggar" to be touched by the Master when he calls, "Friend of Jesus, have mercy on me!"

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LUKE 19:45-47

BRUCE MCLARTY

The cleansing of the temple is certainly one of the most passionate, exciting, controversial, and perplexing actions of Jesus' entire public ministry. Nearly two thousand years later, His dramatic actions that day still inspire and trouble His followers. Exactly why did He drive the merchants and the moneychangers from the temple? Was He distressed that people were trading in the temple? Was He disgusted by the dishonesty and exploitation He witnessed? Was He frustrated that the Court of the Gentiles was being so abused that Gentile God-seekers were being kept from worshiping the Lord God? Or was something else going on when Jesus of Nazareth shocked everyone that day with His most famous outburst of anger? More specifically, for the purpose of this article, how does the cleansing of the temple episode function in the context of the Gospel of Luke?

To begin with, Luke 19:45-47 appears soon after the distinctive "Traveling to Jerusalem" section of Luke's Gospel (9:51-19:10). All through these ten chapters the tension mounts as "Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem" (9:51). Though He is continually misunderstood along the way, Jesus knows clearly that the road He is taking will lead Him to the Cross. Finally, when His destination is reached, it is simply announced, "Then He entered the temple area" (Lk. 19:45).

The temple itself plays a key role in the Gospel of Luke. In the early chapters it features prominently in the stories surrounding Jesus' birth and in the episode where Jesus is "lost" there at the age of

twelve. After a virtual silence about the temple in the intervening chapters, the sacred landmark reappears as Jesus enters the temple to cleanse it. After that it serves as the place where Jesus teaches, and, in the final verse of Luke, is the place the disciples go to worship.

Also enlightening in the study of Luke 19:45-47 is the way this account of the cleansing compares with the accounts in the other three Gospels. To begin with, Luke starts abruptly by saying that Jesus "began driving out those who were selling." Matthew and Mark add that He also drove out the buyers, but about this Luke is silent. Only John indicates that Jesus made a whip of cords for the occasion (Lk. 2:15) or that He specifically targeted the sellers of oxen and sheep. Matthew, Mark, and John all write that Jesus overturned the tables of the moneychangers and that he also drove out the dovesellers. Mark adds that Jesus refused to allow anyone to use the temple as a thoroughfare for carrying merchandise (Lk. 11:16). John concludes with Jesus' demand, "Stop making my Father's house a market place" and the disciples' remembrance of the Scripture, "Zeal for your house will consume me" (Lk. 2:16-17). Matthew, Mark, and Luke conclude with Jesus' saying, "My house is to be called ['is to be' in Luke] a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of robbers." Mark also adds "for all the nations" after "house of prayer." Luke follows his account with the interesting information that "every day He was teaching in the temple" (Lk. 19:47).

One last bit of necessary background involves the Old Testament prophets. Jesus directly quotes from two of the prophets in this text and at least two others figure prominently in the background of the event. The "house of prayer" language (Is. 56:7) comes from a passage where the Lord declares that foreigners, eunuchs, and other outcasts who are faithful to Him will be brought to the holy mountain and "their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be on my altar." The expression "a den of robbers" (Jer. 7:11) has its origin in Jeremiah's famous "Temple of the Lord" sermon. The other two passages from the prophets which form the backdrop for Luke 19:45-

47 are Zechariah 14:20-21 ("on that day there will no longer be a Canaanite [trader in NASB] in the house of the Lord Almighty") and Malachi 3:1-5 ("Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple").

All of these lines of evidence seem to come together to present the function of 19:45-47 in the Gospel of Luke. In his effort to present Jesus as the Son of God and the true Messiah, Luke uses the cleansing of the temple to announce the arrival of Jesus in Jerusalem the week of the Crucifixion. Jesus' use of Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11 points toward this moment as the arrival of the Messiah who will cleanse the temple and set Jewish religion aright after long years of corruption and abuse. It is significant that this event in Luke is immediately followed by the report that "every day he was teaching in the temple" (19:47), which is then contrasted with the frustration of the wicked chief priests and teachers of the law who were seeking a way to kill Him (19:48).

In short, Luke uses the cleansing of the temple as one more way to proclaim that Jesus was, indeed, the true Messiah. His actions identified Him with the expectations of the prophets and prepared the way for the final four days of public ministry leading up to the Crucifixion. He spoke of the temple as "my house" and made it His base of operations the week of the Cross. In this, Jesus came like the Messiah, taught like the Messiah, and would shortly die like the Messiah. It powerfully reminds us that Jesus stands as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy and as a model for His disciples of how evil is overpowered and often intimidated when people of God act boldly in doing the right thing!

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LUKE 20:41-44

ROY SMALLING

The O.J. Simpson trial has provided the average person an education of our judicial system. This writer has been impressed with the ability of the attorneys to ask questions. Sometimes they have to ask the question several different ways before it is allowed. One thing is sure; asking the right question is vital.

The next time you read the gospels, be sure to notice the questions that Jesus asks. While preparing for this class, I found over seventy questions asked by Jesus in the gospel of Luke. He asked questions to gain information (Matt. 15:34; Mk. 5:30; Lk. 22:35; Jn. 6:5), to emphasize a point (Matt. 11:23; Jn. 3:12), to express exclamation (Matthew 12:34; Mark 15:34; Luke 11:40; John 10:32) and to incite the mind to independent activity (Matt. 22:42; Lk. 6:9,41,42; Lk. 20:41). In fact, Jesus asked nearly 30 different classifications of questions.

Luke 20, our chapter of study, contains four questions by Jesus and three by the elders, chief priests, and teachers of the law. It will be the purpose of this study to examine those questions.

QUESTIONS ASKED OF JESUS

The first question was a question of authority (Luke 20:2-20). As the official guardians of the Law, the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders had the responsibility to investigate anyone who claimed to speak in behalf of God (Deut. 18:15-22). Luke tells

us in chapter 19:47-48 that they were not seeking truth; they were looking for evidence to use against Him.

They thought this question would trap Him. If Jesus answered that He had no authority, He would be in trouble with the Jews for invading the temple and chasing out the money changers. If He said that He had authority from God, He would be in trouble with the Romans who were always on the alert for would-be Messiahs.

The second question is a question of responsibility (Lk. 20:20-22). Jesus knew that the men who posed this question were spies sent out by the Pharisees and the Herodians (Mk. 12:13). The Herodians supported the family of Herod as well as the Romans. The Pharisees were totally against Herod and the Romans. The question was offered hoping to provoke Jesus into offending the Jews ("pay your tax!") or the Romans ("don't pay your tax!").

The third question is a question about eternity (Luke 20:27-40). This question came from the Sadducees. This group accepted only the Law of Moses as their religious authority. If a doctrine could not be found in the first five books of the Old Testament, it was not to be accepted. They, therefore, did not accept life after death, angels, demons, final judgment, or the resurrection (Acts 23:8). Their question has its "base" in Deuteronomy 25:7-10. Their point: Resurrection cannot be true; if it were, this woman would have seven husbands in eternity. Jesus pointed out two errors. First, they were ignorant of the power of God and the truth of the Scriptures. And second, resurrection is not the restoration of life; it is entrance into a new life that is different.

QUESTIONS ASKED BY JESUS

The first question is a question about John the Baptist (Lk. 20:3). In asking this question, Jesus was not refusing to answer their question; he was refusing to endorse their hypocrisy. Even if Jesus had answered the question, their hearts were unprepared to receive it.

Jesus asked his question (v. 3-8), told a parable (v. 9-16), and quoted a prophecy (vs. 17-18)-- all intended to reveal the sins of the nation of Israel. It is interesting to note that the word translated "rejected" in verse 17 means "to reject after investigation."

The second question is a question about inscriptions (20:23). By asking this question, Jesus lifted the discussion to a much higher level. Since Caesar's image was on the coin, it must be his. To pay the tax was simply to give back to Caesar what was his. Since man was created in God's image (Gen. 1:26), man belongs to him. So give to God what belongs to him.

The third and fourth question's asked by Jesus were questions about identity (Lk. 20:41-44). Here Jesus focused on the most important question man could ever answer, for if we are wrong here, we are wrong about everything that is important.

Matthew's account helps us see the first part of the discussion: "While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, 'What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?'" (Matt. 22:41). Note that the question is asked in the third person. The question is phrased in such a way that the Pharisees were able to give an answer without affirming that Jesus was the Christ.

The expected Messiah, according to these Pharisees, was "the son of David." Their view was based on scripture (2 Sam. 7:13-14; Is. 11:1; Jer. 23:5; Ps. 78:68-72; 89:3-4, 20, 24, 28, 34-37; Amos 9:11; Mic. 5:2; etc.).

Jesus then quotes from Psalm 110:1 and asks the last question: "If David calls him 'Lord,' how then can he be his son?" Jesus and the Pharisees accepted Psalm 110 as being written by David. They also accepted it as being a Messianic Psalm. If not, Jesus' argument would have been empty, and they would have jumped on it quickly.

The words, "If David calls him 'Lord,' how then can he be his son?" do not mean, "the Messiah cannot be David's son;" instead they must mean "cannot be David's son merely in the sense of his

descendant." He is far more than that. As eternal God, the Messiah is David's Lord, but as a man, he is David's son (Rom. 1:3; 9:4-5; Acts 2:32-36; 13:22-23).

The person of Jesus was the crucial issue in the conflict between Jesus and the leaders of Israel. And all the questions of Luke 20 are for the purpose of revealing the person of Jesus.

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LUKE 21:1-4

KENNETH V. NELLER

Worship is largely about impressing the god which one is worshiping. Perhaps that is an unusual way to express the concept of worship, but consider the idea carefully before dismissing it. In Elijah's time the prophets of Baal tried to impress their god by cutting themselves with swords and spears (1 Kings. 18). Prayers to pagan gods were at times full of babbling in an attempt to be impressive (Matt. 6:7).

What impresses our God, the Lord and Creator of the universe and Author of our salvation? How can we worship him in a way that he is pleased--impressed--by our love, devotion, and thanks? While there are a variety of scriptures to which we could turn for an answer (e.g., 2 Chron. 7:14; Jer. 29:13; Mic. 6:8; Matt. 6:1-18; Jn. 4:23-24; Rom. 12:1; 1 Tim. 2:8; Heb. 13:15-16; Jas. 1:5; 5:16; 1 Jn. 3:22.), the incident of the widow's offering recorded in Luke 21:1-4 provides some very useful insight into worship that impresses God.

THE FAMILIAR STORY OF UNUSUAL GENEROSITY

Jesus, during the last week of his ministry, is teaching his disciples in the temple in Jerusalem. All of a sudden, he stops in mid-sentence and points toward the temple treasury. "Look!" he exclaims.

His disciples, perhaps mystified at Jesus' excitement over a rather commonplace scene, respond, "At what?"

"Over there," Jesus insists, "by the treasury."

"At the wealthy people giving gifts?" The disciples are still searching for understanding.

"No. Look at the woman."

"The worn, wasted woman robed in rags?" the disciples ask incredulously.

"Exactly. Did you hear how much she gave?" (Some scholars think that when a monetary gift was offered at the treasury, the worshiper declared the amount to the priests.) [See I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 751.]

"Two leptas."

"She has given more than any of them," Jesus asserts, waving his hand at the other worshipers.

"Huh?" The disciples, once more are dumbfounded.

"She has given more than any of them," Jesus insists.

"No way!" The disciples respond. The man in front of her gave a gold shekel."

"True," Jesus concedes. "But they merely gave a little of their vast wealth. She has given all that she has left in the world to live on."

THE WOMAN'S STORY AND THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

This woman, with her humble, sacrificial attitude, stands in stark contrast to the attitudes of the religious leaders of her time. Her story in Luke follows a series of episodes depicting the spiritual depravity of the Jewish religious leaders: Jesus laments that Jerusalem's leaders reject him (19:39-44); he cleanses the temple, and the leaders plot to kill him (19:45-48); he is challenged and questioned (20:1-40); and he warns of the hypocrisy of the teachers of the law (20:41-47).

The story of the widow is connected thematically to the preceding verses by the catchword "widow" (20:47; 21:2) and by the vivid contrast between the arrogant attitudes and unacceptable piety of the Jewish religious leaders and the woman's piety which catches the eye and gains the admiration of the Son of God. [A few recent scholars--e.g., A. G. Wright, "The Widow's Mites: Praise or Lament?--A Matter of Context," *CBQ* 44 (1982):256-65, followed by J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, AB 28 (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 1321--believe that Jesus' words about the widow's offering are more of a lament than a commendation. Nevertheless, despite their arguments, there is nothing within this passage, or even in Luke's redaction, to make such an interpretation necessary or even preferable.] Immediately after relating this tender story of piety, Luke goes on to record Jesus' dialogue with his disciples regarding the destruction of the temple--a type of judgment upon the religious leaders' concept of godliness and piety (Lk. 21:5-36; cf. esp. 19:43-44; 20:16; and 21:22).

WORSHIP WHICH IMPRESSES GOD

Certainly four verses of Scripture cannot express all that the Bible has to say about worship, but from this incident of the widow's offering, we can learn much about what does and does not impress God.

(1) For one thing, God is NOT impressed with those who are more concerned about their positions than piety. In Luke, when Jesus condemns the leaders for turning the house of God into a den of robbers, they plot to kill him (Lk. 19:47); furthermore, they question his authority which dares to threaten their own authority (Lk. 20:2). Jesus condemns their arrogance and hypocrisy (Lk. 20:14, 46-47).

In light of such a clear denunciation of presumptuous and pompous power, one would think that Christians today would abhor similar attitudes. Yet at times we have elders who seek to control the

flock with "authority," not with shepherding; preachers who seek to be the center of attention or who believe that only they know what is best; members of the church who think that "to be pleasing to God, you must believe and worship just like I do." God is NOT impressed!

(2) Moreover, God is NOT impressed with wealth and its trappings. God wants his "house" to be a house of prayer, not of merchandise (Lk. 19:46). What he really wants is NOT what belongs to Caesar--money (Lk. 20:25) but our hearts. Large contributions and fancy buildings do not necessarily impress him (Lk. 21:4, 5-6). [For a full discussion of wealth and poverty in Luke, see Luke T. Johnson, *The Literary Function of Possessions in Luke-Acts*, SBLDS 39 (Scholars Press, 1977).]

The church would do well to reconsider what God considers "best" in worship. Sometimes undue emphasis is placed upon fancy buildings, dressing in "Sunday best," and our concept of "in decency and in order" (no babies crying, no clapping, etc.). More recently, a great concern has been expressed that everything that goes on during a worship service must be "excellent" (meaning everything which goes on "up front"). One writer, commenting on the leading of public worship, says, "If we really want to follow the Lord, then we have no choice but to desire and pursue excellence. The standard of excellence is simply a part of the nature of the God whom we serve." [Tom Kraueter, *Keys to Becoming an Effective Worship Leader* (Psalmist Resources, 1991), quoted in *Worship Leader* (May/June 1995), 55.] Perhaps so. But whose standard of excellence: God's or ours?

(3) God IS impressed with humble faith. The humility, trust, and obedience of the widow stand as an oasis in a desert of pride and self-righteousness. A similar contrast in pictures is found in Jesus' parable of the proud Pharisee and the humble tax collector who prayed, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner" (Lk. 18:9-14). The Pharisee was proud of his religious accomplishments and trusted in his own righteousness because his eye, his focus, was upon himself.

But as C. S. Lewis says, "Whenever we find that our religious life is making us feel that we are good--above all, that we are better than someone else--I think we may be sure that we are being acted on, not by God, but by the devil." [*Mere Christianity*, rev. and enlarged (New York: Macmillan, 1952), 96.]

Humility, on the other hand, is self-forgetfulness. It is the only path to God (cf. Jas. 4:10; 1 Pet. 5:6). (A. W. Tozer notes, "Self is the opaque veil that hides the Face of God from us.") [*The Pursuit of God* (Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications, 1948), 46.] Self-forgetfulness cannot be achieved by human effort (try it!); it is, as John Stott observes, "the by-product of preoccupation with Another's presence, and with his message, his power and his glory." [*Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 340.] It is only when we focus on God that we forget about ourselves. Then we can and will worship. We become humble, self-forgetful. And such self-forgetfulness leads to trust and obedience which is as bold as the widow's.⁹ [Cf. Thomas Kelly, *Testament of Devotion* (1941; large print ed., New York: Walker, 1987), 87. Also relevant to the widow's faith is Maude Royden's observation: "When you have nothing left but God, then you become aware that God is enough."] How transformed our lives and worship assemblies would be if we had such humble faith!

(4) Finally, God IS impressed when we give our all. This is why Jesus held up the widow as an example. It is what Jesus requires of all who seek to please him (cf. Lk. 5:11, 28; 9:23-25, 57-62; 10:27-28; 12:31; 14:33; 17:33; 18:22, 29-30). Paul says that the kind of spiritual worship which is pleasing to God happens when we give our bodies as a living sacrifice (Rom. 12:1). To those who give everything to him, Jesus promises that we will receive blessings in this life and eternal life in the age to come (Lk. 18:29-30).

Giving God our all is costly, but the rewards are great: impressing God, receiving his blessings, and eternal life. What more could we want?

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LUKE 21:6-36

JIMMY JIVIDEN

I am not sure of all that *abomination of desolation* means not because I have not studied, but because I have. We can, however, know some things about it. The term *abomination of desolation* is not in Luke 21.

In the same context as Matthew 24 and Mark 13, Luke used the term *desolation*. Our understanding of *abomination of desolation* in Luke is helped by the context: **"But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is at hand"** (Lk. 21:20 NASB).

Before we deal with the text, we need to examine the words. The Greek term τὸ βδέλυγμα means "to feel nausea because of stench, to abhor, to detest." Idolatry, greed and immorality are a stench to God (1 Kgs. 11:5; Lk. 16:15; Rev. 17:4).

Matthew identifies the phrase as coming from the prophet Daniel in the Old Testament. The phrase is used three times in reference to the desecration of the temple (Dan. 9:27; 11:31; 12:11).

The general context is best given by Luke. When the disciples were talking about the beauty and adornment of Herod's temple, Jesus said, **"As for these things which you are looking at, the days will come in which there will not be left one stone upon another which will not be torn down"** (Lk. 21:6 NASB). The disciples wondered when this would take place and what sign would proceed it (Lk. 21:7 NASB).

Several conclusions can be drawn about the meaning of the phrase by looking at the different contexts in which it is used. Matthew's account reveals three things. First, the *abomination of desolation* will stand in the holy place. Second, this will be a sign to "those who understand" to flee from Judea with great haste and abandonment (Matt. 24:16-22). Third, God will deliver His people (Matt. 24:22).

Instead of the abomination of desolation "standing in the holy place" Mark's account says that it is "standing where it should not be." Luke's account adds another dimension to our understanding in two ways. First, it speaks of Jerusalem being surrounded by armies when her desolation is at hand. Second, one of the tragedies of this time would be that **"Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles"** (Lk. 21:24 NASB).

It is important to understand that this passage is apocalyptic literature, coded to the culture. It is symbolic in order to conceal its meaning from enemies but to reveal its meaning to those who understand. As with all apocalyptic literature, it is folly to ascribe a literal meaning to the words written to give hope in times of crisis and despair. Matthew and Mark show that a hidden meaning is involved by saying, "Let the reader understand."

Three things need to be understood about interpretation of this passage. First, the very nature of apocalyptic literature is that it can be made to refer to similar things in every generation -- sometimes far removed from the intent of the author. However, such symbolic language referred to real-life historical situations to the first readers.

Second, the fulfillment of much of this apocalyptic language was to take place "soon": "But keep on the alert at all times, praying in order that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place" (Lk. 21:36 NASB. See also Mk. 13:30 and Matt. 24:34).

Third, apocalyptic literature often mixes crisis events without concerns for timing. This is particularly evident in the synoptics,

which describe both a soon-to-come crisis of the destruction of Jerusalem and the future coming of the Son of Man in judgment.

There is much I do not understand in this passage, but my studied judgment shows three facts. First, the *abomination of desolation* spoken of in Daniel probably referred to the desecration of the temple by Antiochus Epiphanes in 168 B.C. He stripped the gold from the sanctuary of the temple and committed a dreadful desecration upon the altar by sacrificing a sow on the altar (I Macc. 1:33, 39).

Second, the *abomination of desolation* spoken of by the synoptics probably referred to what took place when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans. Luke identifies it as a time when Jerusalem would be surrounded by an army (Lk. 21:20). Matthew identified the time as when "not one stone here shall be left upon another" (Matt. 24:2). This fits Josephus' description of the event.

Third, the warning given to the disciples in these texts seems to have been heeded. Eusebius speaks of the Christians in Jerusalem fleeing to Pella in Berea to escape the destruction of Jerusalem (*Church History III*, 5.3).

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JUDAS AND PREDESTINATION

LUKE 22: 1-6

SCOTT MCDOWELL

Judas Iscariot has long been regarded by Christendom as one of the most tragic figures in all of human history. Here was one who was part of the inner circle of Christ. He heard the greatest sermons ever preached, observed daily the lifestyle of God incarnate, witnessed first hand the many miracles, and shared intimate association with the original heroes of the Christian faith. How could this man betray Jesus? In the words of Alois Stoger:

He was one of those who were closest to Jesus, whom he had chosen for himself; this is a deep mystery certainly. He belonged to the patriarchs of the new people of God, and had been chosen after Jesus spent a whole night praying (Lk. 6:12). This could easily be a stumblingblock for the faith (p. 221).

The major stumblingblock with which this writing will be concerned has to do with whether or not Judas' freedom of choice was overruled. Was Judas a mere pawn either in the hands of a sovereign God or a sadistic Satan? Did he choose to betray Jesus or was it something unavoidable? If a man of his relative privilege did in fact choose to betray him, what does that imply about the dangers that all believers face? While definitive answers to all of these questions are beyond the scope of this writing, the writer will attempt to at least

shed some light on the nature of Judas' betrayal that may provide some direction for further study.

When Peter wrote that Paul's letters, "contain some things that are hard to understand" (2 Pet. 3:16), he may have had the doctrine of predestination in mind. *Baker's Dictionary of Theology* offers the following description of this curious doctrine:

We define predestination as that theological doctrine, primarily associated with Calvinism, which holds that from eternity God has foreordained all things which come to pass, including the final salvation or reprobation of man (p. 415).

While this writer cannot accept Calvin's brand of predestination¹, he must admit a certain tension over just what the Bible does teach on this subject. Part of this tension is undoubtedly a reaction to Calvinism's extremism, but part of it also has to do with the difficulty of the subject matter.

Understanding the balance between human freedom and God's sovereignty is challenging at best. The key, as in all successful Bible study, is to look at the subject in the light of all that the scriptures have to say. Many times the problem with interpreting difficult passages or doctrines stems from studying them in isolation from either their immediate or remote contexts. For the sake of brevity, one example will suffice.

Luke's expression, "then Satan entered Judas" (Lk. 22:3), is the one remark in this gospel which seems most problematic. The real question concerns what was involved in the "entering." Did Satan overwhelm Judas to force his way in, or was he an invited guest? Luke's gospel alone allows only speculation, but if we assume an overall unanimity of the scriptures, a look at the remote context of other biblical sources further informs this discussion.

R.C.H. Lenski offered the following comments along these lines: "This entrance was made in stages. Luke speaks of it in a

summary way, but John 13:2, 27 reveal it in stages" (p. 1034). The exact wording by John shows that the "stages" come in the form of Judas' being "prompted" (NIV) with temptation and only later being actually "entered." The American Standard translators prefaced this "entering" with the more literal "the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him "

Even after acknowledging these "stages," the question of "who was in control?" still remains. This is a particularly troubling question because it strikes at the heart of the concept of free moral agency, but an examination of the overall teaching of the scriptures shows that Luke's gospel harmonizes quite well with this concept.

1 Peter 5:8 cautions against spiritual complacency because "Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour." Peter challenges his readers to "Resist him." James informs his readers of the same spiritual danger and explains further than Peter: "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (Jas. 4:7). The various gospel accounts of Christ's temptation show Christ modeling these very behaviors and experiencing these promised results. In Ephesians 4:26-27 Paul warns against letting the "sun go down while you are still angry," because in so doing one "gives the devil a foothold." By combining the force of these four passages, the reader can reasonably conjecture what happened in the case of Judas. In the words of Plummer:

There is no hint that Judas is now like a demoniac, unable to control his actions (Hahn). Judas opened the door to Satan. He did not resist him, and Satan did not flee from him. Jesus must suffer, but Judas need not become the traitor (p. 490).

When the reader sees Luke's expression, "Satan entered," he sees the sudden impact of a culminating moment, but he misses the process which has caused this moment to arrive. James 1:14 states that "each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged

away and enticed." Alexander Ross offers these comments on the words "dragged away, and enticed":

The first verb which occurs only here in the N.T., contains a metaphor taken from hunting, and means "to lure forth" as game is lured from its covert. The second word means "to entice as by bait," a metaphor from hunting or from fishing. It is often used in the Greek classics with the sense of enticing or seducing (p. 34).

This writer appreciates the use of hunting terms. One of the first rules of successful hunting is patience. Time and again throughout history, Satan has shown himself an extremely patient hunter. In the case of Kings David, Solomon, and Hezekiah, he waited until the vigor of youth was gone to entrap them. The nation of Israel faltered often as one generation grayed and left "the love of her espousals" (Jer. 2:2). Even in the case of Christ himself, Satan left only "for a season" (Lk. 4:13). In Judas' case, Satan's patience paid off. In the words of F.W. Farrar,

It began in avarice, disappointment, and jealousy, and, when he had long weakened his soul by indulgence in these dark, besetting sins...at last, the tempting opportunity met the susceptible disposition...His crime was but the epitome of months--perhaps years--of secret faithlessness (p. 323).

Those last words are chilling because they are really a commentary on how all human sin comes about. Sin is always the culmination of a process. In that light, the most practical application of Judas' story to his modern counterparts is a reminder toward attentive watchfulness. The prayer of the psalmist ought to be a regular part of one's spiritual discipline: "May the words of my mouth

and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in Your sight" (Ps. 19:14). In the words of Paul, "If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall" (1 Cor. 10:1).

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ENDNOTE

The unconditional and seemingly arbitrary nature of predestination appears to be in direct conflict with obvious statements throughout the scriptures addressing both the nature of God and man, particularly

those that deal with freedom of choice: Gen. 2:16-17; Deut. 30:19-20; Josh. 24:14-15; 1 Kg. 18:21; Matt. 7:12-13.

LUKE 22: 24-30

A. J. ARNOLD

Our idea of greatness is formed in large measure by our culture. The apostles of Jesus were no different. Their Jewish pride centered in God's covenant favors. They were elected to be "a light of the Gentiles" (Is. 42:6). They longed for the time when the fallen house of David would be restored to kingly rule. Jesus was that Messiah. Anything that did not fit their view of the prophetic promises was simply passed by.

The twelve apostles were in an upper room observing the Passover (Lk. 22:24-30). Jesus said, "I am among you as he that serveth" (Lk. 22:27). He had already washed their feet. This task of a servant needed to be done, and none of them were of a disposition to do it. Why? There was chronic strife as to which one of them would be greatest in the coming kingdom. Their vision of greatness was identical to that of the Gentiles (Lk. 22:25).

The Master had once used a little child as a living object lesson on the nature of their service in the coming kingdom (Mk. 9:36-37). They now viewed his washing of their feet as anything but a living parable for them. It even offended Peter, and he said so! That was no way for a king to act. Yet Jesus said, "I am among you as he that serveth" (Lk. 22:27). Physical service and positions of influence would be necessary but only as helps in modeling redeeming love in service to human needs.

Their original visions of personal greatness were only

strengthened by what Jesus then said. He expressed his continued confidence in them. He was proud of them for continuing "with me in my temptations" (Lk. 22:28). He then repeated earlier promises that they would rule in the kingdom while he reigned over it. They would be at his banquet table as citizens with authority and "sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Lk. 22:30). How smoothly and quickly he turned from gentle rebuke to genuine praise and promise. They needed both!

Although they accurately heard the words of Jesus, they did not understand His meaning. Their Lord knew that there was a difference between being "wilfully" ignorant and just being ignorant (Heb. 10:26; 5:2). There is an eternity of difference between being a deliberate traitor and just being weak in faith. Jesus will not lean too heavily on bruised reeds and smoking wicks (Is. 42:1-4). How can He help them if they abandon Him? If they are dead? He had much rather replenish the oil and bandage up the bruises. That is His patience toward the struggling weak ones. He will strengthen them!

John tells us what Jesus was thinking when He washed feet. He was sure of His heavenly origin, His redemptive purpose and His imminent return to heaven (Jn. 13:1, 3). He knew it was God's nature to love people. Faith is "the victory that overcometh the world" (1 Jn. 5:4). Love is the greatest virtue that "abideth," but it is received by faith. Jesus' faith in God was the guiding principle and motivation in all of His service. The love of God was the life of Jesus. Service was His spirit (Matt. 20:28).

Christians are commissioned to carry on the work of Jesus (Matt. 28:18-20). Only to the degree of our faith will we reveal God's character in loving service "to all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10). We must seek "peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). How long does it take for God to make us holy? It happens within an hour (Acts 2:38, 41) and then during a lifetime of selfless

service (Jn. 17:17). Our earthly process of sanctification will be completed at Jesus' second coming (1 Jn. 3:1-3).

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BUT I HAVE PRAYED FOR YOU, PETER

LUKE 22:32

EDWIN J. MYERS

Luke 22:32: "...But I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers " (NASB).

One of the most challenging thoughts in scripture appears in Luke 22:32 where Christ shows His concern over the events that are about to transpire in Peter's life. He had just spoken words of praise for the disciples' steadfastness. They had continued with him through trials (v. 28). But, being the Omniscient One, He knows what is about to happen and how it will effect the lives of those whom He had chosen, especially Peter's.

THE IMMINENT DANGER

The Lord first warns that there is a danger awaiting them (Lk. 12:31). Satan is wanting to assail them and overthrow their faith. The doubling of the address "Simon, Simon" expresses the deep concern Jesus had; it is like the doubling in "Martha, Martha" or "Jerusalem, Jerusalem" or in David's heartbreak "O Absalom, my son, my son!" It is the common name "Simon" used here, not the one given for a rock-like character, "Peter."

We might learn from this the nature of temptation, although it is common to all (1 Cor. 10:13). Temptation comes from the Adversary who must obtain the permission of God, as was the case with Job (cf. Job 1:12). It was only by God's permission that Satan

was allowed to try to get anyone. Satan asks that he may test the apostles. He had already tempted and won Judas (Lk. 12: 3-6). Never satisfied, he comes after more.

There is discrimination in the intercession. "To sift YOU" is in the plural; "I have prayed for YOU" is singular. Satan was wanting to sift all of them, and Christ was especially concerned for Peter.

THE INTERCESSION OF CHRIST

Peter is in more danger than the others whom Satan is wanting to sift. Christ knows what Peter is about to do. And Peter's denial will bring about a piercing look from the eyes of the Lord (cf. v. 61).

But the encouraging words here are "I have prayed for you." Just imagine the fervency of His prayer. Alexander Maclaren said, "The thicker the darkness, the brighter His life; the drearier our lives, the richer His presence; the more solitary we are, the larger the gifts of His companionship. Our need is the measure of His prayer." (*Gospel of Luke*, p. 242). Christ intercedes for us in the time of our greatest need.

THE CONTENT OF THE PRAYER

Christ doesn't pray that Peter will be exempt from the trial or that he might escape it unscathed. He prays that his faith will not fail. No matter how low one falls, there is always a way home. "Eclipse is not extinction; the momentary untruthfulness of one's deepest convictions is not the annihilation of these convictions" (Maclaren). It is the desire of the Lord that through the trial Peter be strengthened (cf. Jas. 1:2-4). Though he fell, he did not lie in the mud but staggered to his feet again and was used mightily by the Lord. The rest of Peter's story is a monument to a restoration and forgiveness which lead to effective service.

"When you are converted" is not to be understood in the technical sense, but rather as "when you have turned (i.e. to God)": an example of conversion, to be certain. There is more chance of the recovery of a good man that has fallen into some sin than there is the recovery of some who let their religion be only a part of their lives.

LESSONS LEARNED

One lesson learned is that the sincerest love for Christ will not exempt us from the tempter. Peter understood and warns, "Be of sober [spirit,] be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Pet. 5:8 NASB). Jesus had instructed in the words of prayer that they were to ask "deliver us from the evil one" (Matt. 6:13).

Another lesson learned is that the deepest fall may be recovered. It is true that with all temptations we find those elements that "are common to man" (1 Cor. 10:13 KJV).

And we learn last of all that when turning back to God we have a responsibility to others: "strengthen your brothers." Similar words come from the pen of the Apostle Paul, "brethren, *even if a man is caught in any trespass*, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; [each one] looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted" (Gal. 6:1). Peter's reply in verse 33 shows how vulnerable we all can be to the subtlety of temptation. Pride, (e.g. thinking that we are beyond the ability to sin) has caused many to fall into the clutches of the Adversary. May we all take comfort in the fact that just as Peter received intercession from the Lord, we also have Him as our Advocate that our faith might not fail. Then we also are to "strengthen our brethren." There is a road back for all wanderers (cf. Lk. 15).

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STUDENT LECTURES

A BLAMELESS WOMAN OF GOD

LUKE 1:6

MARTHA ALLISON

Elizabeth: "upright in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly."

Elizabeth is so often overlooked because she plays a seemingly insignificant part in the Bible. Her story is placed right there beside that of the birth of Jesus. And yet, a closer look at this woman's life will show that we have a lot to learn from her. In Luke 1:6, she is characterized as "upright in the sight of God." She is barren and then blessed with a baby, and through it all she remains blameless.

Elizabeth was barren. She had probably wanted to have children ever since she was a little girl. As she carried her homemade doll around in her arms, she probably dreamed of the time when she could have a real baby. Now she was old and had lost all hope of ever having a baby to call her own. She longed desperately for a baby, because in those days it was a disgrace to be barren. This was such a disgrace that it led Sarah, in Genesis 16, to give Abraham another woman to produce a baby for her. Elizabeth, too, must have felt the scorn of being barren. She probably lived daily with this burden. And then came something wonderful for Elizabeth. It came in the form of Zechariah's message from the angel. Although Zechariah could not verbally tell the news, I'm sure the excitement was very evident on his face as he used gestures to explain to Elizabeth the whole story of the angel's visit.

Then the Bible tells us that Elizabeth remained in seclusion for five months after becoming pregnant. Maybe she had doubts that she would actually become a mother. Maybe she didn't want to tell

others it was true until she herself knew for absolute sure. And then when she was completely convinced that the Lord truly had blessed her with a baby, she gave all the glory to Him saying, "The Lord has done this for me. In these days He has shown His favor and taken away my disgrace among the people" (Lk. 1:25). And when Elizabeth did have the baby, her neighbors and friends shared her joy.

And, through it all, Elizabeth is a blameless woman of God. She "observed all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly." **Blameless**, according to the dictionary, means without error or fault. Elizabeth obeyed the Lord without fail. When Zechariah told Elizabeth what the angel had said, she found it hard to believe, and yet she still remained in submission to her husband and the angel, quietly accepting her role in this plan. She did not brag about the fact that the Lord had chosen her to mother a very important child. Although it was out of place for a woman, Elizabeth spoke out when the baby was born and insisted that the baby be named John because she knew that was the name the Lord wanted (Lk. 1:60).

Together, Zechariah and Elizabeth served and obeyed the Lord. They were also good parents to John, bringing him up in the Lord.

Elizabeth, must have been a gentle, loving, and wise older woman. She was blameless in God's eyes and remained that way through all the difficult times she underwent. I'm sure that is why the Lord chose Elizabeth to be John's mother. If I were to choose a mentor, I would follow after Mary's steps and choose a woman like Elizabeth. We, too, should be blameless in God's eyes and persevere in hardships.

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COLBY HILL

John the Baptist's birth is a story that is familiar to every Christian. There are four main characters: Zechariah, Elizabeth, Gabriel, and God. Although God takes center stage in every event, the role of Zechariah cannot be overlooked. Luke did not have to begin his gospel by relating the circumstances surrounding John's birth. However, Luke felt that Christians could gain some valuable lessons from the experiences of Zechariah. He also believed that information concerning Zechariah was essential to "an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us" (Lk. 1:1). What role does Zechariah play in Luke's gospel, and how was he touched by the Master?

Luke uses Zechariah to teach us two lessons. First, we cannot base our faith on the circumstances of life. Zechariah had to deal with the disgrace of having no children. This disgrace resulted from the Jewish belief that God blessed the faithful with fertility. Since Zechariah and Elizabeth had no children, the community viewed them as unfaithful. However, Zechariah remained upright and blameless (1:6). No matter what goes on in our lives, we can remain faithful and obedient to God. True faith means being content with any situation because of the trust we have in God.

Second, we must take a stand for God in the face of opposition. Zechariah doubted God's promise of a son, but he took a stand for God when it counted. His doubt led to an act of faith. Elizabeth's

neighbors and relatives pressured her to name the child after his father. Elizabeth answered, "He is to be called John," but this did not satisfy the crowd. When Zechariah was asked what the child should be named, his answer left no room for compromise: "His name is John." We are going to face peer pressure and opposition from those who do not want us to obey God's commands. When those situations come, we must be courageous and take a stand!

Although the lessons we learn from Zechariah are important, Luke's main purpose in mentioning Zechariah is to show how he fits into the eternal plan of God. Zechariah's prophecy is used to foreshadow the purpose of both John the Baptist and Jesus. Zechariah's prophecy in Luke 1:67-79 is significant for two reasons. First, prophecy had been nonexistent for almost 400 years. During this period of time, God chose not to speak through any of his people. However, when Zechariah is filled with the Holy Spirit, God once again reveals himself in a special way: first through John and then ultimately through Jesus.

The second reason why the prophesy of Luke 1:67-79 is significant is that Zechariah's prophecy begins Luke's dominant theme of fulfillment. Luke wants his readers to know that even before the birth of Jesus, God was implementing his eternal plan to save mankind. Luke wants us to read Zechariah's prophecy and then compare it with the events that occur in the rest of his gospel. The similarities are astounding. Touched by the master, Zechariah catches a glimpse of God's eternal plan and realizes that he and his family play a major part. The same holds true for our lives. We are touched by the Master when we understand the eternal plan of God and then search for the way that God can use us for his glory.

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JENNY FORIEST

Mary, the mother of Jesus, is one of the most fascinating and well-loved women in the Bible. Although she does not emerge from the Bible as a fully described, clear-cut personality, she has become a target of discussion for many because of the role for which she was chosen. There are many valuable lessons we can learn from Mary. She was a human who lived in a world of human beings just as we do. God gave her a task never given to any other woman. She carried out that task in a human situation. She had a husband to cook for and children to care for. She had a family with problems and everyday life situations that she faced daily. Surely God intended for us to learn from the woman who bore his only begotten son.

Mary was a virgin when she was betrothed to Joseph. When the angel appeared to tell Mary of her pregnancy, she expressed incredible courage and willingness as she accepted God's will for her life. Though she was aware of what people would think if she were found pregnant, she risked the personal shame and even the anger of Joseph and her own family. Her words expressed in Luke 1:38, "I am the Lord's servant," remind us that a true faith in God is expressed by submission to his will. Through her acceptance of God's will for her to have this "child," Mary risked losing her life, her husband, her wedding day, and her hope for a life that any Jewish girl would have.

Much of Mary's heart is revealed in Luke 1:46-55. She expresses her joy and thankfulness to God for all he has done for her and others. She once again refers to herself as a humble servant. She exemplifies what the correct attitude should be when God does something good for us or asks something very trying of us.

It must have also been trying for Mary to understand her son at times, since He was called to come and save the lost. This is obvious in Luke 2:41-52 when she and Joseph take Jesus to the temple and he ends up speaking with the teachers instead of traveling with his parents. This confused Mary, and most likely she worried about him.

Perhaps the most trying thing of all was when Mary was present at her beloved son's crucifixion. Perhaps it was even more painful for Mary since she knew that her beloved son was truly the son of God and the Savior of the world. Jesus displayed enormous respect for her when, in one of his last statements at the cross he said, "Dear woman, here is your son" (Jn. 19:26). This must have torn Mary's heart to see her son enduring all the pain and sin of the world.

Mary was an incredible woman of strength who exemplified what we should all be. God never promises us an easy life with no surprises. God found favor in Mary, and it is because of her part in God's plan that Jesus was able to die on the cross for us.

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CARTER DAVIS

Who was he? Was he Elijah? No, though an angel told his father that he would come in the spirit and power of Elijah. Was he the Prophet, the one spoken of in Deuteronomy? No, but he was a prophet and spoken of by other prophets. Was he the Christ? No, he was not that. Rather he was a voice calling in the desert, "Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. And all mankind will see God's salvation" (Lk. 3:4-6).

He was John the Baptist, the one spoken of by Isaiah and Malachi. But those prophecies were more than descriptions of him; they told his whole purpose in life. He was "to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous -- to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Lk. 1:17). If John had to write a mission statement, it would have been these words. The people were not ready for the Son of God, for the Savior of the world. It was John's mission to make them ready.

Since making a people prepared for the Lord was his mission, then his message of repentance and baptism for forgiveness of sins was the way to prepare the people.

The message of repentance was not a new one. Almost all the prophets of old pleaded with Israel to turn from their sin and follow God's commands once again. But for the Jews to be prepared for the arrival of God in the flesh, there had to be repentance. In one sense they needed to turn from sin to righteousness because the Christ was about to be among them. But also if they, like people today, were to

be reconciled to God and enter his kingdom, they had to repent. They also needed to repent because of the eternal consequences of not doing so: "every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire" (Lk. 3:9).

It is also interesting to note that Luke adds the last part of the quotation from Isaiah, "And all mankind will see God's salvation" (Lk. 3:6). This must be in keeping with the purpose of informing Gentile Christians about Jesus by showing their inclusion in the gospel call. It also puts a different twist on John's assertion that God could produce Abraham's children from stones. It seems to show the Gentiles that they did not have to be a Jew to be a Christian; they simply had to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins.

While the mission of John is the most important thing about him, the episode in Luke 7 is puzzling and seems inconsistent. In Luke 7, he sends messengers to Jesus to ask if he is the Messiah or is someone else coming? What kind of question is that? Is John not the one who baptized Jesus, the one who called him the Lamb of God when he first saw him, the one who testified that he saw the Spirit of God come down on him and say, "This is my Son, whom I love, with him I am well pleased" (Lk. 3:22), even the one who leaped in his mother's womb when his mother heard the sound of Mary's voice? And he is asking whether or not Jesus is really the Messiah?

It must be that John, like so many other believers, misunderstood Jesus' coming. He was looking for the earthly kingdom to be established, not the spiritual one that Jesus was really talking about. However, it may be that John did not see a message of judgement in Jesus' lessons. Therefore, he may have thought Jesus did not completely fulfill the role of the Messiah. However, in 1 John 3:17 we learn that Jesus came not to judge but to save the world. John was human, and just like his hero Elijah, he was given to doubt. The point of this, I believe, is to show how even the greatest men doubt and how God's power is strengthened through human weaknesses.

John the Baptist was a man on a mission. He was to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. God was able to use him, even through his own personal doubts in Jesus. He is a good example for Christians today. We too, should be readying people for the Lord while also letting God use us in spite of our weaknesses.

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LUKE 5:17-26

STEVE CLOER

"And behold, some men were carrying on a bed a man who was paralyzed . . ." (Luke 5:18).

"As we travel through life, with its trouble and strife," one major question arises that Christians need to answer. That question is this: how should a Christian act? Normally, when we try to answer this question, we look to Jesus and his example as we are told in 1 Peter 2:21. But another angle is to study a follower of Jesus and see how he acts. First Corinthians 11:1 pictures Paul's telling the Corinthians to imitate him as he follows Christ. Let us use this approach and look at the paralytic in Luke 5 and see how he acted in his encounter with Jesus.

Some of the paralytic's friends lowered him from the roof so he could be healed by Jesus. According to Luke 5:25, the paralytic responded properly to Jesus' mercy after being healed by praising God. And, in a sense, in order to become better Christians we need to become like the paralytic.

WE MUST REALIZE THAT WE HAVE BEEN PARALYZED

Just like the paralytic in Luke 5, we were paralyzed too. We were not physically disabled, but we were spiritually disabled. Some people are arrogant and proud and do not realize they are paralyzed. In Romans 3:23, we are reminded that we have all sinned. In other words, before we met Christ, we were crippled in sin. We must remember this truth about ourselves. We were saved from condemnation by Jesus' grace.

We should not walk around with a big head, thinking that we know everything or that we are perfect. We should not be like the man in Matthew 7, who overlooked the plank in his eye, but tried to be "holier-than-thou" and help a man with a little speck in his eye. We have to know that we lack God's mercy and grace and that we certainly do not deserve it.

WE MUST BE WILLING TO RECEIVE HELP

The paralytic had some great friends who brought him to Christ. They took him to the roof and lowered him so he could see Jesus. The paralytic had people who cared about him and displayed their concern, but it took some humility on the part of the paralytic to receive that help. We should give up our pride and accept guidance from our friends.

WE MUST PUT OUR FAITH IN GOD

Sometimes life can seem too great for us. We are overwhelmed by it, and we do not know where to turn. When this happens, we must put our faith in God. The paralytic was willing to put his faith in Jesus, and because he did, he was healed. If we put our

faith in God and trust him, he will take care of us. We need to become like a child and leave everything up to the Father.

WE MUST BE THANKFUL FOR EVERYTHING

Right after the paralytic was healed, he started to praise God, giving thanks for his mercy. We must be like the paralytic and be thankful. We have been in sin, and God has been gracious enough to forgive and save us. First Thessalonians 5:18 says to "give thanks in all circumstances," and we are compelled to obey this instruction.

In the book *The Hiding Place*, Corrie ten Boom tells of being sent to a concentration camp because she had been hiding Jews. In one of these camps she encounters "a blanket" of fleas in her sleeping quarters. At first she detested the fleas, as anyone would, but with the help of her sister she began to thank God for them. None of the guards wanted to be around fleas. Since the fleas kept the guards away, she could teach others what she believed about the Scriptures. The fleas provided a place for evangelism, and for this she gave thanks. We must be thankful in all circumstances, for we know everything will work out according to God's purpose (Rom. 8:28).

CONCLUSION

Let us look to the example set by the paralytic as he reacted to what happened to him. Step into his mind. Realize that we have been and can become paralyzed in sin. Then fall down before God's mercy. May we put our faith in God and leave everything up to him. In an attitude of gratitude, let us be thankful in all things and in all our circumstances. With God's help, we need to be willing to receive correction and help from others. If we let him, the paralytic will help us to follow Christ more perfectly.

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LUKE 6 : 27-36

LINDSEY HOWARD

Enemies are inevitable. Jesus, the only perfect person, had enemies, so why should we expect to escape having enemies ourselves? No matter who we are or what we do, not everyone is going to like us. However, Christians are called to treat our enemies differently than the way the world is inclined to act towards their enemies. The Bible addresses the subject of our enemies and how we are to treat them throughout both the Old and New Testaments. Strong's' *Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* lists over 300 entries dealing with enemies.

In Luke 6:27-36, we are admonished concerning the treatment of those who are our enemies. This passage includes six specific instructions that are easier to discuss than implement. The writer states that we are to do the following:

- (1) Love them (cf. Matt. 5:44).
- (2) Do good unto them (Prov.. 25: 21-22; Rom. 12:20).
- (3) Bless them (Lk.6:28).
- (4) Pray for them (Matt. 5:44).
- (5) Turn the other cheek (Matt. 5:39).
- (6) Treat them the way we would want to be treated (Matt. 7:12).

These six admonitions which appear in Luke and throughout the Bible are all action words. In order for us truly to fulfill these

scriptures and what God demands of us, we must actually turn the other cheek and pray for our enemies. However, the first and most important of Luke's admonitions, to love our enemies, is the hardest one and takes the most effort. A common misconception is that love is the strong feeling that develops after an attraction; however, the kind of love Luke is addressing here is Agape love, or unconditional love. Loving our enemies is not an emotional feeling. We can love a person even without necessarily liking him or her.

Loving someone who loves us in return is simple. The real sacrifice comes when we have an attitude of continually being able to turn the other cheek to a person who persists in treating us badly. The world is inclined to be kind only to people who are kind in return. However, the Christian is called to set himself apart from the world. This separation is another way in which a Christian is to be different from the world. Matthew 5: 46-47 states, "If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?"

Our command is to have an attitude of sacrifice and love. Luke 6:35 states, "But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because He is kind to the ungrateful and wicked." In everything we do, we, as Christians, should remember to be examples, not only to our enemies, but to everyone we encounter in life. Enemies cannot be avoided, but we can control the way we act towards them. As God has mercy on us, we are to have mercy on our enemies.

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LUKE 9:37-43; 48

RYAN SORELL

Sixteen years old of legal age to drive, and drive I did! I was spoiled enough that I got a new red sports car on my birthday. At first I was a model defensive driver, cautious, observing every law, checking every mirror. By the second day I had become a wild man! All caution flew out the windows. I drove by all my friends with my shades on and radio up. I was hot stuff. I had been given authority by the state of Texas and my parents to go where I wanted, when I wanted, for whatever reason I deemed necessary. I now received a new level of respect, honor, and responsibility. I appeared in control. But suddenly, I lost control. Things happened too fast; I saw the car, but much too late. Within three months of getting my license both my new car and driving record were severely disfigured. However, the wreckage of the car was nothing compared to my damaged ego. I was humbled; humiliated is more accurate. In broad daylight everyone had seen what I caused, and they shook their heads. From the sideswiped car came an irate lady yelling, "You almost killed my little girl!" I never wanted to drive again. I couldn't look at my parents. I looked for the nearest rock to hide under. I learned a lot that day, and anyone who saw me sitting on the curb with my chin buried deep into my chest could tell that I learned the hard way.

God has quite a knack for "opposing the proud." It's funny how across all time He has met the need to humble those who think they are pretty sharp. However, at the same time, we serve a God who

has a wonderful way of taking those who have nothing to smile about and changing their lives so dramatically that you could never wipe the smile off their faces. That's what's happening in Luke 9.

"The next day when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met Him. A man called out, 'Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child. A spirit seizes him and suddenly he screams. It scarcely ever leaves him and is destroying him. I begged your disciples to drive it out, but they could not'" (Lk. 9:37-40).

"O unbelieving and perverse generation," Jesus replied, "How long shall I stay with you and put up with you. Bring your son here" (Lk. 9:41).

At the beginning of the chapter Jesus gave the disciples power and authority to drive out all demons and cure diseases, but this man said, "But they could not." I can't help but think that with all the success the disciples were having that they were beginning to think pretty highly of themselves, pretty much like me in my new car, and they too lost control. The wheels fell off, and they wrecked their reputation in front of everyone. Humiliated? Maybe. Humbled? Definitely. Having been knocked down a notch, Jesus now taught them an important lesson, the hard way.

This story also has a flip side. There is a boy involved, a boy who most likely cannot remember having a normal day, who quite probably has no friends, who is used to strange looks. He's the butt of jokes, the town freak. This boy has nothing and no one except for a loving father who has tried everything and is down to his last option. The boy, battered, bruised, torn, and crushed is at the lowest point possible, but this day is different. Jesus called him.

"Even while the boy was coming, the demon threw him to the ground in a convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the evil spirit, healed the boy and gave him back to his father" (Lk. 9:42). Jesus is the master of putting smiles on faces of those who seemingly have nothing to be happy about.

This summer I was given the opportunity to go into downtown Memphis and work with the underprivileged kids in the projects twice a week. Although we sang, taught lessons, made crafts, and drank Kool-aid, I discovered that what they needed most from me was a touch or a hug. Actually, they climbed all over me. Not a second went by that I was not swinging, tickling, or carrying a kid on my back. Apparently that was not common to them, and it was sad to think that maybe the only time they got it was twice a week from me.

Things were different for this demon-possessed boy once he met Jesus. He not only was treated, he was touched, and not just by anyone but by God. The laughing stock is now in the arms of the creator of the world, and Jesus makes everything all right. He was brought out of his torment and lifted up to be the most special person in the whole crowd. Do you think he had a smile on his face?

That very moment of being held in the arms of my Lord and Savior is what I base my entire life on; it will be my crowning achievement. I want to feel what this boy felt.

Luke reminds us here, as he does throughout this book, that God humbles the proud and exalts the humble.

"Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. For he who is least among you all--he is the greatest" (Lk. 9:48).

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TRUE FAITH DOES NOT GO UNNOTICED BY CHRIST

LUKE 8:46

BETTY DAVIS

For the past twelve years, I have been confined to a life of complete desperation and isolation. Daily, I was forced to deal with the agonizing pain of my incurable sickness as well as the pain of being forsaken by the ones I had grown to love. I felt useless and was treated as an outcast.

The disease was the source of my heartache. The person that I am, my character, had not faltered. People that once called me "friend" were now afraid to touch me for fear of becoming "unclean." They avoided me at all cost.

My body deteriorated quickly, due to a constant loss of blood, and I often found it difficult to perform even the simplest of tasks. I remained hopeful, however, that someone out there might be able to help me. I went to many doctors, but no one had the cure. The process of going from one physician to the next, and each time hearing no words of hope had left me extremely physically weak, psychologically drained, and completely penniless.

I heard of a man from Nazareth named Jesus, and I saw Him in a large crowd. I heard the people all around talking about how He had made the lame to walk and the blind to see. Now He was on His way to the home of Jairus, a synagogue ruler, to touch and heal his sick daughter. I knew in my mind that if I could just touch His clothes, I would be healed.

I came up behind Him, and I reached out and touched the hem of His coat. In a moment many thoughts rushed through my mind: the

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years of pain were over; I had been healed; I could feel in my strengthening body the flow of blood stand still. I had found the one, true, Great Physician.

My thoughts focused on him as I tried to slip away, but in the bedlam of the crowd I heard only Jesus when he said, "Who touched me?" (Lk. 8:46). I knew then that I could not go unnoticed, and I fell trembling at his feet. In the presence of all the people I told him my story and how he had healed me.

Finally, I looked into his eyes; they were full of compassion and love for me when he gently said, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace" (Lk. 8:48).

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MARTHA

LUKE 10:38

MANDY JO ALEXANDER

Martha was a woman of very virtuous qualities, who always tried her best to do everything she could for her family. In Luke 10:38-42, it is easy to surmise that Martha was the older of the two sisters and was most likely in charge of the household expenditures and duties. This can also be seen in John 12 where Martha was mentioned as serving several men, including Jesus during the passover. Many women can understand this. They go to the store to buy the groceries; they go shopping for the clothes and other needs of the family; they wash the clothes, cook the meals, clean the dishes, clean the children, and do much, much more. As an onlooker, all this work seems like a very stressful, hectic, and (sometimes) thankless job. Yet, Martha seemed to enjoy this kind of work. She enjoyed the quiet background and was probably happiest when she was attending to someone by doing what she could do best.

When people have mentioned the name Martha to me, I often think of her as an attitude and not a name. Martha had the attitude of a loving servant, and I see her spirit in many around me. They are hard workers, doing what is needed. Without these people, nothing would get done, accomplishments would not be made, and chaos would ensue. One young man who worked with a group of campaigners in Donetsk, Ukraine, had this serving attitude. He never taught a Bible study, never led singing, and never led a prayer. He did sit at the front door to greet those who came in for the lecture. He would

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watch the people during the lecture, and if they were getting too hot, he would open the windows, and he would close them again if the people got too cold. His quiet disposition, his cheerful Texas grin, and his Christian example, led many to Christ.

However, Martha, in her frantic state to prepare everything for Christ, got so wrapped up in making sure everything was done right that she began to feel sorry for herself. She needed more than just two hands to make this day go perfectly. And where was that sister of hers? She found Mary at Jesus' feet. What a surprise! Martha was trying her best to make his day with them perfect, and she needed all the help she could get. She sought to impose her good service upon her sister Mary. She became so anxious and worried about service that she lost sight of the one important aspect of her life. Christians must let Christ set the agendas of life.

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THE FOOL'S FOLLY

LUKE 12: 13-21

KENT JOBE

Since the dawn of time, man has been both fascinated and perplexed by the world around him and has had an unquenchable desire for the never-ending acquisition of innumerable quantities of material possessions. The possessions we acquire and the undeniable manner in which we revere those possessions tells not only a lot about the person we are but also serves as a direct reflection on the God we serve. In Luke 12:13-21, we find that Jesus did not come to be a judge or an arbiter; he refused to have anything to do with settling family disputes. Deuteronomy 21:15-17 states that the oldest son received a double portion or two-thirds of the father's inheritance, and the remainder was to be divided among the other sons. Therefore, it would appear that the man who raised the question to Jesus was a younger brother who in essence was saying, "No Fair!" or "I'm being cheated!" Furthermore, it stands to reason that Jesus refused to comply with the request to be a judge for two reasons: (a) He did not wish to ignore the authorities who were supposed to take care of such matters, and (b) He Himself had been appointed to take on a task more important and sublime, namely, to seek and save the lost (Lk. 19:10).

By this time, Jesus had probably heard quite enough and therefore uttered a warning about material greed. "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed" (Lk. 12:15a).

In the parable of the rich fool, it is important to note that the father is not condemned for being successful or that he was dishonest. The real wrong occurs in the following verses (Lk. 17-19). There are

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essentially three points where we realize where we find fault with the rich fool.

First, it becomes obvious that the rich man does not know himself. He fails to realize that he is mortal and that he might not live on "for many years." His spiritual life is so lacking that material blessings are of no value to his eternal destination.

Second, he doesn't take into account the needs of others. He becomes self-centered and is much more concerned with his own needs rather than the needs of those around him. Third, the rich man does not thank and glorify God. He does just the opposite by offering a soliloquy which is still utilized today: "eat, drink and be merry!" It is hard to refrain from shunning our responsibilities, beliefs, and convictions for a lifestyle which the world views as acceptable. The fool was not only wrong in thinking that he was in control of his life, but also in forgetting that he did not even know when it would be terminated.

It is paramount that Christians constantly be on their guard against greed.

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THE RICH YOUNG RULER

LUKE 18:18-30

PHILLIP SHERO

Then Jesus said to the rich young ruler, "Sell all that you own and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me" (Lk. 18:22). This passage has haunted Christians since the time it was written. What was Jesus saying? Am I supposed to sell everything that I have? Many preachers and Bible class teachers have struggled with how to soften or explain Jesus' pointed command without twisting the scripture into a pretzel--often without success.

The account of the rich young ruler is repeated in both Matthew and Mark with little variation. Matthew tells us that he is young, and Mark notes that he ran up and knelt before Jesus. This simple story has only two main characters, Jesus and a wealthy ruler, and a background of listeners. As we examine their conversation, let us become a part of the crowd who was listening to Jesus.

The rich man commands attention with his expensive clothing and a confidence that makes him act at home anywhere. Yet this man has come to ask something of Jesus, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" (Lk. 18:18). Jesus responds with a question in verse 19, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone," likely a mild rebuke for the young man's careless use of a description of God and a reminder that even rulers lack true goodness. Jesus then quotes from the Ten Commandments.

The ruler's rather arrogant reply that he had already done those things strikes a chord with the rest of the audience as they probably confirmed his statement: "Yes, he's a good lad...comes from a good family...kept all the commandments." Jesus' response must have caught the young man (and the crowd) off guard: "There is still one thing lacking." Before he can regain his composure, Jesus continues with three commands and a promise, "Sell all that you own and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me" (Lk. 18:22). A small low pressure area forms as the crowd draws in its collective breath. Jesus' words are so hard. We see the sadness in the ruler's face because he is very rich. But Jesus is not finished speaking yet; he "looked at him and said, 'How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God. Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God'" (Lk. 18:24-25). Jesus' shocking words are not lost on the crowd and they cry, "Then who can be saved?" Jesus' vague answer about the power of God is less than satisfying. Neither the crowd nor the young man are ready to put their faith in God. And Jesus' point is proven--if they cannot trust God with their possessions, they will never trust Him to do what is impossible for them to accomplish, their own salvation.

The easiest way to deal with this story in the twentieth century is to stereotype the Rich Young Ruler and put him in a category apart from ourselves. But Jesus spoke to a man who was just like all those around him, and the message to the ruler was intended to impact all hearers. In distancing ourselves from the ruler we will certainly miss the message, because as we separate ourselves from the ruler, we separate ourselves from Jesus.

Luke presents us with a radical Jesus who makes uncomfortable demands on our lives. His disciples are familiar with these demands; they have heard them before, "Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do

not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Lk. 12:32-34). So do we need to put our houses on the market and auction off our wardrobes? One thing is sure; if we do it to complete our list of righteous acts, we are no better off. Jesus' question is not just, "Have you kept all of my commandments?" but the more pertinent, "Where is your treasure?" and, "Where is your heart?" But if in this article, I concluded that, yes, we must sell everything that we own to follow Jesus, could we do it? That kind of soul examination is what our Lord requires before we put our hands to the plow.

Peter, like us, needs confirmation. His insecure statement of faith begs the question, "Lord is our sacrifice worth it?" Jesus' reply speaks to Peter's heart and gives every disciple real hope: "Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not get back very much more in this age, and in the age to come, eternal life" (Lk. 18:29).

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