

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN THE GOSPEL OF LUKE AND
ITS SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CHURCH IN CHINA

By
Wen-en Lin

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Thesis Supervisor

The Rev. John Yueh-Han Yieh, Ph. D.

Thesis Reader

The Rev. Robert S. Heaney, Ph. D., D. Phil.

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To

My wife Jing Li (李静) and our son Tongxi Lin (林同熙)

Abstract

There is consensus among New Testament scholars that the kingdom of God is the central theme of Jesus' message in the Synoptic Gospels. This thesis seeks to demonstrate that self-sacrificial love and social service to those in need are particularly significant to Luke's understanding of what the kingdom of God means to Jesus' followers, and they are inspiring and instructive for the faithful and effective mission of the Church in the modern Chinese context. This thesis (1) discusses the nature and traits of the kingdom of God in the ministry and teaching of Jesus as presented in the Gospel of Luke, (2) shows that the kingdom of God is already a present reality but one with eschatological hope for a full consummation, and (3) argues that the kingdom of God has important ethical implications for Jesus' followers.

The Introduction presents my research questions, reviews recent scholarly contributions, and outlines my methodology. The First Chapter elaborates on the claim that the kingdom of God in Luke's Gospel has been realized in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The kingdom of God is a present reality with important implications for social services. Most noticeably, Jesus welcomes all kinds of people, especially the marginalized, into the kingdom of God. The Second Chapter puts forth several ideas regarding the kingdom of God in the teachings of Jesus. The less fortunate in society are beneficiaries of the kingdom of God. Love for enemies, though counter-intuitive, is a basic characteristic of the kingdom of God. Love of neighbor should be manifested in practice. The disciples of Jesus are to show mercy

to the neighbor. Those who wish to enter the kingdom of God must show hospitality to the marginalized. The Third Chapter analyzes the theme of the kingdom of God in the parables of Jesus, many of which are found only in Luke. In summary, the kingdom of God is a present reality to be experienced and to embody. It is a remarkable manifestation of God's salvation, and it is a resounding call for a positive response in life. In the Conclusion of this thesis, I suggest how Luke's view of the kingdom of God may be applied to the Church in China in modern Chinese contexts.

Key words: the kingdom of God, Luke's Gospel, love, social service, gospel for the poor, social outcast, mission, the Church in China

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Soli Deo Gloria!—To God alone be the glory!

Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	Anchor Bible Dictionary
<i>ATI</i>	<i>American Theological Inquiry</i>
<i>BBR</i>	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
BDAG	W. Bauer, F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i>
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
<i>BS</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
<i>BT</i>	<i>Black Theology</i>
BTNT	Biblical Theology of the New Testament
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CCC	China Christian Council
<i>CF: JCCRC</i>	<i>Ching Feng: A Journal on Christianity and Chinese Religion and Culture</i>
<i>CTM</i>	<i>Currents in Theology and Mission</i>
<i>CTR</i>	<i>Chinese Theological Review</i>
DBI	Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation
DJG	Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels
EDNT	Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament
ESV	English Standard Version
<i>ExpT</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
GNB	Good News Bible
<i>IRM</i>	<i>International Review of Mission</i>
IVPDNT	IVP Dictionary of the New Testament
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>

<i>JSNTSup</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series</i>
<i>MT</i>	<i>Modern Theology</i>
NAC	New American Commentary
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NJBC	New Jerome Biblical Commentary
NIB	New Interpreter's Bible
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIDB	New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible
NIV	New International Version
NKJV	New King James Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NTS	New Testament Series
PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentary
<i>PRS</i>	<i>Perspectives in Religious Studies</i>
<i>RE</i>	<i>Review & Expositor</i>
REB	Revised English Bible
RSV	Revised Standard Version
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Southwestern Journal of Theology</i>
SHS	Scripture and Hermeneutics Series
<i>STR</i>	<i>Sewanee Theological Review</i>
TDNT	Theological Dictionary of the New Testament
<i>TJ</i>	<i>Trinity Journal</i>
<i>TS</i>	<i>Theological Studies</i>
TSPM	Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee of the Protestant Churches in China
<i>TT</i>	<i>Theology Today</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WUZNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament
<i>ZMR</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft</i>

Introduction

There is consensus among New Testament scholars that the kingdom of God is the central theme of Jesus' message in the Synoptic Gospels.¹ The kingdom of God is not only a key to understanding the gospel Jesus proclaimed (Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:15; Luke 23:42) but also important for understanding the mission of Jesus as a whole.

The term "kingdom" (*basileia*) is used forty-six times in the Gospel of Luke.² The phrase "kingdom of God" (*basileia tou theou*) appears thirty-two times in Luke's Gospel.³ The first occurrence of the phrase, the kingdom of God, is in Luke 4:43, where Jesus states that proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God is his mission: "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other cities; for I was sent for this purpose." It is challenging for the reader to understand the meaning of the kingdom of God in the teaching of Jesus in Luke. Luke does not definitively present what the kingdom of God is.

There are four reasons for me to choose Luke's Gospel as the main scriptural focus for exploring Jesus' teaching on the kingdom of God. First, Jesus' teaching on the kingdom of God appears mostly in the parables, and there are more parables of Jesus preserved in Luke than in any other gospel. At least twenty-one of Jesus'

¹ Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology* (New York: Scribner, 1971), 34-35; George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 57; A. M. Hunter, *Introducing New Testament Theology* (London: SCM, 1975), 13; Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Theology* (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 1981), 409; David A. deSilva, *New Testament Themes* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2001), 107; I. Howard Marshall, *New Testament Theology* (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 2004), 78; Frank J. Matera, *New Testament Theology: Exploring Diversity and Unity* (Louisville: WJK, 2007), 11.

² Joel B. Green, "Kingdom of God/Heaven," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, eds. Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown and Nicholas Perrin (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 2013), 468.

³ Green, "Kingdom of God/Heaven," 481.

sayings referring to the kingdom of God are peculiar to the Gospel of Luke.⁴ Second, Jesus embodies the kingdom of God by befriending sinners (7:34; 15:1-2), tax collectors (5:29-30; 7:34; 15:1-2; 19:7), prostitutes (7:37), and the poor (14:13, 21). Luke puts the poor and other marginalized groups in a more prominent position in Jesus' teachings than any other evangelist (14:13, 21; 16:20, 22; 18:22; 21:3).⁵ Jesus receives all kinds of the socially marginalized into the kingdom of God. Third, Jesus' teaching on the kingdom of God has present and future dimension, which Luke's Gospel clearly preserves very well. On the one hand, Luke views the kingdom of God as a present reality. The death and resurrection of Jesus make the kingdom of God a present reality to his disciples, e.g. "But truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God" (9:27; see also 11:20; 17:21).⁶ On the other hand, Luke also indicates that the kingdom of God is a future event. Jesus' eating with his disciples in the new age makes the kingdom of God as an eschatological event, e.g. "For I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God" (22:16; see also 13:28-29; 21:27, 31; 22:18).⁷ Fourth, Luke's Gospel reveals that the kingdom of God has an ethical dimension (18:24). Jesus healed those who suffered different kinds of diseases (5:12-26; 6:6-11; 13:10-17; 17:11-19), welcomed all kinds of people into the kingdom of God (5:27-32; 7:36-53;

⁴ Daniel G. Reid, ed., *The IVP Dictionary of the New Testament* (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 2004), 653.

⁵ David J. Bosch, "Mission is Jesus' Way: A Perspective from Luke's Gospel," *Missionalia* 17, no. 1 (1989): 5-7; R. Alan Culpepper, *The Gospel According to Luke*, NIB IX (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 105.

⁶ K. L. Schmidt, "Basileia," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 101.

⁷ U. Luz, "βασιλεία," in *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol.1, eds. Horst Balz and Schneider Gerhard (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 204-205.

18:16; 19:1-10), and fed thousands of people (9:10-17).

In this thesis, I also seek to apply the ideas of the kingdom of God to the life setting of the Church in China for three reasons. First, the kingdom of God is important to Jesus and essential to Luke in explaining the origins of the Church. Many people are beneficiaries of the kingdom of God because they are attracted by Jesus' Gospel. Luke uses Jesus' message about the kingdom of God to explain why a great number of Gentiles converted to Christ and why evangelism was so successful. Luke urges his audience to proclaim the gospel and to guide people in recognizing the good news of God's love for all people through their good testimonies. Good testimony means caring for those who are needy and serving others (Acts 2:44; 4:32). The churches have a role in witnessing to the kingdom of God in the first-century Roman world. This is an example for the Church in China in its testimonies and missions. The Church in China would benefit from exploring Jesus' teaching on the kingdom of God. The Church in China is developing rapidly, but it remains marginal because many Christians only emphasize personal spiritual growth. There still are a vast number of Chinese people who do not know what Christianity is or what the kingdom of God is, so preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God with concrete actions of social service is an important mission of the Church in China. I hope my systematic research on the kingdom of God in Luke can help the Church in China have a positive impact on the development of Chinese society and make the kingdom of God understandable and acceptable by more Chinese people.

Second, Christians in contemporary China believe the kingdom of God is

central to their faith and life, but they have different and contesting views of its meaning and significance. Many conservative Christians emphasize that the kingdom of God is a future event. They regard the kingdom of God as a heavenly realm in which believers live after death. They focus their mission on pursuing personal spiritual growth and evangelism. They flinch from building up the kingdom of God in the earth. They think evangelism is more important than social service.⁸ On the other hand, many liberal Christians highlight that the kingdom of God is a present reality. They consider active participation in social action more important than converting people to Christianity.⁹ In fact, neither of them has fully understood the kingdom of God because each has only emphasized one aspect of the kingdom. I believe the kingdom of God in Luke can provide a corrective vision for Christians in China to better understand the kingdom of God Jesus proclaimed.

Third, Christians in China understand the idea of “kingdom” in the kingdom of God in a way shaped by the Chinese translation of the term, which needs some clarification. Chinese Bibles translate “the kingdom of God” (“*hē basileia tou theou*”) as “the country of God” (上帝国/神国). The Chinese understand their country from an ethno-centric perspective. Historically they understand China as “the Middle Kingdom” (中国), meaning China is the center of the world. However, Chinese people today have a much greater appreciation for the rest of the world and they see themselves as a part of the world. With this new appreciation, it is my hope that this

⁸ Manghong Melissa Lin, *Ethical Reorientation for Christianity in China: The Individual, Community, and Society* (Hong Kong: Christian Study Centre on Chinese Religion and Culture, 2010), 48.

⁹ K. H. Ting, *God Is Love: Collected Writings of K. H. Ting* (Colorado Springs: Cook Communications Ministries International, 2004), 486.

research may help Christians in China to better understand the kingdom of God in the Bible which transcends the boundary of any country. Furthermore, the Chinese word for the “kingdom” of God as a “country” (國¹⁰) has some connotations, which may be too limited for the biblical understanding of the kingdom of God. The Chinese tend to understand “country” as a political entity within a territory for a particular group of people. The term “*basileia tou theou*” (“kingdom of God”) denotes God’s sovereignty,¹¹ for instance, the action of God that impacts human life (Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:15). In Greek, “*basileia*” (“kingdom”) can be understood in two senses: one is geographical, kingdom or place; the other is functional, royal rule or kingly rule.¹²

Both senses of “*basileia*” mentioned above are found in the New Testament (Matt. 4:8;

¹⁰ The Chinese translation of *basileia* has different connotations and denotations depending on the characters used. There are two standard sets of Chinese characters within the Chinese-speaking world. One is the traditional (complex) Chinese character. Traditional Chinese characters are currently used in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau. They were also used in mainland China before the People’s Republic of China simplified them in the 1950s and 1960s. In overseas Chinese communities other than Singapore and Malaysia, the traditional characters are commonly used. The other is the simplified Chinese character. The simplified Chinese characters are used in official publications in mainland China, Singapore, and Malaysia. Consequently, there are two different kinds of Chinese characters for the word kingdom. One is the traditional Chinese character (國); the other is the simplified Chinese character (国). Etymologically, the composition of the word for kingdom in traditional Chinese (國) is four characters: territory (big 口); military force [literally, “edged weapon”], specifically used to resist foreign aggression (戈); people (small 口); and land (一). In contrast, there are only two characters in simplified Chinese for kingdom (国), i.e., territory (口), and treasure (玉), which means that China is understood as having vast expanse of territory and abundant resources. Noteworthy is that another ancient form of the word for kingdom in Chinese (国) in Houhan Dynasty (AD 947–950) was composed of the characters for territory (口) and king (王), and could be interpreted to mean that the king dominates the realm just as in English. See <https://www.cheng-tsui.com/blog/simplified-versus-traditional-chinese-characters> (accessed April 19, 2019).

¹¹ Bruce Chilton, “Kingdom of God, Kingdom of Heaven,” in *The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 3, ed. Katharine Doob Sakenfeld (Nashville: Abingdon, 2008), 512.

¹² W. Bauer, F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, eds., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2000), 168-169; Luz, “βασιλεία,” in *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, 201.

Mark 6:23; 13:8; Luke 19:12; Rev. 1:6; 16:10; 17:12).¹³ The term “kingdom” may point to territory and/or the reign of king. I believe an expanded understanding of the kingdom of God in Luke’s Gospel can enable Chinese Christians to gain a more comprehensive view of Jesus’ message about the kingdom of God.

1. Research Question

The research question I am pursuing in my thesis as a whole is the following: what is the kingdom of God in the teaching of Jesus according to Luke? In particular, I want to ask three specific questions. (1) How can the kingdom of God which Jesus proclaimed in Palestine be understood in the modern Chinese context? (2) Does the kingdom of God extend beyond the Church? (3) Does the kingdom of God involve only evangelism or also transformation of society through social service?

This thesis arises out of contextual issues I have faced as a Chinese Christian. Christians who strive to love their neighbors because they understand the kingdom of God as present may suffer. For example, in a great flood, Christians might invite other people for shelter, but others may not be willing to share their homes with those in need. In that case, the needs of those seeking shelter could become a burden on the Christians who receive them into their homes. To live in the kingdom of God in the present can be difficult when others live as if the kingdom of God has not yet come. In our present world, not everyone loves their neighbor, but in the kingdom of God everyone does. The Christian who tries to love their neighbor in the present world also lives in the hope that in the future the kingdom of God will be a realm in which

¹³ Luz, “βασιλεία,” in *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, 204-205.

everyone loves their neighbor without suffering.

In terms of hermeneutical circle,¹⁴ we can start with our contemporary questions and look for relevant scripture for the questions or we can begin with the scripture in its linguistic, cultural, and social contexts and discern what it may challenge us to address our issues today. If we start with our specific questions, there maybe a danger of misquoting scripture. If we begin with the scripture, there is probably a risk of mismatching the contexts then and now. A good biblical interpretation should come from a proper dialogue and interaction between text and context, in this case, between Luke's text about the kingdom of God and the Church in China's context of mission. Biblical texts can enlighten our understanding of social contexts, whereas social contexts can help us make sense of biblical texts. As a biblical scholar, I will try to start with a careful analysis of the meaning of text and find similar context to hear what the Scripture may speak to us in our new contexts. My "contextual" reading of Luke is based on a careful exegesis interpretation of the meaning of the kingdom of God in Luke's historical context. In light of this discovery, I hope to discern what Luke maybe teaching us as we try to address the mission of the Church in China today.

What does the kingdom of God look like in the Bible and in Luke's Gospel in particular? I shall explore Luke's understanding of the kingdom of God in the teaching of Jesus and its social implications.

¹⁴ "The hermeneutic circle describes the process of understanding a text hermeneutically. It refers to the idea that one's understanding of the text as a whole is established by reference to the individual parts and one's understanding of each individual part by reference to the whole." See http://www.google.com/search?ei=4Sa5XNalFcHm5gKz6b3gCw&q=hermeneutical+circle&oq=hermeneutical+circle&gs_l=psy-ab.12.015j0i22 (accessed April 19, 2019).

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus requires his disciples to show compassion to those who are needy (e.g., 10:37). He also teaches them to welcome others who are socially marginalized into the kingdom of God (e.g., 18:16). Thus this thesis will demonstrate that self-sacrificial love and social service are central to Luke's understanding of the kingdom of God and apply this conviction to the Chinese context. In order to do this, this thesis (1) discusses the nature and traits of the kingdom of God in the ministry and teaching of Jesus as presented in the Gospel of Luke, (2) shows that the kingdom of God is already a present reality but one with eschatological hope for a full consummation, and (3) argues that the kingdom of God has important ethical implications for Jesus' followers.

2. Recent Scholarly Research

Twentieth-century scholarly discussion focused on the question of whether the kingdom of God was present, future, or some combination of the two. In 1935, C. H. Dodd introduced the term "realized eschatology" to emphasize that the kingdom of God has arrived in the ministry of Jesus. He based his argument on the notion that the kingdom of God was manifested in Jesus' preaching in Galilee.¹⁵ Dodd interprets "*engiken*" in Mark 1:15 as "has reached" or "has arrived." Writing in 1950, A. M. Hunter also asserted that the kingdom of God has come because Jesus declares that the kingdom of God began in his ministry. The parables of the sower (Luke 8:4-8) and the yeast (Luke 13:20-21) illustrate that Jesus inaugurates the coming of the kingdom

¹⁵ C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (London: Nisbet, 1936), 41; Norman Perrin, *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1963), 58.

of God.¹⁶ However, Albert Schweitzer viewed the kingdom of God as wholly future and coined the phrase “thorough eschatology.”¹⁷ For Schweitzer, the kingdom of God that Jesus reveals is imminent and apocalyptic. It is an eschatological event. In response to the two opposing views above, R. H. Fuller held that the kingdom of God is both present and future. The kingdom of God has not yet come, but it is near. The kingdom of God has already happened in the ministry of Jesus, yet the full consummation of the kingdom is still in the future.¹⁸ Likewise, Hans Conzelmann regarded the kingdom of God as both present and future but highlighted the kingdom of God as part of God’s redemptive history.¹⁹ The kingdom of God is the salvation of God given unconditionally to all people.²⁰

In more recent years, Lukan scholars have presented fresh theories. Luke T. Johnson and Darrell L. Bock hold that God’s plan of salvation is central to the Gospel of Luke and is Jesus’ prominent theme as seen in a variety of texts (1:14-17; 13:31-35; 24:44-49).²¹ Concerning the timing of the kingdom of God, I. Howard Marshall, J. A. Fitzmyer, and François Bovon argue that the salvation of God has already been realized and fulfilled in the ministry of Jesus.²² The ministry of Jesus should be

¹⁶ Archibald M. Hunter, *The Work and Words of Jesus*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1973), 96.

¹⁷ Albert Schweitzer, *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God: The Secret of Jesus’ Messiahship and Passion*, trans. Walter Lowrie (New York: Macmillan Company, 1950), 48.

¹⁸ R. H. Fuller, *The Mission and Achievement of Jesus: An Examination of the Presuppositions of New Testament Theology* (London: SCM, 1954), 25.

¹⁹ Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke*, ed. Geoffrey Buswell (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), 149-150.

²⁰ Hans Conzelmann, *An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1969), 113.

²¹ See also Luke 1:46-55, 68-79; 2:9-14, 30-32, 34-35; 4:16-30. Darrell L. Bock, *Luke, Vol. 1: 1:1-9:50*, BECNT 3A (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 20-21; Luke T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2002), 81.

²² I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1978), 35.

regarded as the fulfillment of the divine salvific plan.²³ God's promise of salvation has been accomplished in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.²⁴ However, Bock and John T. Carroll emphasize that the kingdom of God in Luke's Gospel has both present and future dimensions. Some Lukan texts illustrate that the kingdom of God is already present in Jesus' ministry (10:9; 18:19; 11:14-23). Other texts show that the kingdom of God is still to be realized in the future (17:22-39; 21:5-38).²⁵ The kingdom of God, then, is both a present reality and an eschatological event for all people.²⁶ Concerning the scope of the kingdom of God, Marshall, Fitzmyer, Bovon, and Carroll maintain that the salvation of God is universal.²⁷ Salvation history and the new divine salvific work extend to outsiders who are non-Israelites.²⁸ Jesus' ministry demonstrates that the grace of God reaches all people in all nations.²⁹ The kingdom of God is comprised of Jews and Gentiles.

Marshall, Bock, Carroll, and Johnson also call attention to the fact that the kingdom of God is for the poor and the outcasts. Luke specifically emphasizes that the poor and the needy are recipients of God's salvation.³⁰ The mission of Jesus is to preach good news to the poor (4:16-30).³¹ The poor and the marginalized are the beneficiaries of the ministry of Jesus.³² Jesus welcomes those who are powerless and

²³ J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (I-IX): Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, AB 28 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1981), 179, 192.

²⁴ François Bovon, *Luke 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1:1-9:50*, trans. Christine M. Thomas, ed. Helmut Koester (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 11.

²⁵ Bock, *Luke, Vol. 1: 1:1-9:50*, 22.

²⁶ John T. Carroll, *Luke: A Commentary* (Louisville: WJK, 2012), 14.

²⁷ Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 35.

²⁸ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (I-IX)*, 187.

²⁹ Bovon, *Luke 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1:1-9:50*, 10; Carroll, *Luke*, 14.

³⁰ Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 35.

³¹ Bock, *Luke, Vol. 1: 1:1-9:50*, 20.

³² Carroll, *Luke*, 10.

poor into the kingdom of God.³³ Luke shows that God's loving kindness extends to the outcast (1:50, 54, 58). Other scholars insist that the members of the kingdom of God have a responsibility to serve others. For instance, Richard A. Horsley points out that Jesus requires his audience to help needy people and generously share their possessions with others.³⁴ Morna D. Hooker states that Jesus commands his community to carry out his ethical teaching in their lives.³⁵ Still others, like Fitzmyer, Marshall, and Johnson, contend that the disciples of Jesus should assume responsibility for those in need. The disciples of Jesus are to bear witness to Christ and to follow the way of Jesus through self-sacrifice.³⁶ The beneficiaries of the kingdom of God should live a self-giving and dedicated Christian life as they persevere and await Jesus' second coming (*parousia*).³⁷ They should show their hospitality to all people as God loves them without expectation of anything in return (6:32-36; 10:27-37).³⁸

In his most recent work, Karl Allen Kuhn introduces a new approach to the sociological, narrative, and theological dimensions of Luke-Acts. Social, literary and biblical-theological approaches help Christian readers, particularly Chinese theologians, understand the social-historical background, rhetorical expression, and theological message of the gospel more accurately so that they may live and witness to the gospel of the kingdom of God in their concrete social contexts. Kuhn

³³ Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 24.

³⁴ Richard A. Horsley, *Jesus and Empire: The Kingdom of God and the New World Disorder* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 119.

³⁵ Morna D. Hooker, "Kingdom of God," in *A Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*, eds. R. J. Coggins and J. L. Houlden (London: SCM, 1999), 376.

³⁶ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (I-IX)*, 241, 243.

³⁷ Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 36.

³⁸ Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 24.

investigates certain “key historical, social, literary, and rhetorical features of Luke-Acts.”³⁹ He also draws upon the political, social, economic, and religious character of the first-century Mediterranean world and provides important knowledge of the characteristics of first-century Roman life.⁴⁰ One stark social phenomenon is that the elite lived luxuriously while the vast majority of peasants struggled for survival.⁴¹ Kuhn’s investigation explains why so many people were attracted by the gospel of the kingdom of God and why preaching good news to the poor was so significant. By following Kuhn’s model and exploring the social context of Luke’s audience, I believe I can help the contemporary Church in China better understand what the kingdom of God can mean for them.

Kuhn explains how Luke uses various literary techniques to draw the audience’s attention to the “kingdom story.”⁴² Among such strategies are his birth narrative (1:5-25, 26-38), pronouncement stories (e.g., 4:42-44; 5:33-39), miracle stories (e.g., 4:38-39; 5:12-16), parables (e.g., 15:1-32; 16:19-31), meal scenes (e.g., 5:27-32; 7:36-50), summaries (e.g., 1:80; 2:19-20), and dramatic episodes (24:). In addition, Luke employs patterns and parallels, such as Gabriel’s birth announcements (1:13-17, 30-37) and the passion predictions (9:21-22; 18:32-33), and speeches, such as Elizabeth’s greeting (1:41-45), Mary’s song of praise (1:46-56), Zechariah’s canticle (1:67-80), Jesus’ sermon in Nazareth (4:18-21), and Sermon on the Plain

³⁹ Karl Allen Kuhn, *The Kingdom According to Luke and Acts: A Social, Literary and Theological Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), xv.

⁴⁰ Kuhn, *The Kingdom According to Luke and Acts*, xv.

⁴¹ Kuhn, *The Kingdom According to Luke and Acts*, 15.

⁴² Kuhn, *The Kingdom According to Luke and Acts*, 203.

(6:20-49).⁴³ Luke uses elaborate narrative artistry and rhetorical techniques in order to help his readers understand the kingdom of God and to convince them to receive its blessings.

Kuhn, furthermore, examines the distinctive narrative of Jesus' sovereignty in Luke. Luke regards the "kingdom story" as a continuation of Israel's story. Jesus fulfills God's long-standing promises to redeem God's people. Luke portrays Jesus as Savior (1:11), teacher (6:20-48), prophet (4:21-30), the Christ (9:18-20), the Son of Man (5:17-26; 9:21-27), and the Lord (20:41-44; 22:69). As Savior, Jesus shows his mercy and power to save Israel and all humanity as Yahweh did in the past. As teacher, Jesus instructs his hearers to listen to the word of God and put it into practice. As prophet, Jesus performs mighty acts of healing just like Elijah and Elisha (7:1-17) and declares the word of God (e.g., 5:1; 8:21). Jesus, the Christ, is anointed by God's Spirit for a specifically prophetic mission as he announces in Nazareth (4:18-19, 24-27). Jesus, the Son of Man, exercises his royal power and authority in miraculous works. Jesus, the Lord, has divine identity and rules over creation.⁴⁴ Luke calls his audience to follow Jesus and to become participants in the story of God's kingdom. Having examined the various Christological views presented in Luke's gospel narrative, Kuhn proposes that "one of Luke's chief objectives was to call Theophilus and other members of the elite to abandon their privileged stations and their allegiance to Rome and to embrace the kingdom of God and Jesus as Lord."⁴⁵ In addition, Luke narrates that Jesus extends sincere fellowship to the marginalized and

⁴³ Kuhn, *The Kingdom According to Luke and Acts*, 71-201.

⁴⁴ Kuhn, *The Kingdom According to Luke and Acts*, 217-222.

⁴⁵ Kuhn, *The Kingdom According to Luke and Acts*, 255.

other groups (e.g., 5:29-32; 7:34) because he is convinced that the kingdom of God is a gift also and particularly for them. Theologically, Luke offers his readers an exhaustive “kingdom story” of Jesus.

Kuhn offers thought-provoking and helpful insights into the kingdom of God in Luke. Like Kuhn, I will explore the kingdom of God in Luke from literary, social, and theological perspectives. However, I will focus on Jesus’ ministry, teaching, and parables of the kingdom of God. The context and culture of Luke’s audience are different from that of the Church in China. Thus this thesis will supplement Kuhn’s combined methods with a cross-cultural approach in order to explore the kingdom of God in Luke and apply it to the Chinese context.

The scholars mentioned above have made important contributions to our understanding of the kingdom of God in Luke’s Gospel. This thesis will review their insights and consider implications for the vision and mission of the Church in China.

3. Methodology

During the first half of the twentieth century, theologians such as Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976) and Karl Barth (1886-1968) raised questions about the uses of historical criticism that were naively optimistic, but historical criticism remained the dominant scholarly method of understanding the Bible.⁴⁶ Those who study the Bible using historical criticism aim to answer the questions “What actually happened, and why?”⁴⁷ This requires the scholar to read the text critically and to reconstruct its background. In doing so, they may discover things that challenge their dogmatic

⁴⁶ Edgar Krentz, *The Historical-Critical Method* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 30-32.

⁴⁷ Krentz, *The Historical-Critical Method*, 37.

beliefs.

For me, as a Christian scholar working in a modern college to train pastors for the Church, to use only a historical-critical method is not sufficient. As someone who wants to serve the Church with my scholarship, I must do more than merely establish what really happened in history. I must also be concerned with the meaning of scriptural text in that context. Moreover, I need to consider how biblical meaning can be applied to the faith and practice of the Church. Among contemporary biblical scholars, there are different opinions on the usefulness of historical-critical methods. For instance, Fernando F. Segovia is concerned about contemporary issues such as racism, colonialism, and imperialism. To deal with these issues, he argues in *Decolonizing Biblical Studies: A View from the Margins*, that ideology criticism is more useful than historical criticism, which only produces uncertain historical hypotheses not relevant to our problems today.⁴⁸ In the book, *The Nature of Biblical Criticism*, John Barton strongly argues that historical-critical approaches are not dead and should not be outlawed simply because many scholars are not interested in them. In fact, they can help careful readers to find the plain sense of the Bible and construct appropriate religious belief.⁴⁹ In *Evangelical Faith and the Challenge of Historical Criticism*, Christopher B. Ansberry and Christopher M. Hays promote what they call “faithful criticism” calling evangelical scholars to re-engage with historical criticism so that they may be both “critical and evangelical” to find a “critical faith.”⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Fernando F. Segovia, *Decolonizing Biblical Studies: A View from the Margins* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2000), 34-35, 50-52.

⁴⁹ John Barton, *The Nature of Biblical Criticism* (Louisville: WJK, 2007), 7.

⁵⁰ Christopher B. Ansberry and Christopher M. Hays, “Faithful Criticism and a Critical Faith,” in *Evangelical Faith and the Challenge of Historical Criticism*, ed. Christopher M. Hays and Christopher

Evidently, there is a strong question but also reaffirmation of the usefulness of historical criticism as a tool for biblical research. It depends on the purpose of the scholar. For my purpose, historical approach, faithful criticism, and appropriate contextualization of the Bible are equally important.

There are also reasons specific to my topic that call me to employ a theological method with some reference to social context. Some scholars like Martin Dibelius, Marshall, Philip Francis Esler, and Bock, think that Luke's portrayal of Jesus and teaching on the kingdom of God may not correspond to the historical Jesus but reflect traditions that developed in the preaching of the early Church.⁵¹ Luke's community may have modified them to address their particular situation. This may or may not be the case. They may have just applied the teaching of Jesus to their own situation without changing them. In either case, Luke's social context does need to be considered. I will focus on the final form of the text, because it is authoritative for the Church as the canon of Scripture. The text also is viewed as literature with theological reflection. Therefore, I am going to examine Luke's Gospel as a literary narrative with the method of narrative criticism because this approach enables us to read the gospel closely and in its entirety. Narrative criticism is an approach to the gospels, focusing on the implied reader that lies within the text of scripture.⁵² This approach requires

B. Ansberry (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 208-213.

⁵¹ Martin Dibelius, *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles*, ed. Heinrich Greeven, trans. Mary Ling (London: SCM, 1956), 192-206; Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 35-36; Philip Francis Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 1-2; Michael D. Goulder, *Luke: A New Paradigm*. Vol. I, JSNTSup 20 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 73-128; C. F. Evans, *Saint Luke* (London: SCM, 1990), 30-44; Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 3-10; Darrel L. Bock, *A Theology of Luke and Acts*, BTNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 43-44; Jesper Tang Nielsen and Mogens Møller, eds, *Luke's Literary Creativity* (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2016), xxi-xxiv.

⁵² Mark Allan Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* NTS (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 19.

the reader to begin with the text itself. This method helps scholars learn about the meaning of the text and its theological significance. I will employ this approach to examine Luke's theological understanding of the kingdom of God. Luke's Gospel was written not only to preserve Jesus' teaching but also to address the issues confounding the early Church; therefore, I will also use redaction criticism to discern his particular insights into his social context because this approach helps us see more clearly Luke's interpretation of Jesus. Redaction criticism is an important approach to the Gospels and seeks to explore the ways in which the author structures, presents, and molds the material to express their purposes.⁵³ This method can help scholars find out how the authors of the gospels arranged materials in their particular ways.⁵⁴ I will make use of this approach in order to explore Luke's theological purpose for his intended readers.

Luke's Gospel was written in the first century CE for his readers in the Roman Empire, but we want to consider what his message might mean for the Church in China today. There is obviously a huge gap in time, culture, and language between Luke's readers and Christians in modern China. The text is the same, but the readers and contexts are different. So the final issue to be addressed is, how does Luke's text support and/or criticize the contemporary practice of the Church in China? The cultural and social contexts of the first-century audience of the Gospel of Luke are very different than that of the twenty-first-century Church in China, but I am convinced that the Church in China, which loves the Bible as holy scripture, will benefit from exploring Jesus' teaching on the kingdom of God in the Gospel of Luke

⁵³ Norman Perrin, *What is Redaction Criticism?* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), 2.

⁵⁴ Jonathan Knight, *Luke's Gospel* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 22.

for self-understanding and outreach missions. The research question of this thesis has to do with contemporary relevance for the Church in China, so I shall also employ cross-cultural and contextual approaches as we shall discuss in the conclusion of this thesis in order to assess the theological significance of the kingdom of God in Luke for the Church in China. In summary, this thesis will supplement historical questions with social, literary, and theological questions. For its primary source, my investigation will be based on the text of the Greek New Testament.⁵⁵ English quotations will be cited from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible unless otherwise noted.

⁵⁵ *Novum Testamentum Graece*, Nestle-Aland, 28th rev. ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012).

Chapter 1

The Kingdom of God in the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus

What is the “kingdom of God” in the teaching of Jesus according to Luke?

There are two specific questions regarding this central theme in Jesus’ proclamation that interest me in particular. First, is the kingdom of God an eschatological event, or a present reality, or both? Second, does it have a social dimension? This chapter of my thesis seeks to answer these two questions with a focus on the meaning and significance of the kingdom of God in the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Through careful exegetical analysis of Luke’s narrative, I will argue that in Luke’s Gospel the kingdom of God is a present reality with important implications for social service. I am particularly interested in these two questions regarding the timing and social dimension of the kingdom of God because I believe that they can help the Church in China which values the authority of the Scriptures to define its relation with and missions in the society.

In this chapter, I will engage in a close reading of Luke’s narrative of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection in order to gain a comprehensive view and firm ground for analyzing and understanding Luke’s message regarding the kingdom of God.

1.1 The Life of Jesus

Jesus’ ministry in Luke’s Gospel consists of three stages: ministry in Galilee (4:14-9:50), the journey from Galilee to Jerusalem (9:51-19:40), and the final events in Jerusalem (19:41-24:53). The kingdom of God is manifested in the life of Jesus, including Jesus’ proclamation in Nazareth (4:16-30), Jesus’ miraculous works, and

Jesus' fellowship with the marginalized.

1.1.1 Proclamation

Jesus' sermon in Nazareth in 4:16-30 marks the beginning of Jesus' Galilean ministry in Luke.⁵⁶ It has parallel passages in Matthew 13:53-58 and Mark 6:1-6. Matthew and Mark place Jesus' sermon much later in his ministry, but Luke intentionally moves this event to the beginning of the gospel.⁵⁷ Its placement shows that the synagogue incident is exceptionally significant for Luke. Marshall considers Jesus' inaugural sermon in Nazareth as a paradigm of Jesus' ministry.⁵⁸ Christopher M. Tuckett regards the sermon as a programmatic summary of Jesus' ministry.⁵⁹ But what is the theological function of Jesus' inaugural sermon at Nazareth in relation to Luke's understanding of the kingdom of God? Luke does not give all the details of Jesus' sermon but only presents a summary. This sermon establishes our understanding of the kingdom of God and mission of Jesus in Luke's Gospel because of five fundamental convictions.

First, the basis for this ministry: Jesus is the one anointed by the Holy Spirit with a message of good news (v. 18). Luke explains the nature of Jesus' ministry and defines his messianic role by using Isaiah 61:1-2.⁶⁰ Jesus opens his ministry with the words, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good

⁵⁶ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (I-IX)*, 526.

⁵⁷ Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 177; Fred B. Craddock, *Luke*, Interpretation (Louisville: WJK, 1990), 61; Michael Wolter, *The Gospel According to Luke, Vol. I: 1-9:50*, trans. Wayne Coppins and Christoph Heilig (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2016), 198.

⁵⁸ John Nolland, *Luke 1:1-9:20*, WBC 35A (Dallas: Word, 1989), 202; Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 207.

⁵⁹ Christopher M. Tuckett, *Luke* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 52.

⁶⁰ Craddock, *Luke*, 62; Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 81.

news to the poor” (4:18). The anointing of Jesus designates Jesus as the Messiah with kingly power.

Second, the content of the ministry: the ministry of Jesus consists of preaching good news to the poor, release of the captives, recovery of sight for the blind, liberation of the oppressed, the acceptable year of the Lord, and healing for the Gentiles (vv. 18-19, 25-27). Here the poor and the blind should be regarded as those who are literally poor and literally blind.⁶¹ This interpretation fits the Lukan context. Luke takes a special interest in the poor and other marginalized groups. Preaching good news to the poor is crucial to Jesus’ ministry,⁶² and it is a central theme in Luke, continuing throughout Luke’s Gospel (6:20-23; 7:22; 12:33; 14:13, 21-24; 16:19-31; 18:22).⁶³

Third, the nature of Jesus’ ministry: Jesus announces that the time of fulfillment of the Scripture is now (v. 21). Charles H. Talbert argues that Luke sees Jesus’ ministry in Nazareth as Isaianic prophecies being fulfilled.⁶⁴ I agree with him because Luke regards the kingdom of God as, in part, a present reality. The teaching and action of Jesus make the kingdom present. After reading the scripture from Isaiah, Jesus said, “Today, this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” (4:21). To illustrate the present reality of God’s salvation, Luke immediately presents Jesus’ healing of a man with an unclean demon in Capernaum in 4:31-37. The demon says

⁶¹ Richard J. Cassidy, *Jesus, Politics, and Society: A Study of Luke’s Gospel* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1978), 22.

⁶² Darrell L. Bock, *Luke. Vol.1: 1:1-9:50*, BECNT 3A (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 408.

⁶³ Walter E. Pilgrim, *Good News to the Poor: Wealth and Poverty in Luke-Acts* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1981), 67, 64.

⁶⁴ Charles H. Talbert, “The Lukan Presentation of Jesus’ Ministry in Galilee,” *RE* 64, no. 4 (1967): 486; Pilgrim, *Good News to the Poor*, 66.

that he knows that Jesus is the Holy One of God (4:34) and Jesus rebukes him and orders him to come out of the person (4:35). This miracle indicates that in Jesus the opportunity for God's salvation has already come.⁶⁵ The transformation of the poor and the oppressed occurs today.⁶⁶ Jesus urges his audience to respond to God's salvation.

Fourth, the scope of Jesus' ministry: Jesus' mission of salvation extends to all kinds of people (vv. 23-27). In the infancy narrative, the angels proclaim the good news of Jesus' birth to the shepherds in the wilderness saying, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people" (2:10). They make it very clear that the good news of Jesus is great joy "for all the people," not only for a few selected ones. Simeon presents his prophetic words about the future influence of baby Jesus, saying, "for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel" (2:30-32). This declaration in the Temple clearly indicates that the mission of Jesus will move beyond Israel to include the Gentiles and all nations. John the Baptist as the voice of one crying out in the wilderness also declares that his job is to "prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God" (3:4-6). Jesus' sermon in Nazareth points in this direction, for Jesus tells the story of God's grace to a Gentile woman through Elijah and to a Gentile man through Elisha (vv.

⁶⁵ Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 178; Craddock, *Luke*, 62.

⁶⁶ Craddock, *Luke*, 62.

25-27) in order to indicate his concern for the Gentiles as well as the Jews.⁶⁷ Here Jesus compares his ministry to Elijah's and Elisha's to show that his mission is universal.⁶⁸ Jesus' final words to his disciples also focus on the same theme: preaching repentance and forgiveness of sins in Jesus' name to all nations is the mission of the disciples (24:46-49).⁶⁹ The gospel of the kingdom of God is not only offered to the faithful and the righteous but also to the widow, the unclean, the Gentile, and those who have no status in the society.⁷⁰ Thus God is not only the God of Israel but also the God of the Gentiles.

Fifth, the result of this ministry: Jesus' audience has different responses to his sermon (vv. 22, 28-29). On the one hand, the audience speaks well of him, amazed by his "gracious words," which announce God's mercy for the captive, the sick, and the poor (v. 22). On the other hand, however, they remember Jesus' humble family. He was merely the son of a local carpenter Joseph, so they look down on him and cannot believe that he has credible messages about the kingdom of God. Luke then tells us that the crowd gets angry with Jesus and even tries to toss Jesus over the cliff when he cites prophetic texts (vv. 28-29). Why did they suddenly change their mind and turn against Jesus? In fact, Jesus is rejected, because of his concern for a wider mission beyond the Jewish people who believed themselves to be the only chosen people of God. Jesus talks about the prophet Elijah helping a poor widow (1Kings 17:8-24) and Elisha healing a Syrian general Naaman (2 Kings 5:1-14). Jesus is saying to them that

⁶⁷ Cassidy, *Jesus, Politics, and Society*, 22; Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 82.

⁶⁸ Cassidy, *Jesus, Politics, and Society*, 24.

⁶⁹ Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Luke: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Third Gospel* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 57.

⁷⁰ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 218.

God also loves the poor and the foreigners. The reason that the crowd rejects Jesus becomes clear, namely, they could not appreciate what Jesus said about the kingdom of God. Evidently, Jesus uses prophetic texts to challenge the Jews' contention that God's salvation was reserved only for them.⁷¹ It is no surprise for Luke that later in the narrative, a leprosy Samaritan also becomes a beneficiary of God's salvation and even the only person who returns to give Jesus thanks (17:11-19).

1.1.2 Miraculous Works

The Gospel of Luke preserves various examples of Jesus' miraculous works, including healing the sick, raising the dead, and exorcising demons. Through these miracles, Luke demonstrates that the salvation of the kingdom of God has been realized in Jesus' benevolent ministry. Miraculous works also illustrate the social concern of God's kingdom.

1.1.2.1 Healings

Luke tells a variety of healing miracles of Jesus. These healing stories are found scattered in the Gospel of Luke (e.g., 4:38-39; 5:12-16).⁷² The term *iaomai* (to heal) appears eleven times in Luke's Gospel which is more than in any other gospel.⁷³ A great number of sick people are healed, including women, such as Simon's mother-in-law (4:38-39), a woman with a hemorrhage lasting for twelve years (8:43-48), and a crippled woman (13:10-17), two lepers (5:12-16; 17:11-19), paralytics (5:17-26), a blind man in Jericho (18:35-43), and those who were suffering

⁷¹ Craig G. Bartholomew, Joel B. Green and Anthony C. Thiselton, eds. *Reading Luke: Interpretation, Reflection, Formation*, SHS 6 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 244.

⁷² See also Luke 17-26; 6:6-11; 7:1-10; 8:40-56; 13:10-17; 14:1-6; 17:11-19; 18:35-43; 22:50-51.

⁷³ Culpepper, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 436.

from other kinds of diseases (6:6-11; 7:1-10; 14:1-6; 22:50-51). Healing stories communicate two characteristics of the kingdom of God in Luke. First, Jesus treats the marginalized with compassion and love. The lepers (5:12-16; 17:11-19), a woman with a hemorrhage (8:43-48), and a man with edema (14:1-6) were isolated socially in their culture because they were infectious and were regarded as ritually unclean (Lev. 13:2; 15:19-31). However, Jesus receives those whom the society rejects and cares for them.⁷⁴ Jesus restores them to their families or communities through healing. The women, the lepers, the paralytic, and the blind were also socially marginalized in the Hellenistic world. Jesus enters into their isolation and reverses their condition, demonstrating that the gospel of the kingdom is given for them also. The low-ranking people of society are the recipients of the kingdom. According to the Lukan Jesus, human need even takes precedence over Sabbath observance (6:6-11; 13:10-17; 14:1-6). Jesus' concern for the marginalized is unmistakable.

Second, the kingdom of God is for outsiders and Gentiles. Jesus' healing of a woman with a hemorrhage (8:43-48) and healing of two lepers (5:12-17; 17:11-19) demonstrate that the kingdom of God extends to outsiders. Both the woman with a hemorrhage and the lepers live in isolation from their communities because of their diseases and impurity. Green points out that Luke wants to emphasize that even outsiders may receive the salvation of God.⁷⁵ Jesus' healings of the ten lepers and the centurion's slave also demonstrate that the Gentiles are the recipients of the kingdom

⁷⁴ Craddock, *Luke*, 71.

⁷⁵ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 620.

of God.⁷⁶ The story of the Samaritan leper echoes the story of the Syrian leper Naaman (2 Kings 5:1-14) in Jesus' sermon in Nazareth (4:25-27). Ironically, only a Gentile receives the full blessing of Jesus' ministry (17:19).⁷⁷ The irony can also be seen in the story of the Roman Centurion in Capernaum in which Jesus commends the centurion, saying he has not found such great faith even in Israel (7:9). Clearly, Jesus invites all peoples, Jewish and Gentile, into the kingdom of God, for the gospel of the kingdom is prepared for all nations.

1.1.2.2 Raising the Dead

Luke reports two incredible stories of Jesus' miracles raising the dead, namely, restoring the life of the widow of Nain's son (7:11-17) and bringing Jairus's daughter back to life (8:40-42, 49-56). The story of raising the widow's son in Nain from death is unique to Luke. Fred B. Craddock states that the story of the dead being raised in Nain anticipates Jesus' response to John's question: "The dead are raised" (7:20).⁷⁸ I agree that this arrangement is probably due to Luke's redaction. Luke not only uses this miracle story to illustrate Jesus' divine authority over death but also to express his theological message of Jesus' love for his community. Luke particularly states that the woman is a "widow" and the dead man is her "only son" (7:12). The woman has already lost her husband and now she loses her only child. So, the situation of the widow is miserable and desperate, going from bad to worse. She has no family now and is in a hopeless and dire situation. As the story turns out, fortunately, the merciful

⁷⁶ Craddock, *Luke*, 94; Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 285; Graham H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Miracle Worker: A Historical and Theological Study* (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 1999), 153.

⁷⁷ Craddock, *Luke*, 203.

⁷⁸ Craddock, *Luke*, 97-98.

Jesus encounters her in her sorrow and misery. By showing compassion for the widow, a broken-hearted woman, Jesus vividly demonstrates his concern for those who are hopeless.⁷⁹ As soon as Jesus sees the widow losing her son in Nain, he has sympathy for her and speaks to her, “Do not weep” (7:13). The Greek word for “weep” (*klaiein*) occurs in a beatitude in the Sermon on the Plain, “Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.” (6:21). Jesus not only comforts the widow but also gives her the hope of the life. Jesus reassures the woman that he will turn her mourning into laughter. Put another way, the woman will experience the incredible joy of salvation of God. She will also testify that the kingdom of God has already come in Jesus’ ministry.⁸⁰ When Jesus stops the funeral procession, he touches the bier and says, “Young man, I say to you, rise!” (7:14). Then and there, Jesus enacts the astonishing and exclusive divine power over death. The dead man sits up and begins to speak (7:15). After that, Jesus gives the widow her son back after his life is restored (7:15). Marshall correctly notices that, while displaying Jesus’ divine power to raise the son from the dead, Luke describes how Jesus also ironically shows his humanity to those in hopeless situations.⁸¹

In this miracle story, Luke emphasizes the fulfillment of Jesus’ mission to “bring good news to the poor” (4:18).⁸² Green is right to point out that, through this miracle that helps a widow, Luke identifies Jesus as a compassionate benefactor of the poor, among whom a widow is the most pitiable.⁸³ In his sermon in Nazareth, Jesus

⁷⁹ Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 214.

⁸⁰ Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, 321.

⁸¹ Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 285.

⁸² Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 120.

⁸³ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 290.

speaks of the works of Elijah and Elisha, citing in particular Elijah's ministry to the widow at Zarephath (4:26). The story of Jesus' raising the widow's son echoes Elijah's ministry. The hopeless widow in Nain gets back her restored son. It shows the salvation of God, through Jesus, will reach those who are poor and hopeless.

1.1.2.3 Exorcism

Luke offers four stories of Jesus' exorcisms in his Gospel (4:31-37; 8:26-39; 9:37-43; 11:14-20). What does it mean theologically to affirm that Jesus exorcises demons? What does it mean for our understanding of the kingdom of God in Luke? First, Luke reminds his audience that the kingdom of God is seen through Jesus' exorcism. Some scholars including Johnson and Marshall argue that Jesus' exorcism signals the kingdom of God has come.⁸⁴ Jesus' exorcism should be regarded as evidence that the kingdom of God has been present in Jesus.⁸⁵ The parallel phrases "the greatness of God" and "all that [Jesus] was doing" in Luke 9:43 highlight the manifestation of God's majesty in Jesus' work. Jesus also claims that if he casts out demons by the power of God then the kingdom of God has appeared (11:20). The destruction of Satan's kingdom symbolizes the beginning of the kingdom of God.⁸⁶

Second, these stories show Jesus' concern for those who are possessed by demons. Jesus delivers those who suffer under the power of demons from their torment and restores the possessed person to wellbeing.⁸⁷ Although the demon throws

⁸⁴ Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 474; Culpepper, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 241; Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 183.

⁸⁵ G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 75; Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 457.

⁸⁶ Robert O' Toole, "The Kingdom of God in Luke-Acts," in *The Kingdom of God in 20th-Century Interpretation*, ed. Wendell Willis (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987), 161; Graham H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Miracle Worker: A Historical and Theological Study* (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 1999), 177.

⁸⁷ Culpepper, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 186.

down the man in the Capernaum synagogue, this action does not harm him (4:35).

This illustrates “the power and gentleness of Jesus’ ministry.”⁸⁸ Luke uses pathos to draw forth Jesus’ pity for the man in Gerasene. The Gerasene demoniac not only lives among the tombs but also has no clothes or home (8:27). Elsewhere, Jesus hands an epileptic boy whom he has healed to his father (9:41-42). The sympathetic gesture is clear. The fact that Jesus frees those who are possessed not only shows his care but also fulfills the promise of deliverance of the captives in the inaugural sermon in Nazareth, where Jesus announces his mission to relieve, release, heal, and restore life.⁸⁹

Third, Jesus sends disciples to preach the good news of the kingdom of God to others. Jesus delivers the man in Gerasene from the bondage of demons. The man wants to be with Jesus, but Jesus sends him to his home and instructs him to declare all that God has done for him in his hometown. It is obvious that Jesus’ healing of the Gerasene demoniac foreshadows the mission to the Gentile world. Luke not only demonstrates that the Gentiles are recipients of the kingdom of God but also underlines that those who have experienced the salvation of God should take responsibility for evangelism to all peoples, for God’s salvation is universal.⁹⁰

1.1.3 Fellowship with the Marginalized

The Lukan gospel pays particular attention to the poor, the sick, women, and the Gentiles in order to show that God’s salvation is for everyone, especially the

⁸⁸ Twelftree, *Jesus the Miracle Worker*, 147.

⁸⁹ Culpepper, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 110.

⁹⁰ Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 341.

marginalized.⁹¹ Jesus has fellowship with outcasts (5:29-32; 7:36-50; 15:1-2; 19:1-10). In Greco-Roman antiquity, table fellowship was treated as an expression of intimacy, solidarity, and acceptance.⁹² Jesus' eating with the marginalized illustrates that they are candidates for the kingdom of God.

1.1.3.1 The Poor

The Greek term *ptōchos* ("poor") appears ten times in Luke's Gospel.⁹³ As a matter of fact, the underprivileged receive special attention in the Gospel of Luke.⁹⁴ The *Magnificat* (1:46-55) sets the tone for this theme. In her hymn, Mary praises God for lifting up and blessing the less fortunate (1:52-53).⁹⁵ God consciously cares for and reaches out to those without status and power in the society (1:48, 52). Jesus' preaching good news to the poor is an important theme in the Gospel of Luke (4:18; 6:20-23; 7:22). In these passages, the kingdom of God is offered especially to the impoverished. In his synagogue address in 4:16-20, for instance, Jesus announces that the gospel is for the poor (4:18). In 6:21, Jesus issues a beatitude for the poor; they will be filled. In 7:22, Jesus highlights again that the gospel is preached to the destitute.

Furthermore, Jesus responds to the need of the impecunious to whom Jesus

⁹¹ Cassidy, *Jesus, Politics, and Society*, 77.

⁹² Green, *The Theology of the Gospel of Luke*, 87.

⁹³ Luke 4:18c; 6:20; 7:22; 14:13, 21; 16:20, 22; 18:22; 19:8; 21:3; thirty-four times in the New Testament in Eben Scheffler, "Compassionate Action: Living According to Luke's Gospel," in *Identity, Ethics, and Ethos in the New Testament*, eds. Jan G. van der Watt and Francois S. Malan (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), 90.

⁹⁴ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991), 98. The Greek term *ptochos* ("poor") is used ten times in Luke's Gospel, five times each in Mark and Matthew in Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 98; S. John Roth, *The Blind, the Lame, and the Poor: Character Types in Luke-Acts*, JSNT-Sup 144 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 11; Bock, *A Theology of Luke and Acts*, 247.

⁹⁵ Scheffler, "Compassionate Action," 90.

ministers.⁹⁶ Jesus commands that the poor be invited to the banquet (14:13, 21-24) and exhorts people to sell what they have and give material things to help the destitute (12:33; 18:22). That Lazarus is blessed in the afterlife reinforces this theme. In 16:19-31, the rich man did not show compassion toward those in need in his earthly life. God condemns the rich man for failing to care for his neighbor, Lazarus, whom he should have helped. The rich man was selfish and ignored his social responsibility towards Lazarus. Luke reminds his readers of the danger of ignoring the needs of the poverty stricken. The children of God should care for the poor and share what they have with them, for God shows concern for people in need. Eben Scheffler contends that there is a sharp discrepancy between the rich and the poor in the Lukan community itself (e.g., 1:53; 4:18; 6:20-21; 7:22; 14:13, 21; 16:19-31; 18:22; 21:3), so first and foremost Luke calls for the wealthy members to care for the poor in his own community.⁹⁷

1.1.3.2 Women

Women are welcome in the kingdom of God. In the ancient Mediterranean world, women had no status and power in society; they lived on the margins.⁹⁸

Women are another group of the underprivileged in Luke's Gospel. Luke is interested in demonstrating Jesus' concern for women (7:11-17; 13:10-17; 18:1-8; 20:45-47). A relatively large number of women benefited from Jesus' healing ministry in Luke.⁹⁹

As we have seen earlier, he healed Simon's mother-in-law of a high fever (4:38-39)

⁹⁶ Pilgrim, *Good News to the Poor*, 55.

⁹⁷ Scheffler, "Compassionate Action," 80-81.

⁹⁸ Green, *The Theology of the Gospel of Luke*, 91.

⁹⁹ Green, *The Theology of the Gospel of Luke*, 93.

and restored the family of a widow in Nain by raising her only son (7:10-17). Jesus also healed a number of other women from “evil spirits and infirmities” (8:2), a woman with a flow of blood (8:42-48) and a woman who lived for eighteen years with a disabling spirit (13:10-13). Luke uses these stories about women to illustrate that the kingdom reaches out to those who are weak and vulnerable in a culture of gender discrimination. These women play a vital role as witnesses to the kingdom of God and what God has done for them through Jesus.

Notably, Luke presents a wonderful story of Jesus’ forgiving the sinful woman who anoints his feet in the home of Simon the Pharisee (7:36-50). This story of love and forgiveness is unique to Luke. Luke uses it as an illustration of Jesus’ association with sinners. In the story Jesus breaks the Jewish convention and befriends a sinful woman because the kingdom of God is for such people. With this story Luke asks his readers to accept notorious sinners into their community as Jesus has done. It is significant to note that Jesus forgives the woman’s sins on the ground of her love and her faith. First, Jesus contrasts the woman’s affection for Jesus and the lack of hospitality shown by Simon the Pharisee. The woman’s loving action is the result of her forgiveness.¹⁰⁰ In other words, Jesus has forgiven the woman, so she shows her lavish love to Jesus in response. Love comes from forgiveness, and her forgiveness is attested by her love. Receiving forgiving grace of God is proportional to loving God (v. 47) because God is just. Second, the woman’s forgiveness is declared to be on basis of her faith (v. 47). The woman’s forgiveness arises from her faith, which is

¹⁰⁰ Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 305.

illustrated in her concrete actions toward Jesus:¹⁰¹ she “stands behind him [Jesus] at his feet, weeping, ...bathing his feet with her tears, ...drying them with her hair, ...kissing his feet and anointing them with the ointment” (v. 38). Faith is the prerequisite for receiving the grace of God. This is also a consistent theme in the Gospel of Luke (7:50; 8:48; 17:19; 18:42). Jesus graciously extends the grace of God to those who humbly approach him. Luke exhorts his audience to put faith in Jesus and to reach him because he is the Lord (2:11; 11:1; 24:34).¹⁰²

Women have neither status nor power in the first-century Roman world, but Luke raises up the social status of women in that patriarchal society. This can be seen in the Lukan parallelism of male and female characters alternately narrated. For instance, Simeon and Anna in Jesus’ infancy narrative (2:25-38), the widow of Zarephath and Naaman the Syrian in Jesus’ sermon in Nazareth (4:25-28), the demon-possessed man of Capernaum and Simon’s mother-in-law (4:31-39), the centurion of Capernaum and the widow of Nain (7:1-17), the twelve disciples and women followers (8:1-3), the shepherd with ninety-nine sheep and the woman with ten silver coins (15:3-10), the persistent widow and the repentant tax collector (18:1-14).¹⁰³ Luke’s parallel presentation demonstrates the equality of men and women. It is highly probable that Luke calls his audience to treat women with respect and care, even though they are the neglected group in the society.

¹⁰¹ Bock, *Luke*, 689.

¹⁰² See also Luke 5:8, 12; 6:5, 16; 7:6, 13, 31; 9:54, 61; 10:1, 17, 40; 11:39; 12:41-42; 13:15; 17:5, 37; 18:41; 19:8, 31, 34; 22:31, 38, 61.

¹⁰³ Scheffler, “Compassionate Action,” 100-101.

1.1.3.3 Sinners and Tax Collectors

Sinners and tax collectors are yet another two groups of recipients of the kingdom of God. The Greek term “*hamartolos*” (“sinner”) is used eighteen times in Luke,¹⁰⁴ so it is evident that Luke calls attention to sinners.¹⁰⁵ In Jewish society, where religious leaders were also civil leaders, sinners were often excluded from the common life of the community, but Jesus accepted them as friends (e.g., 5:1-11, 27-32). Jesus’ opponents frequently complain about his receiving and having fellowship with such people (5:27-32; 7:30, 34, 36-50; 15:1-2; 19:7). However, each time they complain, Jesus teaches his opponents that the salvation of God extends to sinners. One of the missions of Jesus is to call sinners to repent (5:30-32). And Jesus presents himself as a “friend of sinners.”¹⁰⁶ Sławomir Szkredka contends, “Luke then uses sinners to illustrate the far-reaching scope of Jesus’ messianic mission.”¹⁰⁷

Even tax collectors, the common enemies of all people, are included in the kingdom of God. Under the taxation system of the colonial rule of the Roman Empire, tax collectors were regarded as greedy and despicable traitors who exploited their own people to serve the colonial power and were therefore hated and socially marginalized.¹⁰⁸ In Luke’s Gospel, this group of people is often mentioned in the same breath as sinners (5:27-32; 7:29, 34; 18:9-14; and 19:1-10).¹⁰⁹ These passages show that the kingdom of God reaches out to the outcasts. It is noteworthy that Luke

¹⁰⁴ Sławomir Szkredka, *Sinners and Sinfulness in Luke: A Study of Direct and Indirect References in the Initial Episodes of Jesus’ Activity*, WUZNT 2, Reihe, 434 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 2.

¹⁰⁵ Craig G. Bartholomew, Joel B. Green and Anthony C. Thiselton, eds. *Reading Luke: Interpretation, Reflection, Formation*, SHS 6 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 245.

¹⁰⁶ Ralph P. Martin, “Salvation and Discipleship in Luke’s Gospel,” in *Interpretation* 30 (1976): 374.

¹⁰⁷ Szkredka, *Sinners and Sinfulness in Luke*, 4.

¹⁰⁸ Bock, *A Theology of Luke and Acts*, 248.

¹⁰⁹ Bock, *A Theology of Luke and Acts*, 248.

records the story of Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector (19:1-10). The story is unique to Luke. Based on this story, two messages regarding God's kingdom are apparent. First, the salvation of God has come to the outcasts. Jesus sees Zacchaeus on a sycamore tree, and says, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today" (19:5). The Greek term "*dei*" ("must") carries the meaning of divine imperative.¹¹⁰ Jesus' declaration suggests that it is within the divine plan for Jesus to bring salvation to Zacchaeus. That is why Jesus has to stay at Zacchaeus' home. "Today" (*sēmeron*) suggests that the kingdom of God is already present in Jesus' ministry. It is the time of redemption. Obviously, the Jewish leaders could not understand why Jesus would associate himself with such abhorrent people (19:7).¹¹¹ They consider tax collectors as traitors who should not be included in the salvation of God. But Jesus pronounces that he comes precisely to seek out and save the lost (19:10). He also says, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick" (5:31). When Zacchaeus comes down from the sycamore tree, Jesus declares, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham" (19:9). Zacchaeus encounters the "today" of salvation, echoing what Jesus says in 4:21: "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." Jesus welcomes Zacchaeus into the kingdom of God because tax collectors like him are candidates for salvation.

Second, Jesus' gospel of the kingdom of God can change the lives of those

¹¹⁰ Stein, *Luke*, 467.

¹¹¹ Thomas J. Lane, *Luke and the Gentile Mission: Gospel Anticipates Acts* (Europäische Hochschulschriften: Peter Lang, 1996), 49.

who respond to him with repentance.¹¹² When he welcomes Jesus to his home, Zacchaeus the despised tax collector whom others have shunned finds himself warmly accepted by God. Jesus moved him to change his view of the world and his value of life. Learning from Jesus, he now loves people more than money and justice more than trickery, and he says to Jesus, “Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much” (19:8). His positive, dramatic response to the salvation of God reveals a radical transformation of Zacchaeus’ life.¹¹³ Zacchaeus’ transformation is manifested in deeds of compensation and charity. At that moment, Jesus declares Zacchaeus to be “saved” because of his willingness to accept Jesus and reorient his life to help the poor, though he was regarded a sinner in the eyes of the public.¹¹⁴ The transformed Zacchaeus is now willing to give away his possessions for the service of the needy.¹¹⁵ The story of Zacchaeus shows that the gospel of the kingdom has great power to save souls and change lives. In this sense, Zacchaeus provides a good example of proper response to the salvation of God. Luke probably wants to exhort his audience that sharing wealth with the poor is obligatory for all believers.

I have examined above the power of the kingdom of God as embodied in the life of Jesus in Luke’s narrative in order to argue that (1) believers experience this power as a present reality, (2) its grace of salvation has been offered to all the people, especially the poor, the most vulnerable of the society, and even the most despised,

¹¹² Bock, *A Theology of Luke and Acts*, 355.

¹¹³ John Nolland, *Luke 18: 35-24:53*, WBC 35 C (Dallas: Word, 1993), 907.

¹¹⁴ Lane, *Luke and the Gentile Mission*, 57.

¹¹⁵ Joel B. Green, “God News to Whom? Jesus and the ‘Poor’ in the Gospel of Luke,” in *Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ. Essays on the Historical Jesus and New Testament Christology*, ed. Joel B. Green and Max Turner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 71-72.

and (3) it can change the lives of those who accept Jesus' message about the kingdom of God and amend their lives accordingly.

In the following, I will argue that the kingdom of God in Luke has already come also in Jesus' death and resurrection.

1.2 The Death of Jesus

Luke interprets the events of Jesus' death in a particular way worthy to be noted. On the human level Jesus' death is caused by the Jewish leaders' hostility, but Luke wants his readers to know that Jesus' crucifixion is within God's plan.¹¹⁶ Jesus clearly realizes that the divine plan concerning his death must be fulfilled and is willing to walk toward Jerusalem (22:37). Jesus' crucifixion has nothing to do with personal guilt. Rather, his death reveals the special nature of the kingdom of God and some characteristics of discipleship.

1.2.1 Jesus' Death Is Divine Necessity

In the passion narrative of his gospel, Luke emphasizes that Jesus is innocent of any wrongdoing. Jesus' suffering and death are a matter of divine and scriptural necessity. First, Jesus predicts three times that he must suffer (9:22, 44; 18:32-33). Jesus' death is presented as the fulfillment of God's will, which is spoken of as a divine "must" ("*dei*" in Greek, 9:22; 22:37) and "preordained" (22:22).¹¹⁷ In the first passion prediction, Jesus stresses that "the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised" (9:22). The same announcement recurs in the second passion

¹¹⁶ Stein, *Luke*, 579.

¹¹⁷ Kuhn, *The Kingdom According to Luke and Acts*, 140.

prediction: “Let these words sink into your ears: the Son of Man is going to be betrayed into human hands” (9:44). Moreover, Jesus predicts that he will suffer at the Last Supper when he says, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer” (22:15). Through these predictions and announcements, Luke wants his readers to know that Jesus knows ahead of time what will happen to him in Jerusalem and that his death is part of God’s plan to redeem the world.

Second, Jesus’ death in Jerusalem fulfills scriptural prophecy. This event is spoken of as being “in fulfillment of what is written in the prophets” (18:31), and “this scripture must be fulfilled in me” (22:37).¹¹⁸ Only Luke, of all the Gospel writers, uses the fulfillment formula (18:31; 22:37) as an expression of divine necessity.¹¹⁹ In 18:31, Jesus foretells his death a third time, saying, “See, we are going to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by prophets will be accomplished.”¹²⁰ The same formula is repeated in 22:37. Jesus died between two criminals in completion of Scripture (23:33; cf. Isa. 53:12). His garments were divided by lot in fulfillment of Scripture (23:34; cf. Ps. 22:18). He was mocked in fulfillment of Scripture (23:35; cf. Ps. 22:67). For Luke, all of these events happened in fulfillment of prophecy. Jesus’ death is not a tragedy but the culmination of God’s design.

1.2.2 Jesus Is Innocent

Luke demonstrates Jesus’ innocence in detail. This is seen in the declaration of

¹¹⁸ Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 349.

¹¹⁹ Markan and Matthean passion predictions contain similar expressions of divine necessity (Matt. 16:21; 26:54; Mark 8:31) and scriptural fulfillment (Matt. 26:54; Mark 9:12; 14:21, 27); Kuhn, *The Kingdom According to Luke and Acts*, 140.

¹²⁰ Kuhn, *The Kingdom According to Luke and Acts*, 123.

his guiltlessness by Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor (23:4), Herod Antipas (23:15), a thief (23:39-43), and a centurion (23:47). Each of them testifies to Jesus' sinlessness.

Pilate makes three declarations of Jesus' blamelessness, none of which has parallels in Mark or Matthew (23:4, 14, 22). The religious authorities deliver Jesus to Pilate for a guilty verdict, but Pilate three times declares Jesus' incorruptibility. In his first proclamation of Jesus' innocence, Pilate declares, "I find no basis for an accusation against this man" (23:4), literally, "I have found no cause."¹²¹ Luke deliberately contrasts the "I find" here to the "we have found" in 23:2.¹²² Additionally, Luke indicates that Pilate sought three times to release Jesus (23:16, 20, 22). Pilate ultimately delivers Jesus to be crucified to "their will" (23:25). Thus Jesus' blamelessness was quite clear to Luke's readers because the accusations against Jesus are unconvincing.¹²³ Though Pilate is an accomplice, the Jewish leadership that instigates the trial of Jesus is most responsible for Jesus' crucifixion.

Jesus' probity is further testified by the tetrarch, Herod Antipas, who confesses Jesus' lack of corruptibility (23:6-15). Herod Antipas' judgment of Jesus is unique to Luke (23:15). Luke's motivation for recording this account is not told, but it is likely that Luke regards Jesus' appearance before Herod Antipas as a fulfillment of Psalm 2:1-2: "Why do the nations conspire, and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth [Herod] set themselves, and the rulers [Pontius Pilate] take counsel together, against the Lord [God] and his anointed [Jesus]." Furthermore, Luke presents another

¹²¹ Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 365.

¹²² Stein, *Luke*, 575.

¹²³ P. Benoit, *The Passion and Resurrection of Jesus* (New York: Herder, 1969), 143.

testimony to Jesus' virtue from Pilate (23:15).¹²⁴

It is interesting to note that a criminal crucified with Jesus also admits that Jesus is not a wrongdoer (23:39-43). This detail is unique to Luke's Gospel. Mark 15:32 and Matthew 27:44 refer only to the criminals insulting Jesus, Luke adds that one of the criminals gives a jeer that if Jesus were the Messiah he should save himself and them. The other criminal rebukes him and contrasts their guilt with Jesus' innocence.¹²⁵ Fitzmyer notices that this assessment of Jesus comes from one who suffers the same conviction.¹²⁶ Luke's readers, therefore, should believe that Jesus is righteous even though he is crucified between two criminals.

A Roman centurion who witnesses all that takes place at the scene of crucifixion also recognizes that Jesus is inculpable (23:47). There is a sharp contrast between the comments of the centurion in the Lukan story and those in Mark 15:39 and Matthew 27:54, where the centurion confesses: "Surely this man/he was the Son of God."¹²⁷ For Luke, the centurion's confession concerning Jesus' uprightness is more important than Christological confession in Mark. Being the Son of God would imply that Jesus was righteous, but, in the Lukan context, "righteous" could be understood as "innocent," for the centurion could not honor a criminal as Son of God. Again, "righteous" also carries the sense of innocence in Luke (23:4, 14-15, 22, 41).¹²⁸ For Luke, the centurion's testimony to Jesus' inculpability enables readers to know that

¹²⁴ Stein, *Luke*, 577.

¹²⁵ Craddock, *Luke*, 273.

¹²⁶ J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (X-XXIV): Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, AB 28A (Garden City: Doubleday, 1985), 1509-1510.

¹²⁷ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (X-XXIV)*, 1520.

¹²⁸ François Bovon, *Luke 3: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 19:28-24:53*, trans. James Crouch, ed. Helmut Koester (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 327.

Jesus is righteous even though he dies as a “criminal.”

1.2.3 Jesus’ Death and the Kingdom of God

Jesus’ crucifixion fulfills God’s plan of salvation, reveals God’s special concern for the lowly, and offers implications for discipleship.

1.2.3.1 The Kingdom of God Is For the Lowly and Despised

People of lower social status are also included in the kingdom of God. In the scene of Jesus’ arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, a disciple of Jesus (Peter, according to John 18:10) tries to defend Jesus by cutting off the ear of a servant of the high priest. Like other gospel writers, Luke reports the wounded servant’s social and professional status: he was a “servant” (NRSV, NIV, REB) or even a “slave” (RSV, NASB, GNB). He also specifically speaks of his “right” ear (22:50), which is not mentioned in the parallels of Matthew or Mark.¹²⁹ These details show Luke pays close attention to Jesus’ healing of the high priest’s servant. In the mind of the disciple, Jesus should not rebuke him because the servant of the high priest deserves punishment. The disciple may think Jesus will commend him for providing protection. Thus Jesus’ response must go beyond his expectation. In my view, Jesus’ reaction to that disciple’s impulsive action demonstrates that even the lowly servant who is sent there to arrest Jesus should not be hurt. Jesus’ love for the servant of the high priest is shown in his rebuke of the disciple and his healing of the servant. Jesus invites everyone, including his opponents, into the kingdom through his concrete action of love. Jesus’ action indicates that the kingdom of God extends to the lowly even

¹²⁹ Cf. John does mention the right ear (18:10).

though he is an enemy. Thus the story of the healing of the servant in Gethsemane reinforces the social concerns of the kingdom of God.

The despised are also welcomed into the kingdom of God. As Jesus is crucified on the cross, one of the two criminals asks Jesus to remember him when he enters into his kingdom. Jesus immediately announces that the criminal will be with him in the Paradise that day (23:43).¹³⁰ The account of Jesus' pledge and the criminal's petition are unique to Luke. According to the Lukan Jesus, the criminals being executed for their crimes may have a place in the kingdom of God. Those who are helpless and willingly approach Jesus will receive God's salvation.¹³¹ The words addressed to the criminal echo the proclamation of release to the captives and liberty to the oppressed in 4:18.¹³² Luke wants his readers to know that the kingdom of God is not only for the poor and the hungry but also for the lowly and the despised.

1.2.3.2 Discipleship and the Kingdom of God

Jesus' death reveals key characteristics of the life of true discipleship in the kingdom of God, which include service, prayer, love, righteousness, faith, and obedience. These virtues are a vital and necessary part of the Christian life.

(1) Service. Greatness in God's kingdom is service. The disciples' dispute over greatness is found in all three Synoptic Gospels.¹³³ Both Matthew and Mark place this scene before Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem (Matt. 20:25-28; Mark 10:42-45), but Luke moves it to the Passover supper (22:24-30). The dispute serves as an occasion

¹³⁰ Herman Hendrickx, *The Passion Narratives of the Synoptic Gospels* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1977), 125.

¹³¹ Stein, *Luke*, 593-594.

¹³² Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave*. Vol. 2 (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 1002.

¹³³ Luke 22:24-30 has parallels in Mark 10:35-45 and Matthew 20:20-28.

for Jesus to teach what greatness in God's kingdom really means.¹³⁴ In fact, Luke has already presented such teaching in 9:46-48. Luke here again suggests that humble service is important to his readers. Jesus contrasts the character of the world with what it means to be great in God's kingdom. In this world those who have authority are served by others under them. In contrast, greatness in the kingdom of God is serving rather than being served. The leader should become like a servant (Matt. 20:26-27; Mark 10:43-44).¹³⁵ Luke uses Jesus as an example to illustrate this principle. Jesus' authority is exercised by service: he is "among them as the one who serves" (22:27). Thus to be great in the kingdom is to follow Jesus and serve people.¹³⁶ Jesus knows that service is challenging for his followers; thus, he promises that they will share the benefits of his kingdom with him, dining with him in God's kingdom and judging Israel (22:30). Such promises are designed to encourage the disciples to serve others humbly as Jesus did. John Nolland further asserts that Jesus' death is an example of humble service.¹³⁷ Luke reminds his readers, and especially the leaders among them, that true greatness in God's kingdom is characterized by humble service to others.

(2) Prayer. Prayer enables the disciples to be victorious over temptations. Luke shortens Markan material and eliminates a number of details (22:39-46).¹³⁸ Luke uses

¹³⁴ Stein, *Luke*, 548.

¹³⁵ Culpepper, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 425.

¹³⁶ Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 349.

¹³⁷ Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, 1068.

¹³⁸ This includes the omission of the name "Gethsemane;" the names of Peter, James, and John; the threefold return of Jesus to the sleeping disciples; Jesus' rebuke of the disciples for not praying; and the description of Jesus' sorrow. Both Mark and Matthew have eleven verses; whereas Luke only has seven verses. The Synoptic Gospels record Jesus' retreat with his disciples after the Last Supper to pray to God (Matt. 26:30, 36-46; Mark 14:26, 32-42; Luke 22:39-46). In Luke, Jesus comes to the Mount of Olives after the Last Supper with his disciples and prays to his Father.

an *inclusio*, “pray that you will not fall into temptation” (22:40b, 46c), to frame the episode. Luke shifts the focus of attention from Jesus’ own temptation (22:28) to the disciples’. Again, Luke uses the twofold command to pray (22:40b, 46c) in order to heighten the importance of prayer. The hour when the disciples face Satan’s sifting (22:31) has come, thus the disciples especially need to pray. As Jesus teaches in the Lord’s Prayer in 11:4, they are to pray, “Lead us not into temptation.” The disciples should arm themselves with prayer at any crucial time lest they fail in temptations. In the Last Supper, Jesus predicts to Simon that Satan will shake the faith of all his disciples (Greek is *humas*, you plural; 22:31) and he continues to say “I have prayed for you” (*su*, you singular, referring to Peter; 22:32), so that Peter can strengthen his brothers when he turns back from his denial (22:32). This is the reason why Peter’s denial of Jesus three times in the courtyard of the high priest does not end with apostasy (22:32). Robert H. Stein is right to attribute that to Jesus’ prayer.¹³⁹ A. A. Trites maintains that for Luke prayer was seen as a vital and necessary part of the Christian life both individually and corporately.¹⁴⁰ The readers of Luke might question why Jesus eventually died on the cross even though he prayed earnestly to his Father. Luke explains that Jesus’ death is purely divine necessity (cf., 22:37). Jesus’ prayer (22:42) reveals that, knowing that his death was God’s will, Jesus was willing to submit to God’s intentions despite his own personal desire. As such, Jesus’ prayer serves as a pattern for those who are willing to commit themselves to God’s plan.

(3) Love. Jesus shows his compassion and forgiveness to his enemies through

¹³⁹ Stein, *Luke*, 52.

¹⁴⁰ Allison A. Trites, “The Prayer Motif in Luke-Acts,” in *Perspectives on Luke-Acts*, ed. C. H. Talbert (Dancill: Association of Baptist Professors of Religion, 1978), 178.

concrete actions. In healing the ear of the high priest's servant Jesus demonstrates the commandment of love of enemies in 6:35.¹⁴¹ During his arrest, Peter strikes a servant of the high priest and cuts off his right ear.¹⁴² Jesus rebukes Peter and heals the servant. The detail of this healing act is peculiar to Luke and demonstrates Jesus' love of enemies in word and deed. Similarly, in praying for his executioners (23:34), Jesus exemplifies the attitudes of absolution and kindness toward enemies.¹⁴³ This prayer is unique to Luke and heightens Jesus' message concerning love of enemies. From the beginning at his Galilean ministry, Luke portrays Jesus as bringer of God's salvation.¹⁴⁴ At the very end of his life, Jesus also manifests the character of his own message about love of enemies. Jesus carries out his redemptive mission including healing and forgiveness throughout his life.

(4) Righteousness, faith, and obedience. The Lukan version of the burial of Jesus (23:50-56) omits details that occur in the Markan parallel.¹⁴⁵ However, Luke adds some unique details to his own version. These nuances involve a lengthy description of Joseph of Arimathea and the women at Jesus' burial. Joseph is a member of the Sanhedrin, but he requests and obtains Pilate's permission to bury Jesus. Joseph is described as good and upright (23:50), like Simon (2:25), Zechariah and Elizabeth (1:6), and as the one who was waiting for God's kingdom (23:52), like Simon (2:25) and Anna (2:38).¹⁴⁶ Luke points out that Joseph had not agreed to the

¹⁴¹ James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Luke*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 651.

¹⁴² Only Luke and John specify that it was the right ear.

¹⁴³ Stein, *Luke*, 563.

¹⁴⁴ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 784.

¹⁴⁵ Luke omits Pilate's statement verifying Jesus' death (Mark 15:44-46) and Joseph's taking encourage to approaching Pilate for Jesus' body (Mark 15:43).

¹⁴⁶ Culpepper, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 464.

council's plan and actions (23:50). The women, who had come with Jesus from Galilee, saw the tomb and returned to prepare spices and ointments in order to bury Jesus' body after the Sabbath (23:55-56). Although the women have prepared these substances, they rest on the Sabbath according to the Jewish law (23:56). These women observe the law, as Zechariah and Elizabeth did (1:6). Luke also mentions twice that the women followed Jesus from Galilee (23:49, 55). This suggests the women are uniquely faithful to Jesus. In light of who they are and what they do for Jesus, Stein is right to maintain that Luke puts the virtues of Joseph and the women together to provide a pattern of Christian behavior for his readers.¹⁴⁷ Benoit has argued that Luke likes to emphasize the moral and spiritual qualities of true disciples.¹⁴⁸ Luke intends to exhort his readers to imitate those who were good and right, looking for the coming of the kingdom (11:2; 8:7), and keeping the commandments. They demonstrate what a disciple of Jesus should do to bear witness to the coming of the kingdom of God.

1.3 The Resurrection of Jesus

As I have demonstrated in previous pages, Luke repeatedly emphasizes that the kingdom of God has come in the life and death of Jesus. Luke also indicates that the coming and impact of the kingdom of God is embodied in the resurrection of Jesus. As he did throughout the narrative of Jesus' life and death, Luke once again shows how Jesus' resurrection is divinely planned, is certain, and has important significance for his disciples.

¹⁴⁷ Stein, *Luke*, 601.

¹⁴⁸ Benoit, *The Passion and Resurrection of Jesus*, 216.

1.3.1 Divine Necessity of Jesus' Resurrection

Luke strongly emphasizes that Jesus' resurrection is a matter of divine necessity in three ways. First, it is expressed in Cleopas's speech. On the way to Emmaus, the risen Jesus meets two disciples who are talking to each other about all that has happened in Jerusalem. Jesus approaches them and asks them what they are discussing. Cleopas, one of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, answers him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" (24:18). Cleopas's description of the "things that have taken place" echoes Jesus' own predictions concerning his passion and resurrection (9:22, 44; 18:33). These two disciples refer to Jesus as "a prophet mighty in deed and word" (24:19) showing that they have understood Jesus' identity as the Messiah.¹⁴⁹

Second, Luke underscores again the necessity of Jesus' death and resurrection through Jesus' own words. By asking a rhetorical question, Jesus explains that the prophets' prediction concerning the suffering of the Messiah must be fulfilled: "Was it not necessary [in Greek *dei*] that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" (24:26). The expected answer is affirmative.¹⁵⁰ Culpepper interprets the term "glory" here as Jesus' resurrection.¹⁵¹ Thus the disciples must recognize the necessity of the passion and resurrection of the Messiah.¹⁵²

Third, Luke notes that Jesus realizes the Scriptures that refer to his death and resurrection have been fulfilled.¹⁵³ Luke's narration of Jesus' instruction to his

¹⁴⁹ Kuhn, *The Kingdom According to Luke and Acts*, 154.

¹⁵⁰ Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 395.

¹⁵¹ Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, 1204; Culpepper, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 478.

¹⁵² Bovon, *Luke 3*, 374.

¹⁵³ Jerome Neyrey, *The Passion According to Luke: A Redaction Study of Luke's Soteriology* (New

disciples, “Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures,” (v. 27) expresses the scriptural testimony to Jesus’ resurrection. This statement appears again in 24:44 and 46. Jerome Neyrey states that the words of Jesus prophesying his suffering and death explicitly refer to his resurrection.¹⁵⁴ Therefore, Jesus is the fulfillment to which the Scriptures point.

1.3.2 The Certainty of Jesus’ Resurrection

Luke repeatedly emphasizes that Jesus’ resurrection is certain. Luke expects his readers to put faith in Jesus because Jesus has risen from the dead. There are various evidences and witnesses to the resurrection. These include an empty tomb, an angelic declaration, a conversation and a meal with the two disciples going to Emmaus, an appearance to Peter, and an appearance of the risen Jesus to the disciples in Jerusalem. Three of these events deserve some comment.

First, the women and Peter discover the empty tomb. Luke reports that the women went to the tomb early on the first day of the week. The women seek to anoint Jesus’ body with spices (24:1). They enter the tomb, but they do not find the body (24:1-3). Luke retells this story in 24:22-23. This suggests that the women play an important role as eye-witnesses to Jesus’ resurrection. The women of Galilee have already witnessed the crucifixion (23:49) and the burial (23:55). Now they offer testimony to Jesus’ resurrection. They are credible eye-witnesses of Jesus’ death and resurrection.¹⁵⁵ After the women report that the tomb is empty, Peter runs to the tomb and finds it is empty (24:12). Peter, in fact, repeats the discovery of the women that

York: Paulist, 1985), 152.

¹⁵⁴ Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 390.

¹⁵⁵ Craddock, *Luke*, 281.

the tomb is empty. Peter's discovery serves as another witness to the empty tomb. Since there is no reason for anyone to remove Jesus' body from the tomb, the empty tomb provides a strong evidence to prove that the one who was crucified and buried has been raised.

Second, the angels bear witness to the resurrection of Jesus (24:4-7).¹⁵⁶ The two heavenly figures at the empty tomb tell the women that Jesus has been raised from the dead: "Why do you seek the living one among the dead? He is not here, but has risen" (24:5-6). Both statements—"He is not here" (24:6) and "[He] has risen" (24:6)—are explanations of the empty tomb.¹⁵⁷ Luke reports Jesus' resurrection by an angelic appeal to the women in order to bring to mind something Jesus said while they were still in Galilee: "The Son of Man must be crucified and on the third day rise" (24:7). Jesus the Prophet's words recur in 24:26 and 46.¹⁵⁸ For Luke, the call to remember is important because both Jesus' suffering and resurrection are divine necessities.¹⁵⁹ Luke especially draws his audience's attention to Jesus' words, specifically his prophetic words concerning his own death and resurrection.¹⁶⁰

Third, Jesus appeared to the disciples three times after his resurrection. First, the two disciples on the road to Emmaus see Jesus (24:31). This is a unique story in Luke.¹⁶¹ Jesus has a conversation with Cleopas and his companion on the road to

¹⁵⁶ Luke introduces the two men in dazzling apparel (24:4). Luke does not identify the two witnesses, but, in fact, they are referred to as "angels." Matthew clearly identifies the one who looks like lightning and has clothing white as snow as an angel (Matt. 28:3).

¹⁵⁷ Nolland, *Luke 18:35–24:53*, 1190.

¹⁵⁸ Craddock, *Luke*, 282.

¹⁵⁹ Nolland, *Luke 18:35–24:53*, 1190.

¹⁶⁰ Cynthia A. Jarvis and E. Elizabeth, *Feasting on the Gospels: Luke*. Vol. 2. Chapters 12-24 (Louisville: WJK, 2014), 347.

¹⁶¹ Stein, *Luke*, 609.

Emmaus (24:13-26) and shares a meal with them (24:29-31). Second, Jesus appears to Simon. Cleopas and his companion receive a report from the disciples in Jerusalem: “The Lord was truly raised and was seen by Simon” (24:34). The Apostle Paul also confirms the reference to Jesus’ appearance to Simon (1 Cor. 15:4). Finally, Jesus also shows himself to the disciples in Jerusalem (24:36-43). Luke describes the reality of Jesus’ resurrection: he eats bread (24:30) and broiled fish (24:42), and declares that he has “flesh and bones” (24:39).¹⁶² It is significant that the resurrected Jesus invites his disciples to inspect the scar on his body (24:39). In 24:48 Luke highlights again that the apostles were eye-witnesses to the risen Christ. What Luke tries to say is that Jesus’ resurrection could be believed with certainty because it ultimately came from the apostles.

1.3.3 Discipleship and the Kingdom of God

The resurrection of Jesus has a great impact on the disciples who are frightened and discouraged after his death. It rebuilds the disciples’ faith in Jesus their Lord. Jesus’ appearance restores the fellowship between him and his disciples. Then the risen Jesus sends his disciples on a mission to bring the kingdom of God to all nations.

1.3.3.1 Rebuilding the Faith Fellowship

During the Passover Supper, Jesus declares that he will not again celebrate a meal with his disciples before the fulfillment the kingdom of God. Jesus makes such a prediction two times during the Last Supper: “I shall not eat it until it is fulfilled in the

¹⁶² Edwards, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 730.

kingdom of God” (22:16), and “I shall not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes” (22:18). The word “until” indicates that the death of Jesus is necessary for the fulfillment of the kingdom of God. The term “until” also demonstrates that Jesus’ death “is not the end of the story (see Mark 14:25; Matt. 26:29; 1 Cor. 11:26).”¹⁶³ In fact, Jesus’ resurrection serves as a bridge between his death and his ascension. Among the Synoptic Gospels only Luke reports two times that the resurrected Jesus shares a meal with his disciples. The first time is with two disciples on their journey from Jerusalem to Emmaus (24:13-35), and the second takes place during Jesus’ appearance to the rest of the disciples in Jerusalem (24:36-38). Meal fellowship is important to Jesus and his disciples. For Jesus, it strengthens the disciples’ faith by this restored meal fellowship with them before his ascension. For the disciples, it reassures them that Jesus is alive again (24:30-31) and enables them to carry out the mission to all people in the world.

1.3.3.2 Proclaiming the Gospel to All Nations

Before his ascension, the risen Jesus commissions the disciples to bear witness to the salvation of God to all nations (24:47-48). The disciples are called to go forth to announce in Jesus’ name a message of repentance and forgiveness of sins to all people.¹⁶⁴ It is noteworthy that Jesus’ instructions to the disciples to go “to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem” (24:47) contain two vitally important messages. One is the mission is to commence in Jerusalem.¹⁶⁵ This commission is repeated in Acts 1:8,

¹⁶³ Francis J. Moloney, *The Resurrection of the Messiah* (New York: Paulist Press, 2013), 77.

¹⁶⁴ Kuhn, *The Kingdom According to Luke and Acts*, 164.

¹⁶⁵ Jerusalem is not only the center of the Gospel, but also the focus of Jesus’ ministry to Israel. Jesus’ cleansing of the Temple, and his death, resurrection, and appearance all happen in Jerusalem. Culpepper, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 487.

where Jesus gives the same mandate to the disciples. The other is that the message of the gospel should reach all nations.¹⁶⁶ This means that the redemptive message of the kingdom of God is not limited to Jerusalem and the Israelites but should extend to the Gentiles. Jesus urges his disciples to participate actively in worldwide missionary work. This is shown in the declaration, “You are witnesses of these things” (24:48). Undoubtedly, as James R. Edwards affirms, the object of witness is the risen Christ and his message of salvation.¹⁶⁷ The kingdom of God is the focus of the mission at any age.

1.3.3.3 Awaiting the Promise of Power from the Holy Spirit

While sending his disciples out on a mission, Jesus promises them that God will empower them for the mission. But Jesus requires them to stay in Jerusalem until they are “clothed with power from on high” (24:49). What is the “power from on high”? Johnson argues compellingly that the “power from on high” refers to the Holy Spirit (cf., Luke 4:14; Acts 1:8).¹⁶⁸ The command to the disciples here recurs almost verbatim in Acts 1:4, and in Acts 1:5 Jesus adds a clarifying comment to the command: “You will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”¹⁶⁹ They will go forth to proclaim the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit.¹⁷⁰ The disciples are to be endowed with spiritual power in order to bear witness to God’s salvation. Jesus’ command implies that missionary work needs to rely on spiritual power rather than human ability. The power of the Holy Spirit is a prerequisite for missionary work.

¹⁶⁶ Culpepper, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 487.

¹⁶⁷ Edwards, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 737.

¹⁶⁸ Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 403.

¹⁶⁹ Culpepper, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 488.

¹⁷⁰ Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 906.

Chapter 2

The Kingdom of God in the Teaching (*Logia*) of Jesus

The Gospel of Luke presents Jesus as an authoritative teacher. Jesus teaches about the kingdom of God with parables, proclamation, and discourses (e.g., 4:16-30; 6:20-49).¹⁷¹ This chapter will focus on three passages of Jesus' teaching (6:20-49, 10:25-37 and 18:15-17) that Luke identifies implicitly or explicitly as concerning the kingdom of God. As I will demonstrate, Luke presents the kingdom of God as a present reality with important social implications that may be summarized in five points: (1) The less fortunate in society are beneficiaries of the kingdom of God (6:20-24). (2) Love for enemies is a basic characteristic of the kingdom of God (6:27-32). (3) Love of neighbor should be manifested in practice (10:25-28). (4) The disciples of Jesus are to show mercy to their neighbors (10:29-37). (5) Those who wish to enter the kingdom of God must show hospitality to the marginalized (18:15-17). I will begin with the Sermon on the Plain in 6:20-49.

2.1 Sermon on the Plain

The Lukan Sermon on the Plain (6:20-49) is much shorter than the better known Matthean Sermon on the Mount (5:3-7:27). The Sermon on the Mount has 107 verses; the Sermon on the Plain only has 30 verses.¹⁷² Most of the words in the Sermon on the Plain appear in the Sermon on the Mount.

In comparison to Matthew, Luke shortens Jesus' Sermon on the Plain and

¹⁷¹ See also Luke 11:37-52; 10:25-37; 15:1-32; 17:20-37; 18:15-17; 21:5-36; 22:14-38.

¹⁷² Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (I-IX)*, 627.

focuses on two themes: the beatitudes and the love of enemies.¹⁷³ In the beatitudes, Jesus declares a series of blessings for the poor, the hungry, the weeping, and the despised, but in a stark contrast he also issues warnings against the rich, the full, the joyful, and the arrogant (vv. 20-26). Then, Jesus gives a stern commandment, instructing his disciples to love their enemies (vv. 27-36).

By showing Jesus announcing beatitudes and warnings for all kinds of people, the poor and the rich, and then calling his disciples, those who want to follow him, to show love even to their enemies, Luke presents Jesus as an authoritative teacher-prophet who wishes to mold and shape the character and behavior of his followers in accordance with the new norm of the kingdom of God he proclaims. In the Sermon on the Plain, two themes are particularly noteworthy: the less fortunate and love of enemies.

2.1.1 The Less Fortunate in Society Are Beneficiaries of the Kingdom of God

The Sermon on the Plain begins with the beatitudes which show a sharp contrast between two kinds of people. Jesus pronounces the poor, the hungry, the weeping, and the persecuted as blessed by God; however, the rich, the full, those who laugh, and those who enjoy a good reputation will suffer from God's judgment. The kingdom of God embodies God's favor for the underprivileged.

The initial beatitude declares that the kingdom of God belongs to the poor (6:20). It is worth noting that scholars are divided over the understanding of the term "poor" in this context. Some scholars, such as Craddock, Nolland, Marshall, and

¹⁷³ Bovon, *Luke 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1:1-9:50*, 209.

Johnson, focus on material poverty. Here, Luke clearly addresses the material poor; he does not spiritualize the concept, as in the “poor in spirit” in Matthew 5:3.¹⁷⁴ The “poor” refers to the economically destitute.¹⁷⁵ By contrast, other scholars, including Darrel L. Bock and Luise Schottroff, emphasize a spiritual understanding of poverty.¹⁷⁶ Still, M. Dennis Hamm interprets “the poor” as “true Israelites” who yearn for God’s salvation.¹⁷⁷ Among the three interpretations, I am persuaded by the first, namely, that Luke understands the poor in terms of material poverty. Jesus exhorts his audience to have concern for poor people with financial and social difficulties. In the Old Testament, God shows particular care for the vulnerable and the less fortunate (Deut. 10:17-18; Ps. 10:17-18; 68:5-6; 76:9; 146:7-10).¹⁷⁸ In the Lukan context, the term “poor” denotes a socioeconomic condition rather than a spiritual attitude because the poor in Luke represent the marginalized (4:18; 7:22; 14:13, 21; 16:20-22). In Jesus’ sermon at the synagogue of Nazareth, for instance, the poor (4:18) refers to those to whom Jesus proclaims the good news. The poor are recipients of the good news Jesus proclaims. This is a consistent message of Jesus in Luke’s Gospel (4:18; 6:20; 7:22; 14:13, 21; 16:23). The parable of the great banquet (Luke 14:15-24) also illustrates that God invites the lowly (the poor) to the banquet table of blessing. The poor are candidates for the kingdom of God.

¹⁷⁴ Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 249; Pilgrim, *Good News to the Poor*, 75; Nolland, *Luke 1:1–9:20*, 282; Craddock, *Luke*, 89; Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, including the Sermon on the Plain*, ed. Adela Yarbro Collins (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 576; Scheffler, “Compassionate Action,” 91.

¹⁷⁵ Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 106.

¹⁷⁶ Bovon, *Luke 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1:1-9:50*, 224; Bock, *Luke, Vol.1: 1:1-9:50*, 576.

¹⁷⁷ M. Dennis Hamm, *The Beatitudes in Context: What Luke and Matthew Meant* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1990), 50.

¹⁷⁸ Nolland, *Luke 1:1–9:20*, 282.

The good fortune of the poor is that theirs is the kingdom of God. The first beatitude is anchored in the present: “Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God” (6:20). The Greek term *estin* (is) is present tense, suggesting that the beatitude is already a reality. Luke uses the present tense to highlight the current possession of the kingdom of God.¹⁷⁹ The assurance that the kingdom of God belongs to the poor here in 6:20 echoes Jesus’ announcement of good news to the poor in his inaugural sermon in Nazareth, “to bring good news to the poor, ...to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (4:18-19). The eschatological kingdom has already come with the advent of Jesus. Jesus has announced the fulfillment of God’s salvation in the synagogue in Nazareth: “Today this scripture has been fulfilled” (4:21). The poor are happy not because of their poverty, but because they know the kingdom of God is for them. God exercises the divine, royal rule in favor of the poor. This is the good news for the poor.

The second beatitude is a promise to those who are hungry (6:21a). The hungry and the poor stand in parallel in the Old Testament (Isa. 32:6-7; 58:7; Job 24:4-10). In the Old Testament the term “hungry” is often used to express God’s comfort (Ps. 37:16-19; 107:9; 132:15; Isa. 49:9-10; 55:1-2; Ezek. 34:29).¹⁸⁰ Some scholars such as Bock and Marshall focus on a material understanding of the term “hungry” in the Lukan context. Hence, Bock states that here the term “hungry” has socioeconomic implications.¹⁸¹ Marshall holds that the hungry in Luke 6:21 refers to physical hunger, although it can mean a desire for spiritual satisfaction in the Prophets

¹⁷⁹ Bock, *Luke, Vol. 1: 1:1-9:50*, 572.

¹⁸⁰ Bock, *Luke, Vol.1: 1:1-9:50*, 575.

¹⁸¹ Bock, *Luke, Vol.1: 1:1-9:50*, 575.

(Isa. 55:1; Amos 8:11).¹⁸² It is noteworthy that Matthew the Evangelist describes this group of people spiritually with the words, “hunger and thirsty for righteousness” (5:6). However, Luke underscores the social implications of the kingdom of God. For him, hunger is a sign of need and neglect.¹⁸³ The hungry cannot help themselves, thus they have to depend on God’s promise and favor. The merciful God promises to care for the hungry, so the kingdom of God is for them.

The promise to those who hunger is the promise of satisfaction from God. God’s promise is that the hungry will be fed. In Greek, *chortazo* is passive voice and means “to be filled, be fed,” suggesting that the hungry will be fed by God.¹⁸⁴ The hungry will be filled with what they need in the future, although they are now in the condition of hunger. The assurance that the needs of the hungry will be met echoes the Old Testament promise (Isa. 49:10; Jer. 31:12, 25; Ps. 22:27; 107:9).¹⁸⁵ Here the promise to the hungry also echoes the words, “hungry filled with good things,” in the *Magnificat* (1:53). The parable about a rich man and the beggar tells us that Lazarus who is hungry on earth but enjoys blessed fellowship with God in his afterlife (16:20-22) exemplifies this promise. God gives Lazarus the blessing promised in the beatitude. The promise is the hope of comfort, which extends to those who depend on God.

The third beatitude is a promise to those who mourn (6:21b). The term *klaiō* (cry) is used to express all kinds of weeping and pain.¹⁸⁶ There are several

¹⁸² Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 250.

¹⁸³ Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 106.

¹⁸⁴ Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, I, 11.

¹⁸⁵ Nolland, *Luke 1:1–9:20*, 284.

¹⁸⁶ BDAG, 545.

understandings of the term *klaiō* among scholars. Bovon holds that the term *klaiō* encompasses both feelings and outward meanings.¹⁸⁷ Johnson interprets *klaiō* as any loud expression of sorrow or mourning.¹⁸⁸ Bovon's and Johnson's interpretations are too general. I am convinced by Betz's understanding, which focuses on "weeping over the conditions of this world and the suffering resulting from them," because weeping is treated as an aspect of poverty in Luke's Gospel.¹⁸⁹ Mourning should be seen as a concrete expression of poverty.¹⁹⁰ In the Lukan context, those who weep are recipients of the kingdom of God. This beatitude expresses the comfort of God for those who mourn now.

The sorrow of those who weep will be transformed into eschatological joy: they will laugh (6:22b). The salvation of the kingdom of God will change the present situation of the mourner. Those who weep now will laugh with joy when their sorrow has been removed. This thought is rooted in the Old Testament (Isa. 60:20; 61:3; 66:10; Jer. 31:13; Ps. 126:2, 5), where God promises the people to change their sorrow into joy.¹⁹¹ Luke emphasizes God's total restoration of the one who weeps now (16:19-31; 18:14). People joyful with God's salvific act are a common theme in Luke (1:14; 2:10; 8:13; 10:17; 15:7, 10; 24:41, 52).¹⁹² This beatitude shows Jesus' emphasis on the hope he offers to those who follow him. Those who suffer pain and depend on his salvation shall rejoice. Joy among the oppressed is an expression of the fulfillment of the salvation of God. Joy is an appropriate response to God's salvation.

¹⁸⁷ Bovon, *Luke 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1:1-9:50*, 226.

¹⁸⁸ Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 107.

¹⁸⁹ Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 577.

¹⁹⁰ Nolland, *Luke 1:1-9:20*, 283.

¹⁹¹ Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 251.

¹⁹² Culpepper, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 144.

The fourth beatitude is the promise of eschatological joy in the kingdom of God for those who commit to Jesus. The fourth beatitude is formally different from the earlier three. Luke has nothing corresponding to Matthew 5:10, moving it to the detailed blessings of those who are in various kinds of tribulation. Luke describes four situations in which the disciples may suffer rejection: being hated, excluded, reviled, and defamed. The first description of hostility involves hatred. In Greek, *miseō* (hate) expresses the attitude of opposition to God's people (Isa. 66:5; Luke 1:71; 21:17). The second description mentions that the disciples will be excluded. *Aphorizō* (exclude) carries the sense of being separated.¹⁹³ Johnson interprets it as "marginalization."¹⁹⁴ The third description speaks of being reproached. *Oneidizō* (revile) refers to a verbal attack.¹⁹⁵ It portrays the disciples' total rejection by the society because of their faith. *Ekbalōsin* (defame) designates a verbal reproach and derision. The Lukan description of the disciple's treatment involves attitude (hate), action (exclude), and speech (revile; defame). All of these attacks come on because of the disciples' identification with Jesus. The final phrase, "on account of the Son of man," has no parallel in the Sermon on the Mount, thus it is uncertain whether or not this phrase is original to the Sermon on the Plain.¹⁹⁶ In 21:17, Jesus promises that his followers would be "hated by all on account of my name." As such, Luke connects the fate of the Christians to their identification with Jesus.

Two reasons for the exhortation of joy follow, each introduced by *gar* (for).

¹⁹³ Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 252.

¹⁹⁴ Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 107.

¹⁹⁵ Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 252.

¹⁹⁶ Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 582.

The first is that there is a great heavenly reward for the disciples. The usage in this passage is close to the phrase “treasure in heaven” (12:33; 18:22). Jesus reminds his disciples that God knows their commitment and will honor it. God knows what they are suffering and honors such faithfulness.¹⁹⁷ The promise of heavenly vindication, therefore, calls one to look beyond circumstances.¹⁹⁸ The second reason for rejoicing is that the disciples can know that they are bound to suffer because the same thing has already happened to the prophets in the past. The disciples’ persecution parallels the treatment that God’s prophets once received. In previous generations, the ancestors of those who are mistreating Jesus’ disciples mistreated the prophets (Jer. 2:29-30; 11:18-21; 1 Kgs. 18:4, 13; 19:10; 2 Chro. 16:10; 24:21).¹⁹⁹ Apparently, Jesus equates the disciples with the prophets, so he encourages his disciples to endure suffering by recalling the prophets’ experiences. The disciples may be sure of their heavenly reward because the prophets have been rewarded after their sufferings.

2.1.2 Love for Enemies Is a Basic Characteristic of the Kingdom of God

Love of enemies is a dominant theme in 6:27-36.²⁰⁰ The phrase “love your enemies” opens this section (v. 27), and it is repeated at the end (v. 35). While explaining this commandment, Jesus contrasts the love for enemies with the mutual love sinners often show to each other, in order to illustrate to the disciples that their love for others should go beyond the way people usually act. The disciples who live in the kingdom of God are responsible for carrying out the principle of love. Let us look

¹⁹⁷ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (I-IX)*, 635.

¹⁹⁸ Bock, *Luke, Vol.1: 1:1-9:50*, 581.

¹⁹⁹ Bock, *Luke, Vol.1: 1:1-9:50*, 582.

²⁰⁰ Craddock, *Luke*, 89.

into the commandment to love enemies further in two sections: 6:27-31 and 6:32-36.

2.1.2.1 Jesus Instructs the Disciples to Love Enemies

An appeal “to you that listen” (6:27) marks the beginning of a new section of the Sermon on the Plain. The audience is again the disciples. The same commandment to love one’s enemy is found in a verbatim parallel in Matthew 5:44. Where Matthew also provides a theological reason and a pastoral purpose to his readers, the reason being that God “makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous” (5:45b-c), and the purpose being “so that you may be children of your Father in heaven” (5:45a).

In Luke’s version, Jesus presents three imperatives to illustrate the principle of love for enemies (vv. 27-28). The first and second imperatives, “do good to those who hate you” and “bless those who abuse you,” have no parallel in Matthew.²⁰¹ These specific imperatives seem to imply that Luke underscores that “doing good” and “blessing opponents” are important practical manifestations of loving one’s enemies for his readers in their social context. Christians in Luke’s time were harassed by the Jews and persecuted by the Romans (cf. 6:22; 12:11-12).²⁰² They needed encouragement and instruction on how to respond to a hostile society. So, Luke repeatedly highlights the commands to love and do good (vv. 27, 32, 33, 35) so that their harassers and persecutors have no reason to hurt them but only a call to respect them. The third imperative, “to pray for those who abuse you,” is similar to the command to pray for those who persecute you in Matthew 5:44. Praying for the

²⁰¹ Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 264; Bock, *Luke*, 589.

²⁰² Scheffler, “Compassionate Action,” 79.

opponent requires a kind of supernatural love because it goes beyond natural human instinct.²⁰³ The commandments to “bless” and “pray for” indicate the radical character of love.²⁰⁴ The disciples need to transcend their natural human instincts so that they are willing to love enemies, and to do so they need the help of the Holy Spirit. Clearly, love for enemies is one of the highest standards of love.²⁰⁵ Although no one can adequately fulfill Jesus’ command to love enemies, still the disciples are to seek God’s help to carry out the command in their lives.

Four illustrations of the principle of love of enemies follow in vv. 29-30: offer the other cheek, do not withhold your shirt, keep giving to those who ask of you, and do not ask for the return of what is taken. These are four particularly dramatic examples of the command to love one’s enemies, which are put into practice. Jesus issues a call to go beyond treating others as the disciples have been treated by them.²⁰⁶ Luke adds “everyone” to the parallel in Matthew 5:42. The Lukan redaction shows the disciples’ love should be universal. The four illustrations demonstrate that the disciples are to exercise generosity and kindness to others without expecting anything in return.

Jesus offers the Golden Rule in v. 31, “treat others as you wish they would treat you,” to summarize the preceding four illustrations of the principle of love for enemies. The Lukan version of the “Golden Rule” is paralleled in Matthew 7:12. It is a command to give to others what one would want others to give to oneself. This is a

²⁰³ Bock, *Luke*, 590.

²⁰⁴ Nolland, *Luke 1:1–9:20*, 294.

²⁰⁵ Bock, *Luke*, 590.

²⁰⁶ Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 109.

positive presentation of love for enemies. Jesus requires the disciples to treat others with respect and sensitivity.

2.1.2.2 Jesus Exhorts the Disciples to Exhibit Extraordinary Love

Luke 6:32-34 contains three illustrations of love for enemies.²⁰⁷ Jesus uses three negative examples to show that the disciples' love should be extraordinary. For Luke, love of enemies is a basic characteristic of the disciples. Luke narrates a threefold repetition of questions that disciples' love should go far beyond a reciprocal ethic (vv. 32-34). Each time, the question has the same form: (1) If you love/do good/lend (2) to those who love/do good/lend to you, (3) what credit is that to you? And each time, Luke has a "for even" clause and uses the more general, "sinners." However, for his explanatory clause, Matthew uses the rhetorical question: "Do not the tax collectors do the same?" In fact, loving and doing good in vv. 32-33 link back to v. 27; lending in v. 34 seems to link back to v. 30a.²⁰⁸ Lending here is charity because it has no expectation of return.²⁰⁹ Love of enemies is quite different from the reciprocal ethic, which most people pursue. The disciples are required to take up the radical command of love for enemies.

The key phrase "What credit is that to you?" is repeated three times (6:32, 33, 34). "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you?" (v. 32). This verse has a parallel in Matthew 5:46. If the disciples love those who love them it is nothing special because that is the type of love that sinners have. "If you do good to those who

²⁰⁷ Luke 6:32-34 resembles Matthew 5:45-48, but it shows marks of the Lukan redaction in Nolland, *Luke 1:1-9:20*, 298.

²⁰⁸ Bock, *Luke*, 600.

²⁰⁹ Nolland, *Luke 1:1-9:20*, 303.

do good to you, what credit is that to you?” (v. 33). This verse has no parallel in Matthew. If the disciples do good to those who do good to them, it is not different from the charity exhibited by people in general. “If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you?” (v. 34). There is no equivalent to this verse in Matthew, either. If the disciples lend to those who will respond likewise it is no different from how sinners lend to sinners. There is no favor from God to the disciples for these limited expressions of love and goodness. The disciples should display distinctive behavior, which is different from ethical reciprocity.

Jesus’ command to love the enemy is summarized in 6:35. Jesus summarizes and repeats three illustrations in 6:32-34: “love your enemies” (vv. 27, 32), “do good” (vv. 27, 33), “and lend, expecting nothing in return” (vv. 30, 34). The call to love of enemies is supported by the promise of God’s reward, “your reward will be great” (v. 35). Why does Jesus promise a great reward for people who can love their enemies? I think this promise indicates that Jesus understands it is difficult to love one’s enemy because it is against human instinct. In order to encourage his disciples to obey this commandment, Jesus reminds them God will give them great reward because God is fair and just in rendering final judgment.

The call to love of enemies is further supported by the second promise, “you will be children of the Most High” (v. 35). What Jesus means to say is that when the disciples can demonstrate their love for enemies in action they will behave in the same way as their heavenly Father, the merciful God who loves all people, even sinners like themselves. Here Luke reminds his readers that love of enemies is an

important characteristic of the children of God, as in Matthew, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (5:9).

Then Luke gives a theological reason to explain why those who love their enemies will be called children of the Most High, “for he [God] is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked” (v. 35c). Finally, Jesus declares, “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful” (v. 36). It is worth noting the Matthean parallel, “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (5:48). Scheffler rightly observes that Luke changes Matthew’s text “perfect” (*teleios*) to “merciful” (*oiktirmones*) in order to urge his readers to be as merciful as God.²¹⁰ As a matter of fact, the motif of compassion explicitly runs through Luke’s Gospel. For instance, Jesus feels pity for the widow of Nain when he sees her dead son (7:13). The Good Samaritan feels compassionate for the wounded man when he discovers him (10:33). The father in the parable of the prodigal son is filled with compassion, even when his son is still far off (15:20).²¹¹ All these cases demonstrate that God is merciful. Therefore, the children of God should be compassionate as well.

2.2 Love of Neighbor in the Kingdom of God

The parable of the Good Samaritan is a well-known story told by Jesus and found only in Luke 10:25-37. This parable has crucial significance for the Lukan understanding of the kingdom of God. With this parable, Jesus calls the lawyer who asks how one may inherit eternal life to show compassion for those in need. In his dialogue with the lawyer (10:25-28), Jesus presents the love of God and neighbor as

²¹⁰ Scheffler, “Compassionate Action,” 83.

²¹¹ Scheffler, “Compassionate Action,” 83.

an important commandment for the disciples. Immediately after that, Jesus tells a dramatic story about a Samaritan who stops to help a wounded Jew in order to instruct the lawyer and his disciples in the practice of love of neighbor (10:29-37).

The dialogue in Luke 10:25-28 has parallel passages in Matthew 22:34-40 and Mark 12:28-34. It is significant to note that Luke has a similar account but places it in a different context. Both the Matthean and Lukan parallel accounts say “lawyer” (Matt. 22:35; Luke 10:25). But Mark 12:28 says a scribe comes to Jesus and asks him “what commandment is the first of all?” The Matthean and Lukan Jesus cites only Deuteronomy 6:5, the command to love the Lord wholeheartedly, while the Markan Jesus cites the first two verses of the *Shema* (Deut. 6:4-5). In the Lukan parallel it is the lawyer who quotes Deuteronomy 6:5 rather than Jesus. In both Matthew and Mark Jesus answers the questioner by making Deuteronomy 6:5 the first and Leviticus 19:18 the second commandment. Matthew and Luke both remove, “After that no one dared to ask him any question” (Mark 12:34c). Matthew places it at the end of Matthew 22:41-46, and Luke places it at the end of Luke 20:27-40. Luke deals with the issue of inheriting eternal life, but Matthew and Mark ask about the great commandment. Most important of all, the parable of the Good Samaritan (10:29-39) is found only in Luke and illustrates Jesus’ commandment to love God and love neighbor. All these differences indicate Luke’s special insight and contribution to Jesus’ teaching on the love of God and love of neighbor.

Some of Jesus’ sayings on the subject of discipleship are found in the Travel Narrative (Luke 9:51-19:27), in passages such as 9:46-50, 14:34-35, and 17:1-2.

These teachings take place on Jesus' way to Jerusalem. Jesus instructs his followers in discipleship when he approaches Jerusalem (10:38).²¹² For Luke, discipleship is following Jesus "on the way." The disciples must walk the same way as Jesus—the way of self-sacrifice. As Jesus moves toward his self-sacrifice in Jerusalem, Jesus' teaching on discipleship becomes increasingly important. The pericope 10:25-37 lies at the very beginning of the Lukan Travel Narrative. The story of the Good Samaritan takes place "on the way." In that story, the priest and the Levite passed over the wounded Jew without stopping to help him. By ignoring the wounded person in dire need, they choose a way of self-centeredness. But the Samaritan chooses another way, a way of self-sacrifice. He stops his own journey in order to care for and help the wounded man, and he might also be attacked by the robbers as that man was. So, the way he chooses to follow involves risk, service, and sharing material possessions. Jesus instructs his disciples to follow the example of the Samaritan in this story, to love their neighbors in deed. Jesus calls his disciples to serve others actively in order that they might have a place in the kingdom of God. The disciples of Jesus have a social responsibility towards those who are needy. Let us look further into the dialogue between Jesus and the lawyer (10:25-28) and the parable about the Good Samaritan (10:29-37) in order to see what they may teach us about the lesson of love of neighbor.

2.2.1 Love of Neighbor Should Be Manifested in Practice

In Luke's Gospel, the lawyer does not ask which commandment is the first of

²¹² Mary Ann Getty-Sullivan, *Parables of the Kingdom* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2007), 138.

all, as in Matthew (22:36) and Mark (12:28), but asks instead what one must do to inherit eternal life—“What must I do to inherit eternal life?” (10:25). The same question occurs again later in 18:18. This is a practical question.²¹³ It seems likely that “inheriting eternal life” (18:18, 30) and “entering the kingdom of God” (18:24, 25, 29b) have the same meaning.²¹⁴ Jesus responds to him by asking, “What is written in the law? What do you read there?” In Luke, the lawyer quotes the command to love God (Deut. 6:5) and to love neighbor (Lev. 19:18), while in Matthew and Mark it is Jesus who quotes these commandments. So, in a dramatic and ironic way, Jesus approves of the lawyer’s own answer and then challenges him to observe this commandment that leads to the eternal life. From this dialogue between Jesus the lawyer, there are a couple of points worth noticing.

First, Jesus admonishes the lawyer that love of God and neighbor is the prerequisite for inheriting the eternal life, that is, entering the kingdom of God. Luke unites the two commandments into a single one with the conjunction “and” (*kai*) and makes “Lord your God” and “your neighbor” parallel.²¹⁵ Love of God and love of neighbor are merged into one commandment.²¹⁶ Put another way, love of God and love of neighbor form a two-part commandment. The lawyer brings two commandments of love into a unity in order to demonstrate that love of God and love of neighbor are the same. Love of neighbor holds the same, most important position

²¹³ Keith F. Nickle, *Preaching the Gospel of Luke: Proclaiming God’s Royal Rule* (Louisville: WJK, 2000), 118.

²¹⁴ Herman Hendrickx, *The Parables of Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986), 80; Culpepper, *The Gospel of Luke*, 227; *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 1976.

²¹⁵ Michael Wolter, *The Gospel According to Luke, Vol. II: Luke 9:51-24*, trans. Wayne Coppins and Christoph Heilig (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2016), 74.

²¹⁶ Herman Hendrickx, *The Parables of Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986), 81.

as love of God. Jesus' approval also suggests that the two commandments are integrally related and inseparable.²¹⁷ Love of God and love of neighbor are two expressions of the same fundamental requirement of the law. The requirements of the law cannot be fulfilled in love of God or love of neighbor alone. Love of God must be complemented by love of neighbor. Neither love of God nor love of neighbor is expressed without the other because God cannot be loved apart from one's neighbor. Love of God should be extended to love of neighbor. Thus combining love of God with love of neighbor serves as proper understanding the heart of the law.

Second, Jesus emphasizes that love of God and neighbor needs to be put into practice. Jesus requires the lawyer to carry out the double-love commandment. Jesus gives the lawyer a command and a promise: "Do this and you will live." In Greek, "do" (*poiei*) is the present imperative, suggesting that love of God and neighbor is a command. Mere knowledge of those commandments is not sufficient for the lawyer; he needs to "do this" in order to enter the kingdom of God. The lawyer needs to bear witness to the kingdom of God and to live out a pro-active attitude toward others in his life.

Third, Jesus' command seems to imply that the lawyer did not take up the love command in the past. Jesus challenges him to take responsibility for others. The lawyer would be able to enter the kingdom of God if he lived by the command of loving God and neighbor. In the wider context of New Testament teaching there is at least one other requirement for entering the kingdom of God, namely, new birth (cf.

²¹⁷ Culpepper, *The Gospel of Luke*, 228.

John 3:1-15). It is clear that Luke emphasizes that people inherit eternal life through moral action. For Luke, love of God needs to be in deed, not merely in word.

2.2.2 The Disciples of Jesus Are to Show Mercy to Their Neighbors

For Luke, compassion of heart and charity in deed are key factors in the love of neighbor. In his answer to the lawyer's question ("Who is my neighbor?"), Jesus asks the lawyer to identify with the victim and then says to him, "Go and do likewise" (show mercy to the victim as the Good Samaritan has done). Love of neighbor should be manifested in both affection and action. Luke describes the assaults the victim suffered in great detail: he was robbed, beaten, stripped, and left for dead. The victim was injured so badly that he needed urgent help to survive.²¹⁸ However, the priest and the Levite went out of their ways to avoid the wounded person, passing on the other side. The motives of the priest and the Levite passing by the victim are not given. One detail about the condition of the wounded man might be significant for a possible explanation of their motives. The man was beaten to "half dead." The meaning of the Greek term "*hemithane*" (half dead) is not clear. Here it could mean that the victim could be taken for dead or refer to the victim's being on the point of death.²¹⁹ The latter fits appropriately into the Lukan context. If the victim could be taken for dead, the priest and the Levite can be excused.²²⁰ According to the law, a priest should not touch a corpse, except that of a family member (Lev. 21:1-2; Ezek. 44:25-27). But, if a priest sees that people are in need, he should help them. In fact, in the parable the

²¹⁸ Klyne Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 355.

²¹⁹ Arland J. Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 96.

²²⁰ Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus*, 96.

victim was still alive. Michel Gourgues observes that “the priest and the Levite are not on their way up to Jerusalem but on their way back.”²²¹ Thus it is clear that the priest and the Levite are not willing to help the victim.

By contrast, the Samaritan saw the need of the victim, felt sympathetic and took actions to rescue and care for him. In the Greek text, the word “Samaritan” occurs at the beginning of v. 33. Luke emphasizes the contrast between the priest and the Levite and the Samaritan. The behavior of the priest and the Levite serves as a foil for that of the Samaritan.²²² Both the priest and the Levite “saw” the victim and simply “passed by” on the other side (vv. 31-32); but the Samaritan “was moved with pity” when he “saw” the victim. Instead of displaying the indifference and selfishness of the two religious leaders, the Samaritan actively shows his compassion and self-sacrifice (vv. 33-35). Again, Luke describes concrete compassionate actions the Samaritan undertakes, for instance, approaching the victim, binding the victim’s wounds with oil and wine, taking time to bring him to the inn, making provisions for his welfare, and promising to return and continue to serve his needs (vv. 34-35). The detailed description portrays the character of the Samaritan’s love of neighbor.²²³ There is another interesting contrast. It is the job of the priest and the Levite to pour out the oil and wine on the altar. In a similar but also different way, the Samaritan pours oil and wine on the victim’s wounds. Oil and wine were used in the Temple

²²¹ Michel Gourgues, “The Priest, the Levite, and the Samaritan Revisited: Critical Note on Luke 10:31-35,” *JBL* 117, no. 4 (1998): 709.

²²² Michael Wolter, *The Gospel According to Luke, Vol. II (Luke 9:51-24)*, trans. Wayne Coppins and Christoph Heilig (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2016), 79.

²²³ Stephen I. Wright, *Jesus the Storyteller* (London: SPCK, 2014), 107.

service (cf. Lev. 23:13).²²⁴ Mary Ann Getty-Sullivan states that “the terms ‘poured out’ and ‘bind up’ belong to the language of worship.”²²⁵ In this case, the Samaritan offers the right kind of worship to God. The Samaritan immediately responds to the victim’s need when he sees him. This shows that the Samaritan fully understands what the love command means (Lev. 19:34). Charity is a form of worship pleasing to God.

Another point that needs to be noted is the disciples are to manifest love toward others without preference. Jesus asks the lawyer’s opinion about which character acted as a neighbor. The lawyer acknowledges the Samaritan is the answer, though he does not mention him. Why does the lawyer respond by saying “the one who showed mercy” rather than “the Samaritan”? Richard N. Longenecker argues that the lawyer did not use term “Samaritan” because a Samaritan was an enemy in his eyes.²²⁶ However, Longenecker’s evidence is unconvincing. It is more probable that Luke describes the lawyer’s answer in this way in order to underscore that becoming a neighbor means showing mercy to people in need.²²⁷ Jesus commends the lawyer because his answer focuses on showing mercy. Again, in Greek, “the one who showed him mercy” literally is “the one who did mercy.” Thus, the lawyer’s answer returns attention to the initial question, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” (10:25). The lawyer asked for the object of love of neighbor but is told the subject of it. The disciples are to make themselves neighbors of those they encounter.

Jesus answers the initial question “What must I do to inherit eternal life” with

²²⁴ John Donahue, *The Gospel in Parable: Metaphor, Narrative, and Theology in the Synoptic Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 132.

²²⁵ Getty-Sullivan, *Parables of the Kingdom*, 142.

²²⁶ Richard N. Longenecker, ed., *The Challenge of Jesus’ Parables* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 282-283.

²²⁷ Hendrickx, *The Parables of Jesus*, 90.

a command, “Go and do likewise.” Jesus’ response is very simple, “Go and do likewise.” In Greek, “do” (*poiei*) is the present imperative; it suggests that love of neighbor is the way of life. In other words, love of neighbor calls for practice.²²⁸ Jesus requires the lawyer to go and put his understanding into practice. Jesus’ requirement indicates that the lawyer should imitate the Samaritan.²²⁹ “Likewise” means that he should learn from the Good Samaritan in what he does. He overcame the racial-ethnic and religious hostility of the Jews. He saw the wounded Jew as a child of God. And he put down his own travel and work to care for the wounded one. Jesus presents the Samaritan’s warmhearted assistance as an example of merciful action. In this way, the concluding verse of the parable makes clear that the disciples are to imitate the compassionate Samaritan.

There is an enduring allegorical interpretation of the parable of the Good Samaritan that contributes to a deeper understanding of Jesus’ teaching on the love of enemies. Through the parable of the Good Samaritan and the dialogue surrounding it, Luke wants to emphasize “anyone” can be the neighbor that helps others who are in need. Luke goes one step further when the character who helps the wounded traveler is a “Samaritan.” The major shock comes when it is the Samaritan who helps the victim. A Samaritan is an enemy to the Jews; thus the lawyer responds to Jesus’ question, “Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers” (10:36), saying “the one who shows mercy” (10:37a) rather than “the Samaritan.” In the story of the Good Samaritan, there is a sharp contrast

²²⁸ Peter Rhea Jones, “The Love Command in Parable: Luke 10:25-37,” *PRS* 6, no. 3 (1979): 236.

²²⁹ Ian A. McFarland, “Who Is My Neighbor?: The Good Samaritan As A Source for Theological Anthropology,” *MT* 17, no. 1 (2001): 60.

between the Samaritan and the Jews with their priest and Levi. Racial tension, ethnic discrimination, and religious difference are very much part of the parable. However, for the Lukan Jesus, love of neighbor should go beyond racial, ethnic, and religious barriers. So, Jesus exhorts his hearers to imitate the compassionate Samaritan to help others in need without preference.

Probably no parable has been allegorized more often than the parable of the Good Samaritan. Early Church Fathers, including Origen, Irenaeus, Augustine, and Jerome, interpret this parable allegorically. The most famous allegory is that of Augustine. Origen asserts that “the Samaritan refers to Christ who carried his flesh from Mary.”²³⁰ Augustine also interprets the Samaritan as Jesus.²³¹ This allegorical interpretation focusing on Christology might help us understand better the point of the parable and enrich our own interpretation. If we read the Good Samaritan as Jesus Christ, the commandment to “go and do likewise” means to imitate Jesus Christ and do what he has done in the figure of the Samaritan to take thoughtful care of his Jewish enemy who is wounded. This interpretation heightens Jesus’ demand for the disciples to love their neighbors in two ways: (1) the love of neighbors includes enemies, and (2) Jesus himself practices what he advocates among the people.

In his ministry, Jesus shows God’s love and forgiveness for all people including his enemies. He shows compassion to those who are neglected, forgotten, or

²³⁰ Origene, *Homelies sur S. Luc* (Sources chretiennes 87), Henri Crouzel s.j., François Fournier, s.j. and Pierre s.j. (Paris, 1962), 464-547. Fragment 71 (Luke 10.30 etc. The Parable of a Good Samaritan), English translation by John Y. H. Yieh in an unpublished handout in class.

²³¹ C. E. B. Cranfield, “The Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25-37),” *TT* 11, no. 3 (1954): 371; François Bovon, *Luke 2: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 9:51-19:27*, trans. Donald S. Deer, ed. Helmut Koester (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2013), 60; Patrick M. Clark, “Reversing the Ethical Perspective: What the Allegorical Interpretation of the Good Samaritan Parable Can Still Teach us,” *TT* 71, no. 3 (2014): 301.

despised. Jesus cares for the socially marginalized, such as the poor (6:20; 12:33; 14:13), women (7:10-17; 8:44-47; 21:1-4), and children (18:15-17). He befriends the sinner (7:36-50), prostitute (7:37), and tax collectors (5:27-32; 7:29; 18:9-14; 19:1-10). He heals the sick, including the paralyzed (5:17-26) and the lepers (5:12-16; 17:11-19). Again, he extends God's universal love to the Samaritans (17:11-19), and even to the Gentiles (7:9). Most remarkably, he offers pardon and forgiveness to his executioners from the cross, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they doing" (23:34). It is noteworthy that Jesus' prayer on the cross is found only in Luke. Luke shows that Jesus practices the love of enemy in the most painful moment of his life. This is a perfect expression of love of enemies.

What does the commandment to love one's neighbors and enemies have to do with us who follow Jesus as his disciples? First, we should follow his example to love others in word and in deed. The disciples are called to be the light of the world (Matt. 5:14a), thus we are to be vehicles for the grace of God. We serve as envoys of the love of God and helpers to the one in need, loving our neighbors including enemies, regardless of their race, faith, or nationality. Because every human being bears the image of God, we should not exclude anyone from the kingdom of God.²³² Second, in response to God's grace, we should love God with thanksgiving. The incarnate Jesus sets us free from the bondage of our sins, as the Good Samaritan set the wounded victim free from a desperate and dangerous situation. Jesus redeems us with his life. In response to the self-sacrificing love of Jesus, we should live to Jesus, for "if we live,

²³² Catharine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993), 266.

we live to the Lord” (Rom. 14:8). As Christians receiving grace from God, we should not only remember the love of redemption but should also love our neighbors with willing hearts as Jesus our Lord has done. We should take bearing testimony to the love of God as an obligatory responsibility in our lives.

2.3 Little Children in the Kingdom of God

Jesus’ teaching in Luke 18:15-17²³³ has central significance for understanding the kingdom of God. This pericope primarily concerns what the kingdom of God is and what kind of people can enter it. Jesus calls those who wish to enter the kingdom of God to receive little children: “Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it” (18:17). This saying immediately follows the parable of the tax collector and the Pharisee who go to the Temple to pray (18:9-14). The tax collector repents and asks for mercy, and Jesus says he goes home justified by God. The parable shows that those who are humble will be exalted. As I will argue, Luke 18:15-17 suggests that the kingdom of God is a present reality with ethical imperatives.

2.3.1 The Kingdom of God Is a Present Reality that People May Enter Now

There are two indications that the kingdom of God is a present reality. First, the kingdom of God is open to the socially marginalized, which for Luke includes children. Jesus shows a positive attitude toward children in Luke. Jesus’ reception of the children helps us understand something about the particular nature of the kingdom

²³³ Luke 18:15-17 has parallel passages in Matthew 19:13-15 and Mark 10:13-16. Luke is almost identical to Mark. Luke emphasizes that the children were infants and omits Jesus’ emotional reaction to the disciples’ prohibition and his actions of embrace and blessing with respect to children in the Markan parallel.

of God. The reason children should be allowed to access Jesus is that “to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs” (18:16). But what did Jesus mean when he said “*toioutōn estin hē basileia tou theou*” (“to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs”)? The challenge is to understand that the kingdom of God is for *toioutōn* (“such as these”). The genitive *toioutōn* is possessive and literally means “of such a kind, such as this; like such.”²³⁴ Ernest Best and Ben Witherington interpret *toioutōn* as meaning to such a class or group of people like this, as Mark 10:15 suggests.²³⁵ However, Alfred Plummer interprets *toioutōn* as meaning those who are like them in quality, such as humility and simplicity.²³⁶ Although “of such” can be interpreted “of these children,” or “of people like these children,” or “child-like qualities,” it is best to interpret it as “of people like these children.” According to the Lukan Jesus, it is likely that, *toioutōn* refers to those others who are similar to children. Here children are representatives of those who have no power and status in the society. The common image of children in Greco-Roman antiquity is of littleness and powerlessness. Studies of children in Roman antiquity show that children had no rights or esteem in the ancient Mediterranean world.²³⁷ In antiquity, parents could discard their own children at birth.²³⁸ Grammatically, *toioutōn* (“such as these”) possesses *hē basileia*

²³⁴ BDAG, 1009.

²³⁵ Ernest Best, *Following Jesus: Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark* (Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 1981), 107; Ben Witherington III, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 279.

²³⁶ Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Luke* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1914), 421.

²³⁷ Ched Myers and Karen Lattea, *Say to This Mountain: Mark’s Story of Discipleship* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1996), 120.

²³⁸ Judith Gundry-Volf, “‘To Such as These Belongs the Reign of God’: Jesus and Children,” *TT* 56 (2000): 472.

tou theou (“the kingdom of God”).²³⁹ Thus the kingdom of God belongs to those who are like children. Jesus’ saying can be understood to mean that the kingdom of God is offered to those who are vulnerable, helpless, and powerless in the society. Thus, like the poor of Luke 6:20, the vulnerable and the marginalized are recipients of the kingdom of God.

Second, Jesus announces that the kingdom of God belongs to the marginalized. Jesus welcomes the marginalized and assures them that the kingdom of God belongs to them.²⁴⁰ Jesus requires his disciples to show hospitality toward the marginalized because it is “to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs” (18:16). The verb *estin* (belongs to) is the third person singular indicative present active of *eimi*, and literally means “is.” Vincent Taylor rightly interprets *estin* as “belongs to.”²⁴¹ Such an interpretation accurately demonstrates the nature of the kingdom of God in Luke’s Gospel. The kingdom of God is for everyone. The verb *estin* is in the present, and, therefore, the kingdom of God is present. Luke does not give any reason why the disciples refuse to let the little children approach Jesus, but the disciples obviously misunderstand the nature of the kingdom of God. Notably, Jesus does not allow his disciples to keep the children away, for children and other marginalized groups are members of the kingdom of God.²⁴² They can come to Jesus to receive the blessings of the kingdom of God, which belongs to them even now. But the disciples fail to comprehend what the kingdom of God actually is. They do not understand God’s

²³⁹ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 81.

²⁴⁰ Bovon, *Luke 2: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 9:51-19:27*, 560.

²⁴¹ Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes, and Indexes* (London: Macmillan, 1952), 423.

²⁴² Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 276.

concern for those who are marginalized.²⁴³ This is why Jesus instructs them that the kingdom of God is made up of people such as these little children. The disciples need to extend respectful reception to the marginalized as Jesus did.

2.3.2 Those Who Wish to Enter the Kingdom of God Must Show Hospitality to the Marginalized

There are three indications of the importance of the marginalized in the kingdom of God. First, receiving the children and others who are similar to them is a prerequisite for those who would enter the kingdom of God. When Jesus saw the disciples' attempt to block the children from him, he said to them, "Truly, I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it" (18:17). In the Greek text, both "receiving" (*dezētai*) and "entering" (*eiselthē*) the kingdom of God are in the same subjunctive mood. Entry into the kingdom of God is conditional (subjunctive mood) upon receiving the marginalized.²⁴⁴ Also noteworthy is that Jesus' pronouncement about entering the kingdom of God as a child is in an imperative form. He uses a double negation (*nē dezētai* [does not receive] and *ou nē eiselthē* [never enter]) to emphasize the importance of his command: "Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as [he should receive] a little child will never enter it" (18:17). People must show hospitality towards children and others who are lowly, so that they themselves may have a place in the kingdom of God.

Second, the marginalized are recipients of the kingdom of God. "Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it" (18:17). The

²⁴³ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 652.

²⁴⁴ Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 683.

Lukan wording is exactly the same as Mark 10:15. But what does it mean to receive the kingdom of God as a little child (“*ōs paidion*”)? Unfortunately, neither Jesus nor Luke explains it. In fact, *paidion* can be interpreted as either nominative, “as a child receives it,” or accusative, “as one receives a child.” Fitzmyer and Nolland interpret *paidion* as nominative, which means the kingdom of God is to be received in the way children receive, in humility and simplicity. The reasons are as follows: Matthew 18:3, the parallel passage of Luke 18:17, reveals that Matthew also understood *paidion* as nominative. People are to receive the kingdom of God in the same way children receive things.²⁴⁵ Those who receive the kingdom of God will be childlike. Fitzmyer and Nolland’s explanation, however, is unsatisfactory. While the syntax of *paidion* is ambiguous, the context of Luke favors the accusative interpretation, as argued by some scholars, including Green, Craddock, and Edwards.²⁴⁶ Firstly, *paidion* is an accusative case in grammatical agreement with the implied verb *dezētai* (“receive”). The kingdom of God here is compared to a child. Welcoming the children symbolizes welcoming the kingdom of God. Secondly, although Jesus commends children for their subjective qualities in Matthew 18:3, it is possible that Luke understood things differently. What the Lukan Jesus might have had in mind is that the kingdom of God is for children whom most regard as insignificant. Thirdly, the accusative

²⁴⁵ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (X-XXIV)*, 1194; John Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, WBC 35B (Dallas: Word, 1993), 882.

²⁴⁶ Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, 423; F. A. Schelling, “What Means the Saying about Receiving the Kingdom of God as a Little Child?” *ExpT* 77 (1965-66): 56-58, cited in Vernon K. Robbins, “Pronouncement Stories and Jesus’ Blessing the Children: A Rhetorical Approach,” *Semeia* 29 (1983): 59; Craddock, *Luke*, 212; Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 651; Richard B. Vinson, *Luke* (Macon: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2008), 575; Cynthia A. Jarvis and E. Elizabeth Johnson, eds. *Feasting on the Gospels: Luke*, Vol. 2 (Louisville: WJK, 2014), 145; Edwards, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 509-510.

interpretation of *paidion* accords well with the meaning of Luke 18:16, where Jesus promises the kingdom of God to those who are unimportant and weak in the society. Jesus calls people to welcome the marginalized into the kingdom of God. Fourthly, Luke 9:46-48 favors the accusative interpretation. Jesus teaches the disciples to welcome the little children as they welcome him. Jesus requires the disciples to care for those who have no status in the society. Hospitality and reception of the marginalized whom children represent are characteristics of the kingdom of God.²⁴⁷ In other words, Jesus commands his disciples to show hospitality to children and those who are similar to them.

Third, Jesus' saying illustrates that receiving the marginalized equals receiving the kingdom of God. Jesus does not merely receive children, the most vulnerable and unimportant members of the society, into the kingdom of God, but he also uses them as a symbol for entering it: "Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it" (18:17). "Receive the kingdom of God as [he should receive] a little child" implies that Jesus puts receiving the marginalized in an equal position to receiving the kingdom of God. Such an understanding fits well with Jesus' teaching in Luke. According to the Lukan Jesus, those who wish to inherit the kingdom of God must receive vulnerable and unimportant members of society. The low-ranking people of the society are not only the recipients of the kingdom of God, but also the objects of the disciples' concern.²⁴⁸ Jesus not only cares for the marginalized but also requires those who want to enter the kingdom of God to show hospitality toward

²⁴⁷ Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 280.

²⁴⁸ Joseph A. Grassi, "Child, Children," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 1, ed., David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday Dell, 1992), 905.

them.²⁴⁹ In fact, showing kindness to others is a crucial means for the disciples of Jesus to bear witness to the kingdom of God in the world. If the disciples have truly shown compassion and generosity toward those who are needy, they have participated in building up the kingdom of God. Thus Jesus' teaching concerning little children is not merely an expression of hospitality but also an explicit symbol of showing kindness to the most vulnerable people in the society.

²⁴⁹ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 651.

Chapter 3

The Kingdom of God in the Parables of Jesus

The Gospel of Luke preserves a number of Jesus' parables on the kingdom of God. Most of Luke's parables occur in the course of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem. Along the way Jesus teaches the kingdom of God in parable and invites his followers, the disciples and others, including religious leaders like the Pharisees and scribes, as well as tax collectors and sinners, to catch a glimpse of character and life in the kingdom of God. Many of these parables are unique to Luke.

The parable plays an important role in understanding Jesus' message about the kingdom of God.²⁵⁰ The Greek term *parabolē* (parable) literally means "to set beside" or "to throw beside," illustrating similarity or parallelism.²⁵¹ In Jesus' parables in Luke, three themes arise that influence our understanding of the kingdom of God: the kingdom of God as a present reality; the kingdom of God as a manifestation of God's salvation; and the kingdom of God as a call for response. This chapter will explore what the kingdom of God in the parables of Jesus meant to Luke's (and Jesus') audience. I will begin with the notion that the kingdom is realized in the ministry of Jesus.

3.1 The Kingdom of God Has Already Come

Luke presents the kingdom of God as already present through three parables: the parable of the sower (8:4-8), the parable of the mustard seed (13:18-19), and the

²⁵⁰ Gösta Lundström, *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus: A History of Interpretation from the Last Decades of the Nineteenth Century to the Present Day* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1963[Swedish: 1947]), 273.

²⁵¹ Bernard Brandon Scott, *Hear then the Parable: A Commentary on the Parables of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 19.

parable of the yeast (13:20-21).²⁵²

The three parables illustrate that the expected coming of the kingdom of God has begun in Jesus' ministry.²⁵³ The parable of the sower itself does not show explicitly that its theme is the kingdom of God, but Luke places it in the context of Jesus' preaching about the kingdom (vv. 1, 9).²⁵⁴ The parable depicts a sower going out to sow, scattering seed on four types of ground, three of which, for different reasons, eventually fail, while the fourth bears fruit in a triple abundance. At the end Jesus calls for his audience to hear his real message in the parable saying: "Let anyone with ears to hear listen" (8:8).²⁵⁵ Therefore, Jesus intends to apply the lesson of the seed and soil to persons hearing the message about the kingdom of God. Jesus' ministry is like the sowing activity of the sower. It appears unremarkable in the beginning and even fails to attract people in some cases, but for those who believe it marks the inauguration of the kingdom of God.²⁵⁶ Luke uses two other parables to compare the kingdom of God directly to the mustard seed and the yeast. They illustrate that the kingdom of God has incredible power to grow and expand. The power of the small seed is operative when it is sowed, and the tiny seed will in time grow into a big plant. Similarly, a small amount of yeast is hidden and mixed in the flour but will eventually be noticed when the flour is leavened and rises a big lump. They suggest that the kingdom of God as

²⁵² The parable of the mustard seed is found also in Matthew 13:31-32 and Mark 4:30-32. The parable of the sower has parallels in Matthew 13:1-9 and Mark 4:1-9. The parable of the leaven also appears in Matthew 13:33, which has no parallel in Mark.

²⁵³ Fuller, *The Mission and Achievement of Jesus*, 45; W. G. Kümmel, *Promise and Fulfillment: The Eschatological Message of Jesus*, ed. Dorothea M. Barton (London: SCM, 1957), 111.

²⁵⁴ Getty-Sullivan, *Parables of the Kingdom*, 120.

²⁵⁵ Joel Marcus identifies the "seed" as the "word of God." See Joel Marcus, *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 25-29, 50, 59-60.

²⁵⁶ David Wenham, *The Parables of Jesus* (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 1989), 44.

proclaimed by Jesus has the power to become influential. In fact, the hidden presence of the kingdom of God is at work even though it appears to be ineffective in the beginning.²⁵⁷ The ministry of Jesus may seem insignificant to his opponents, but the kingdom of God will surely manifest its power to bring God's blessings and change many lives, even the world itself, which will surprise everybody. Jesus has initiated the operation of the kingdom of God on earth in his ministry.

The three parables indicate the extent to which the kingdom of God is expanding. In the parable of the sower, although sowing at first seems insignificant, in fact, sowing is a powerful action. The seed which falls into good soil is growing and will produce a hundredfold. Jesus' ministry is like such sowing: the kingdom of God Jesus brings into the world at first seems ineffective, but it is full of vigor and vitality.²⁵⁸ Both the parable of the mustard seed and the parable of the leaven emphasize a sharp contrast between tiny beginnings and stupendous results: the seed grows and becomes a tree; the yeast leavens whole flour. The gospel writer contrasts present smallness and future greatness of the kingdom of God through these two metaphors. In the first-century Mediterranean world, "the mustard seed and its ultimate growth were proverbial for the great growth of the kingdom of God."²⁵⁹ The difference between the tiny seed and the huge herb foreshadows the difference between the

²⁵⁷ Dodd, *The Parables of Kingdom*, 135-137; Aloysius M. Ambrozic, *The Hidden Kingdom: A Redaction-Critical Study of the References to the Kingdom of God in Mark's Gospel* (Washington: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1972), 111; Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, trans. S. H. Hooke, 2nd ed. (New York: Scribners, 1972), 149-151.

²⁵⁸ Wenham, *The Parables of Jesus*, 44; J. D. Crossan, "The Seed Parables of Jesus," *JBL* 92 (1973): 266.

²⁵⁹ Herman L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrash* (Munich: Beck, 1922), 669, cited in Mark L. Bailey, "The Parable of the Mustard Seed," *BS* 155 (1998): 453.

beginning and end of the kingdom of God. The inevitability of the growth of the mustard seed into a tree illustrates the kingdom of God Jesus proclaimed.²⁶⁰ Like the mustard seed, the kingdom of God starts small and becomes very large.²⁶¹ The parable of the leaven also demonstrates the kingdom of God is powerful as the leaven expands irrepressibly. In Greco-Roman antiquity, leaven was often used to express figurative meaning.²⁶² Jesus compares the kingdom of God to a mustard seed and leaven in order to illustrate how the kingdom becomes a powerful reality from its unnoticed beginnings.²⁶³ Through these parables, Jesus implies that God's kingdom will be great in the end, although it is small at the beginning. The kingdom of God is developing dramatically. It is probable that Jesus uses these parables to address those who had difficulty recognizing the kingdom of God in his ministry. They expected the kingdom of God to be massively powerful, but the kingdom was insignificant. However, although the beginning of the kingdom of God in Jesus' ministry might be unremarkable, its growth will be noticeable, just like the mustard seed becomes a surprising tree and leaven rises.²⁶⁴ Jesus' message about the good news of the kingdom will be heard and widely accepted.²⁶⁵ The kingdom of God is enlarging and producing in the world.

²⁶⁰ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (I-IX)*, 1016.

²⁶¹ John Paul Hell, "Reader-Response and the Narrative Context of the Parables about Growing Seed in Mark 4:1-34," *CBQ* 54 (1992): 285.

²⁶² Ryan S. Schellenberg, "Kingdom as Contaminant? The Role of Repertoire in the Parables of the Mustard Seed and the Leaven," *CBQ* 71 (2009): 543.

²⁶³ Robert W. Funk, "Beyond Criticism in Quest of Literacy: The Parable of the Leaven," *Interpretation* 25 (1971): 160.

²⁶⁴ Mark L. Bailey, "The Parable of the Mustard Seed," *BS* 155 (1998): 449.

²⁶⁵ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50*, BECNT 3A (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 726.

3.2 The Kingdom of God Manifests God's Salvation

In the parable of the great banquet (14:15-24), the parables of the lost sheep (15:4-7), the lost coin (15:8-10), and the prodigal son (15:11-32), Luke contends that the salvation of the kingdom comes through God's free offer of grace. God's salvation extends to the marginalized, including sinners and outcasts.

3.2.1 The Parable of the Great Banquet

The parable is bracketed by interpretive references in vv. 15 and 24. Jesus calls this banquet "my banquet" (v. 24), showing the parable is linked with the kingdom of God. Scholars including Geldenhuys, Morris, and Manson interpret the parable as illustrating salvation history.²⁶⁶ The parable communicates key characteristics of salvation in the kingdom of God.

First, the parable illustrates that the salvation of God has already come. In the parable, the kingdom of God is like a banquet to which people are invited. The feast symbolizes God's salvation.²⁶⁷ The host wants to invite many guests to his banquet and, when everything is ready, sends his servant around to call them.²⁶⁸ The words, "All is now ready," make clear that the invited guests may come to the banquet now. The time for entering the banquet of the kingdom of God is now.²⁶⁹ Jesus makes his audience to see that the time for participation in the kingdom has already come.²⁷⁰ Jesus urges his

²⁶⁶ T. W. Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus: As Recorded in the Gospels According to St. Matthew and St. Luke* (London: SCM, 1949), 129-130; J. N. Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke* (London: Morgan & Scott, 1961), 393; Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to St. Luke: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 235.

²⁶⁷ Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 588.

²⁶⁸ Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 322.

²⁶⁹ J. Lyle Story, "All Is Now Ready: An Exegesis of 'the Great Banquet' (Luke 14:15-24) and 'the Marriage Feast' (Matthew 22:1-14)," *ATI* 2 (2009): 69.

²⁷⁰ Hendrickx, *The Parables of Jesus*, 133; Kenneth E. Bailey, *Through Peasant Eyes: More Lukan Parables, Their Culture and Style* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 95.

audience to respond to his invitation by entering the kingdom of God.²⁷¹ However, those who have been invited cannot come because of their possessions or family commitments.²⁷² In fact, if someone rejects the invitation to the feast now, he or she will be excluded from the eschatological banquet in the time to come.²⁷³ Those who are not willing to accept the present invitation, like the first guests who are invited but refuse to come, will fail to participate in the eschatological banquet. With this parable, therefore, Jesus calls his audience to respond now to God's invitation to the kingdom through Jesus' ministry.

Second, the parable reveals that the kingdom of God is universal. The banquet is prepared first of all for the expected guests. The host has invited many people (v. 16), and his house is to be filled with many people (v. 23). Three groups of servants go out to call people to the feast, but the invited guests reject the invitation and offer three different excuses related to the details of commercial and family life.²⁷⁴ Those who refuse to attend the banquet regard the affairs of daily life as more important than participation in the kingdom of God.²⁷⁵ The host wants all the spaces of the banquet to be filled. Seeing that there is still room at the table, he orders the servants to go outside the city and gather people from the roads and lanes.²⁷⁶ If the invited guests exclude themselves from the kingdom, others will take their places. Jesus is warning that the Jews who refuse the invitation to the kingdom will be replaced by Gentiles.²⁷⁷ If the

²⁷¹ Getty-Sullivan, *Parables of the Kingdom*, 144.

²⁷² Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 316.

²⁷³ Robert H. Stein, *An Introduction to the Parables of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981), 90.

²⁷⁴ Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 588.

²⁷⁵ Getty-Sullivan, *Parables of the Kingdom*, 146.

²⁷⁶ Bernard Brandon Scott, *Hear Then the Parable: A Commentary on the Parables of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 164.

²⁷⁷ Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus*, 130; Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 585.

Jewish leaders will not participate in the kingdom now, they will not have a place at the eschatological banquet, and their place will be taken by other people.²⁷⁸ As such, the kingdom of God is extended to include new and unexpected guests. In Luke's view, the gospel of the kingdom of God was therefore offered to all peoples in the world not only to the Jewish people who believed they were the only chosen people of God.

Third, the salvation of the kingdom of God also extends to the disadvantaged. Having been rejected by his expected guests, the host then turns to invite the poor, the crippled, the blind, the lame (v. 21), and the people who dwell among the roads and lanes (v. 23).²⁷⁹ The four groups of new guests in v. 21 are the same group described in 14:13 (cf. also 4:18; 7:22).²⁸⁰ According to Green, those who have no status might dwell among the roads and lanes of the city.²⁸¹ Luke's inclusion of the outcasts has no parallel in Matthew, showing that Luke particularly underscores that outcasts are included in the banquet.²⁸² In other words, even the marginalized groups share God's salvation.²⁸³ For Luke, because of God's mercy, the lowly will be exalted in the kingdom of God (1:52-53; 4:18-19; 6:20-25). It is also important to note that, whereas the expected guests reject the invitation to the banquet, the less fortunate accept it willingly.²⁸⁴ Clearly, this parable is meant to say the salvation of the kingdom

²⁷⁸ Stein, *An Introduction to the Parables of Jesus*, 89.

²⁷⁹ Bailey, *Through Peasant Eyes*, 95; Culpepper, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 290.

²⁸⁰ Willard M. Swartley, "Unexpected Banquet People (Luke 14:16-24)," in *Jesus and His Parables: Interpreting the Parables of Jesus Today*, ed. V. George Shillington (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1997), 181; Ernst R. Wendland, "'Blessed Is the Man Who Will Eat at the Feast in the Kingdom of God' (Lk 14:15): Internal and External Intertextual Influence on the Interpretation of Christ's Parable of the Great Banquet," *Neotestamentica* 31, no. 1 (1997): 167.

²⁸¹ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 561.

²⁸² Stein, *An Introduction to the Parables of Jesus*, 90.

²⁸³ Stein, *An Introduction to the Parables of Jesus*, 90.

²⁸⁴ Getty-Sullivan, *Parables of the Kingdom*, 146.

extends to all the peoples.²⁸⁵ The marginalized and the poor are now recipients of God's salvation.²⁸⁶ God has invited them. Nobody should ignore them or exclude them.

3.2.2 The Parables of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Prodigal Son

The parables of the lost sheep (15:4-7), the lost coin (15:8-10), and the lost son (15:11-32), continue the motif of the parable of the great banquet, that is, the poor and the outcasts are invited to the banquet.²⁸⁷ As tax collectors and sinners gather around Jesus, the Pharisees and scribes grumble over Jesus' acceptance of these sinners and his practice of eating with them.²⁸⁸ Hearing their grumbling, Jesus responds to them with three parables, showing major characteristics of the kingdom of God.

First, this set of parables affirms that the salvation of the lost comes through Jesus' ministry. Jesus has come to bring the good news of salvation to the poor, the sick, and the sinners.²⁸⁹ The coming of the kingdom of God is embodied in Jesus' table fellowship with the sinners.²⁹⁰ Criticized by the Pharisees and scribes for his association with the tax collectors and sinners, Jesus seeks to teach his opponents to recognize through his ministry that the salvation of the kingdom has come.²⁹¹ Jesus' welcoming the tax collectors and sinners and eating with them shows that the

²⁸⁵ Bailey, *Through Peasant Eyes*, 90. Here the banquet symbolizes the salvation of God in Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 587.

²⁸⁶ J. Duncan M. Derrett, *Law in the New Testament* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1970), 146; Elaine Mary Wainwright, "God Wills to Invite All to the Banquet: Matthew 22:1-10," *IRM* 77, no. 306 (1988): 190.

²⁸⁷ Joachim Jeremias calls these three parables as the heart of the third Gospel in Jeremias, *Parables*, 124. The first of three parables has parallel in Matthew 18:12-14. The parables of the lost coin and the prodigal son are peculiar to Luke.

²⁸⁸ Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus*, 82.

²⁸⁹ Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 605; Getty-Sullivan, *Parables of the Kingdom*, 159.

²⁹⁰ Culpepper, *Luke*, 296.

²⁹¹ Richard Longenecker, ed., *The Challenge of Jesus' Parables* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 214.

kingdom of God is present.²⁹² The kingdom of God has come with love and mercy, even for the sinners and outcasts.²⁹³ Jesus declares that he comes to seek and to save the lost people (cf., 19:10). In this sense, the three parables explain why Jesus befriends the tax collectors and sinners (15:1-2). These tax collectors and sinners are symbolized by the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son. In the first parable a shepherd goes after his lost sheep until he finds it (15:4). In the second parable a woman seeks her lost coin until she locates it (15:8). In the last parable the father welcomes back his lost son (15:24). God's love for the lost is shown in these parables. God, through Jesus, reaches those who are outcasts in the society with the good news of the kingdom. In three parables, the lost sheep may refer to the vulnerable and unprivileged in the society, the lost coin reminds us of the poor and marginalized, and the lost son points to the sinners, while the elder son implies self-righteous people. All of them are lost, but God loves them all.

Second, these parables demonstrate that God seeks out the lost and restores them. In the parable of the great banquet (14:15-24), Jesus states the importance of welcoming the outcasts—the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind—to the banquet. Now Luke also uses the three parables to show that God actively and passionately offers his love and mercy to the outcasts.²⁹⁴ Jesus welcomes such persons as tax collectors and sinners. Jesus is criticized for welcoming sinners and having fellowship with them, but using the parables, he justifies his attitude toward

²⁹² Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 141. The Pharisees and scribes are invited to recognize that God's search for what is lost has been realized. See Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 586; Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 108.

²⁹³ Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus*, 86; Getty-Sullivan, *Parables of the Kingdom*, 150.

²⁹⁴ Donahue, *The Gospel in Parable*, 147.

them. Fitzmyer, Johnson, and Paul Borgman hold that the tax collectors and sinners represent the outcasts.²⁹⁵ Thus Jesus' reception of the tax collectors and sinners illustrates that Jesus extends hospitality to the outcasts. In his response to the criticism of the Pharisees and scribes, Jesus not only corrects their false understanding of God's attributes but also challenges them to see God's attitude toward sinners.²⁹⁶ Jesus' eating with the tax collectors and sinners shows that the kingdom of God extends to the sinners. Jesus invites them into the kingdom of God because God loves them just as the father loves his prodigal son. The elder son who refuses to welcome home his prodigal brother symbolizes the Pharisees and scribes who are self-righteous and quick to condemn others. Thus Jesus wants the Pharisees and scribes to understand the true meaning of the kingdom of God and to adopt the same attitude towards the outcasts as the father has shown to his lost son.²⁹⁷

Third, the Lukan Jesus invites all including Pharisees and Scribes to rejoice over the recovery of the outcast. The sense of joy clearly runs through each of the three parables (15:7, 10, 23, 32).²⁹⁸ The major figure in each of the three parables invites his or her friends and neighbors to share in his or her rejoicing. In fact, "rejoice with me" (v. 6) is an invitation to all to enter the shepherd's sense of joy of discovering the lost one. The woman who found her lost coin in 15:9b also extends an invitation; and the father of the prodigal son invites others to "make merry" with him on the return of his lost son (vv. 23, 32). The shepherd takes pains to look for the one lost sheep, the

²⁹⁵ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (X-XXIV)*, 1075; Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 239; Paul Borgman, *The Way According to Luke: Hearing the Whole Story of Luke-Acts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 177.

²⁹⁶ Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 604; Getty-Sullivan, *Parables of the Kingdom*, 155.

²⁹⁷ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 586.

²⁹⁸ Donahue, *The Gospel in Parable*, 150; Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus*, 59.

woman makes great efforts to find the one lost coin, and the father welcomes home the prodigal son, forgiving him and restoring his status as son. The father symbolizes God and the kiss, coat, ring, banquet symbolize love and forgiveness. It is clear that God welcomes home the lost. Since the shepherd is a metaphor for God, the message of the parable of the lost sheep becomes clear: God is pleased with the return of the lost.²⁹⁹ The three parables make quite explicit that God's love and forgiveness for the sinners and outcasts is manifested in Jesus' table fellowship. In Luke's view, the sinners and outcasts are the recipients of the kingdom of God. The Lukan Jesus also invites the Pharisees and scribes to join in the joy of the outcasts' repentance (cf. 5:29-32; 7:36-50; 17:11-19; 19:1-10).³⁰⁰

3.3 The Kingdom of God Demands Proper Response

Luke chooses several of Jesus' parables to illustrate that the children of God should have a proper life in the kingdom of God. The requirement to use wealth wisely and the call to serve God faithfully in the kingdom are two significant themes in Luke's Gospel. I will begin with parables concerning wealth.

3.3.1 Parables Concerning Wealth

The subject of wealth is an important theme in Luke's Gospel. Luke presents three parables concerning wealth: the parable of the rich fool (12:13-21), the parable of the dishonest steward (16:1-9), and the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (16:19-31). Each of the three parables begins with the phrase "a rich man," warning

²⁹⁹ Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus*, 64; Ernst R. Wendland, "Finding Some Lost Aspects of Meaning in Christ's Parables of the Lost—and Found (Luke 15)," *TriJ* 17, no. 1 (1996): 62; Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus*, 58-59.

³⁰⁰ Charles E. Carlston, "Reminiscence and Redaction in Luke 15:11-32," *JBL* 94, no. 3 (1975): 384.

against greed. Jesus warns his audience to avoid all forms of greed, for greed keeps one from the kingdom of God.³⁰¹ The disciples are exhorted to be generous to those in need and to use their material possessions wisely.

3.3.1.1 The Parable of the Rich Fool

The parable of the rich fool (12:13-21) is primarily about the proper use of material possessions. Jesus reminds the disciples to use their wealth wisely. The parable provides a negative example of a way of living before God.

The rich fool thinks his life consists of the abundance of his wealth, so he stores up goods for himself.³⁰² The man wants to tear down his barns and build bigger ones so that he can gather his grain for many years.³⁰³ The man concentrates on increasing his possessions.³⁰⁴ Prosperity becomes his ultimate pursuit in life. But the man is a fool because he thinks material possessions can secure his life and help him relax for many years without any thought that his life may be shortened any moment.³⁰⁵ So, God calls him a “fool” and announces that that very day the rich man will die.³⁰⁶ The rich fool does not realize that he will die and leave behind what he has at any time.³⁰⁷ He fails to see the threat of death as approaching at any moment.³⁰⁸ To instruct his hearers, Jesus presents a proverb in v. 15: “One’s life does not consist in the abundance of

³⁰¹ Mary Ann Beavis, “The Foolish Landowner (Luke 12:16b-20),” in *Jesus and His Parables*, ed. V. George Schillington, 68.

³⁰² Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 521.

³⁰³ Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 521; Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 490.

³⁰⁴ Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus*, 108.

³⁰⁵ Hendrickx, *The Parables of Jesus*, 103; Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 201.

³⁰⁶ Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Luke* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914), 324. Culpepper, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 256.

³⁰⁷ Richard Gribble, *The Parables of Jesus: Applications for Contemporary Life* (Lima: CSS Publisher, 2000), 134.

³⁰⁸ Gribble, *The Parables of Jesus*, 135.

possessions.” In fact, life is not to be measured in terms of wealth.³⁰⁹ It seems likely that Luke reminds the rich members of his community that the wealth they possess temporarily belongs to God, so that wealth should not be used for their selfish pleasure.

The rich fool does not share his wealth with others. The man is self-centered, living completely for himself, for he thinks only of “ample goods” and “many years.”³¹⁰ His self-centeredness is underscored in the frequency of the personal pronoun, “I,” which appears six times in the parable, and the possessive pronoun, “my,” which appears five times.³¹¹ The inner thoughts of the rich man reveal that the needs of those around him never concern him.³¹² Evidently, the man is selfish and totally disregards the needs of others.³¹³ The rich man could have generously shared his belongings with others in need.³¹⁴ But he does not! He is consumed by his possessions and never uses his excess wealth to assist those in need.³¹⁵ Commenting on this rich fool’s selfishness, Jesus presents another proverb in v. 21: “So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich towards God.” For the Lukan Jesus, richness towards God (*eis theon ploutein*) means loving God and caring for the poor (cf., 11:41; 12:33; 16:9). Jesus’ saying suggests that one should be devoted to serving God and showing concern for others.³¹⁶ Wealth should be used for assisting the needy

³⁰⁹ Culpepper, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 255.

³¹⁰ Craddock, *Luke*, 163; Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus*, 108.

³¹¹ Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus*, 109.

³¹² Gribble, *The Parables of Jesus*, 135; Henry Johannes Mugabe, “Parable of the Rich Fool: Luke 12:13-21,” *R & E* 111, no. 1 (2014): 71.

³¹³ Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 359.

³¹⁴ Mugabe, “Parable of the Rich Fool: Luke 12:13-21,” *R & E* 111, no. 1 (2014): 72; Joshua A. Noble, “‘Rich toward God’: Making Sense of Luke 12:21,” *CBQ* 78, no. 2 (2016): 309.

³¹⁵ Culpepper, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 257.

³¹⁶ Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus*, 109.

in the society.³¹⁷ In Luke, “the purpose of wealth is found in its being shared.”³¹⁸

Wealth, which is from God, should be used in service of those who are needy.

Therefore, this parable teaches the disciples to use their wealth for the good of others.

3.3.1.2 The Parable of the Dishonest Steward

In the parable of the dishonest steward (16:1-9), the steward faces dismissal from his position because he dissipates his master’s wealth, the management of which he oversees (vv. 1-3). By reducing the debtors’ accounts, the steward uses his master’s capital to secure his own future.³¹⁹ The parable views the steward’s prudence positively. In an ironic way, the dishonest steward’s shrewdness becomes a model for Jesus’ audience with regard to their attitude toward the demand of the kingdom of God.

It is noteworthy that the steward’s behavior in the parable raises questions. Derrett and Fitzmyer argue that the steward should not be called as a “dishonest steward,” for the steward does the right thing.³²⁰ The master’s financial interest was decreased by the reduction of debtors’ account, but it was legal according to Jewish law.³²¹ The steward reduces the master’s wealth; however, the master may gain a good reputation in the society.³²² The text itself gives reason enough to call the man a “dishonest steward,” thus challenging Derrett’s assertion. First, Jesus’ description and

³¹⁷ Kyoung Jin Kim, *Stewardship and Almsgiving in Luke's Theology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 184.

³¹⁸ Charles Talbert, *Reading Luke: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Third Gospel* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 141.

³¹⁹ Culpepper, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 307.

³²⁰ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, “The Story of the Dishonest Manager (Lk 16:1-13),” *TS* 25, no. 1 (1964): 32; Derrett, *Law in the New Testament*, 62.

³²¹ Derrett, *Law in the New Testament*, 63.

³²² Derrett, *Law in the New Testament*, 72.

comments in vv. 1-2 show the steward is dishonest. The master realizes that the steward has wasted his property. Second, the master identifies the steward as “dishonest” (v. 8).³²³ Third, the steward does not deny his dishonest behavior. He does not attempt to defend himself.³²⁴ Thus the master praises the steward for his “prudence” (*phronimōs*) in handling business affairs, not for his dishonesty.³²⁵

The interpretation of the parable of the dishonest steward divides scholars. Wright understands the parable as an admonition for Israel about the eschatological kingdom. The Israelites will be rejected if they are unfaithful to God just like the dishonest steward will be ejected from his position.³²⁶ Jeremias asserts that Jesus uses the parable to warn his audience about the proper response to the coming of crisis.³²⁷ Some scholars, including Fitzmyer, Getty-Sullivan, Johnson, and Green, contend that the parable is concerned primarily with the use of wealth. According to Fitzmyer, the parable is about the steward’s knowledge of how to use wealth to avert a future disaster.³²⁸ Getty-Sullivan views the parable as the proper attitude toward wealth.³²⁹ Johnson and Green hold that the theme of the parable has to do with proper use of possessions.³³⁰ I am persuaded by the arguments that focus on the proper use of wealth. First, in the parable of the prodigal son (15:11-32), the younger son wastes his possessions through dissolute living, which relates to the use of wealth. The parable

³²³ Paul Trudinger, “Exposing the Depth of Oppression (Luke 16:1b-8a),” in *Jesus and His Parables*, ed. V. George Shillington, 122.

³²⁴ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (I-IX)*, 1097.

³²⁵ Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 45-46; Justin S. Ukpong, “The Parable of the Shrewd Manager (Luke 16:1-13): An Essay in Inculturation Biblical Hermeneutic,” *Semeia* 73 (1996): 193.

³²⁶ N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*. Vol. 2 of *Christian Origins and the Question of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 638.

³²⁷ Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 45-48.

³²⁸ Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 407.

³²⁹ Getty-Sullivan, *Parables of the Kingdom*, 120.

³³⁰ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 589; Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 248.

of the dishonest steward and the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (16:19-31) continue this theme.³³¹ Taken together, the three parables serve as a summons and challenge to discipleship, which includes the right attitude towards wealth and the use of wealth in generous service to others.³³² Second, the master praises the steward for acting prudently, although his behavior is unjust. The steward himself is not wise but acts wisely.³³³ The steward is commended for his foresight in preparing for the future (v. 8a).³³⁴ He is shrewd in that he utilizes the resources he has to ensure his future security.³³⁵ Put another way, the steward is commended for his vigilance. By implication, Jesus urges his audience to be wary in preparing for the coming of the kingdom. They should make judicious decisions about how to cope with the eschatological kingdom.³³⁶ Third, the parable underscores proper use of wealth and the validity of God's stewardship.³³⁷ The steward uses possessions to secure a place for himself, and so should the disciples. The steward is praised because of his wisdom in using money. In the same way, the disciples are commanded to use the wealth wisely in order to gain the approval of God.³³⁸ Giving wealth to the needy is a consistent theme in Luke (6:38; 12:33; 14:33). In this case, the dishonest steward reduces the burden of the tenants. The disciples should help the poor, too.³³⁹ Jesus has promised that those

³³¹ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (X-XXIV)*, 1095.

³³² Mansion, *The Sayings of Jesus*, 293.

³³³ Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 47, 182.

³³⁴ Wright, *Jesus the Storyteller*, 125.

³³⁵ Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 616; Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus*, 151; Gribble, *The Parables of Jesus*, 216.

³³⁶ Stein, *An Introduction to the Parables of Jesus*, 106; Culpepper, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 309.

³³⁷ Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 616.

³³⁸ L. John Topel, "On the Injustice of the Unjust Steward: Lk 16:1-13," *CBQ* 37, no. 2 (1975): 220; Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 615.

³³⁹ James Fielding Turrell, "The Dishonest Manager," *STR* 55, no. 4 (2012): 417.

who use their possessions to help the poor will be rewarded in the kingdom of God (14:14). Now he calls the disciples to think about how to use their financial resources for God's kingdom properly.

3.3.1.3 The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus

In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (16:19-31), Luke exhorts the wealthy to take responsibility for the poor. The fact that the rich man is tortured after death serves as a call for the hearers of Jesus (and Luke) to share their wealth with those in need.³⁴⁰ Luke reminds those in his community who are well off to be generous to the poor.³⁴¹

In the parable the rich man lives extravagantly, but Lazarus the beggar is in terrible circumstances. Three things are mentioned in the beginning of the parable: clothing, food, and a gate. The rich man is clothed in purple and fine linen (v. 19). In contrast, Jesus does not mention the clothes Lazarus wore. Instead, Lazarus is covered with sores (v. 20). The rich man feasts sumptuously every day; but Lazarus longs for scraps of food. The rich man has a gate, signifying he has a house. However, Lazarus has no house, and was laid³⁴² at the rich man's gate.³⁴³ This sharp contrast demonstrates that the rich man is selfish and does not show compassion to Lazarus. In the Torah (e.g., Exod. 23:11; Lev. 19:9-10; Deut. 15:1-11), there are a variety of

³⁴⁰ John Y. H. Yieh, *Making Sense of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge: Grove, 2007), 6.

³⁴¹ Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer and Roland E. Murphy, eds. *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1990), 709.

³⁴² The verb "lay" (v. 20) is a passive form "ἐβέβλητο" (ebeblēto) of "βάλλω" (ballō), which suggests Lazarus may be crippled, unable to move. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 633; Olubiyi Adeniyi Adewale, "An Afro-sociological Application of the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31)," *BT* 4, no. 1 (2006): 32.

³⁴³ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 606.

teachings about how to treat fellow humans, especially the poor.³⁴⁴ This rich man is obviously a Jew because he calls Abraham as “Father Abraham.” (16:24, 30). He knows the Torah and the prophets, but he disregards the basic demands of the law and the prophets concerning the poor. He does not show compassion for his neighbor.

The rich man’s and Lazarus’s fates are totally reversed after death. The rich man lies in anguish in the flames of Hades (vv. 23-24).³⁴⁵ By contrast, Lazarus is carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man is in great pain, so he asks Abraham to send Lazarus to give him water (vv. 24-26). His appeal suggests that he knows Lazarus well.³⁴⁶ When they were alive on earth, however, he ignored Lazarus’s request for even the scraps of food from his table. The rich man neglected those in need during his life, so he cannot get help from the poor now.³⁴⁷ There is no hope of reversing the fate for those who do not show compassion in their lives. In the end, the rich man asks Abraham to send Lazarus to warn his brothers to avoid his error (vv. 27-29). He realizes that his brothers need to repent and be generous so that they will not experience the same fate. This suggests that the rich man has finally realized the terrible consequence of his inaction in not caring for the poor.³⁴⁸ Abraham tells the rich man that his brothers have Moses and the prophets (16:29). If they are willing to hear Moses and the prophets and repent of their selfish life, they will not share his fate of burning in fire. Moses and the prophets are full of ethical teachings about showing compassion to

³⁴⁴ Darrell L. Bock, “The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus and the Ethics of Jesus,” *SJT* 40, no. 1 (1997): 69.

³⁴⁵ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 9: 51–24:53*, BECNT 2 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 1369.

³⁴⁶ Bock, “The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus and the Ethics of Jesus,” 64.

³⁴⁷ Bock, *Luke 9: 51–24:53*, 1371.

³⁴⁸ Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, 831.

the poor.³⁴⁹ The rich man's brothers should know how to be compassionate to the poor. But he knows that his family does not take Moses and the prophets seriously, so he insists that if someone returned from the dead to warn them, then they would repent (vv. 30-31). His request is denied because even a miracle will not transform those who are living a self-indulgent lifestyle. The Torah has clearly required the Israelites to share their wealth with the marginalized.³⁵⁰ God's revelation of loving others should be sufficient for those who are willing to obey God's commandments. It is not necessary to add another sign, such as resurrection. Abraham's reply implies that the rich man's brothers should already know to show compassion to the poor.

3.3.2 Parables About Accountability

As disciples receiving grace from God, they should love God and neighbor. They are called to be the servants of God. Accountability is therefore an important character for faithful servants. Luke offers examples of different virtues for faithful servants through two parables: the parable of the pounds (19:11-27) and the parable of the wicked tenant (20:9-19). Through these two parables, Luke urges his readers to work faithfully in the kingdom of God, as we can see in the following.

3.3.2.1 The Parable of the Pounds

Jesus and his disciples were approaching the holy city Jerusalem, so the disciples began to wonder whether the kingdom of God was to appear imminently. In

³⁴⁹ Deut. 14:28-29; 15:1-3, 7-12; 22:1-2; 23:19; 24:7-15, 19-21; 25:13-14; Isa. 3:14-14; 5:7-8; 10:1-3; 32:6-7; 58:3, 6-7, 10; Jer. 5:26-28; 7:5-6; Ezek. 18:12-18; 33:15; Am. 2:6-8; 5:11-12; 8:4-6; Mic. 2:1-2; 3:1-3; 6:10-11; Zech. 7:9-10; Mal. 3:5) in Bock, "The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus and the Ethics of Jesus," *SJT*, 40/1 (1997): 69; Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1374.

³⁵⁰ Craddock, *Luke*, 196.

reality, however, the kingdom of God would not come immediately.³⁵¹ The final consummation of the kingdom of God was not to take place until after Jesus dies, is resurrected, ascends, and returns to the world as the Son of Man. In preparation for Jesus' return, his disciples should exercise the responsibility entrusted to them to serve the causes of the kingdom of God faithfully.

The parable of the pounds (19:11-27) is about serving God faithfully and responsibly. As indicated in the story of the parable, the servants are given same amount of money as capital to invest and manage, and they will be rewarded or judged in terms of their responsibility or irresponsibility to their assigned task. There are two Lukan themes to be noted.

On the one hand, Luke is saying that faithfulness leads to praiseworthy success.³⁵² The first two servants are willing to do the work assigned to them diligently and, even though they make different amount of profits, ten pounds and five pounds, they receive the same commendation from the master at his coming. Both of them are praised as "good servants" who have "done well"(19:17, 19). As such, the servants are rewarded for their faithfulness and loyalty more than for the high profits they make for their master. As the master rewards his servants for their loyalty according to their job, so will Jesus reward his followers for their work for the kingdom on the final day of reckoning.³⁵³ Luke uses this parable to illustrate how gifts have been used for the sake of the ministry of Jesus. The disciples need to carry

³⁵¹ Dodd, *The Parables of Kingdom*, 153; Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke*, trans. Geoffrey Buswell (New York: Harper, 1961), 113; Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 59; Adam F. Braun, "Reframing the Parable of the Pounds in Lukan Narrative and Economic Context: Luke 19:11-28," *CTM* 39, no. 6 (2012): 446.

³⁵² Derrett, *Law in the New Testament*, 27.

³⁵³ Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 535.

out faithfully their responsibilities while they wait for the final coming of the kingdom. Luke's audience is expected to use what has been entrusted to them as they wait for the coming of the kingdom.³⁵⁴ Jülicher argues that this parable deals with how we should use the talents that God has entrusted to us.³⁵⁵ Furthermore, according to the result of their work, the master gives more responsibilities to those servants who are responsible and dependable. Those who prove that they can make full use of gifts for the sake of their master will be given the opportunity to bear larger responsibility.³⁵⁶ This is a consistent Lukan theme (e.g., 12:44; 16:8a; 19:17, 19).

On the other hand, Luke also suggests that unfaithfulness leads to great loss. The third servant in the parable is condemned because he does not do what his master asks (19:13). He is expected to use his pound to make a profit during his master's absence. But, he fails to carry out what has been entrusted to him. He does not invest the money at all. Worse yet, he attributes his unfaithful service to fear and labels his master a "severe man"(19:21).³⁵⁷ The third servant does not know when his work will be judged. Just as the master will condemn the servant for his lack of work during his absence, so the ascended Jesus will judge his followers for their work in the kingdom before his return to the world for the final reckoning.³⁵⁸ Judgment will fall upon those who prove themselves unfaithful to the master or who reject Christ's kingdom,³⁵⁹ and as Marshall says, judgment and deprivation await the unfaithful and unprofitable

³⁵⁴ Wright, *Jesus the Storyteller*, 143.

³⁵⁵ Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 702.

³⁵⁶ Derrett, *Law in the New Testament*, 30.

³⁵⁷ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 679.

³⁵⁸ Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 535.

³⁵⁹ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 680.

servants.³⁶⁰ Kyoung Jin Kim notes that an unfaithful servant will be reproached and deprived the opportunity to serve (12:46; 16:2; 19:24, 26).³⁶¹ The failure to use a God-given gift to serve the causes of the kingdom of God will result in a great loss at the end of time. Luke clearly highlights the theme of responsibility for action and its consequences in the eschatological judgment. As Luke's narrative shows, those who resist God's kingly rule (19:27) will perish. Those who do not submit themselves to Christ as king can anticipate the same shameful and miserable final judgment as those who reject the kingdom of God.³⁶² Thus this parable serves as a serious warning against a life of unfaithfulness in the kingdom of God.

3.3.2.2 The Parable of the Wicked Tenants

The parable of the wicked tenants (20:9-18)³⁶³ comes shortly after the parable of the pounds (19:11-27), where the servants are required to answer to the master, but here, the vineyard owner has a contract with tenants who are obliged to care for the vineyard. As we shall see in the following discussion, in this parable, the Lukan Jesus presents the same theme of faithfulness from a different perspective.³⁶⁴

There are two clear indications of the tenants' unfaithfulness. First, they mistreat the vineyard owner's servants and his son. We are told that a man plants a vineyard, leases it to the tenants, and at the time of harvest sends three servants to collect his portion of the proceeds, but they are treated roughly by the tenants and sent

³⁶⁰ Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 701.

³⁶¹ Kim, *Stewardship and Almsgiving in Luke's Theology*, 166.

³⁶² Wright, *Jesus the Storyteller*, 143.

³⁶³ The parable of the wicked tenants is found also in Mark 12:1-12 and Matthew 21:33-46.

³⁶⁴ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (X-XXIV)*, 1281.

away empty-handed.³⁶⁵ Finally the owner sends his son, hoping that the tenants will respect him and pay their due. However, the tenants expel the owner's son from the vineyard and kill him in order to keep its produce for themselves. The tenants think that killing the owner's son is an opportunity for them to steal the vineyard. They might be able to acquire the vineyard if the owner dies with no heir.³⁶⁶ The tenants' wickedness and murder horrifically indicate their unfaithfulness to the owner. Luke places this parable at the end of Jesus' ministry within the context of the increasing conflict in Jerusalem that led to his death by the conspiracy of the chief priests.³⁶⁷ This parable fits well in the historical context of Jesus' conflict with the Temple leaders.³⁶⁸ It seems evident that Jesus warns the scribes and the chief priests about their rejection of and conspiracy against him by comparing them to the wicked tenants in the parable.³⁶⁹ In fact, according to Luke, the scribes and the chief priests realize that this parable is addressed to them (v. 19). What Luke tries to say is that the religious leaders in Jerusalem should live faithfully in covenant relation with God as the tenants should be faithful to the vineyard owner in producing and offering their due harvest. Getty-Sullivan and Marshall argue that the vineyard symbolizes the kingdom of God.³⁷⁰ If they are correct, it seems that the parable is an exhortation to the Jewish leaders to take up their responsibility in the kingdom of God. It functions as a critique of the Jewish leaders because they have received blessings and

³⁶⁵ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (X-XXIV)*, 1279.

³⁶⁶ Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 730.

³⁶⁷ Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 287.

³⁶⁸ Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 296.

³⁶⁹ C. A. Kimball, "Jesus' Exposition of Scripture in Luke 20:9-19: An Inquiry in Light of Jewish Hermeneutics," *BBR* 3 (1993): 87.

³⁷⁰ Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 731; Getty-Sullivan, *Parables of the Kingdom*, 131.

responsibilities but are not accountable to their Lord God.

Second, the vineyard owner judges the wicked tenants and gives the vineyard to others. The tenants want to keep all of the yields for themselves, but because of their greed and act of murder the vineyard owner destroys the tenants and transfers the vineyard to others. By way of illustration, Luke also quotes four passages from the Old Testament: Psalm 118:22, Isaiah 8:14-15, and Daniel 2:34-35, 44-45. The citation, “The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,” (20:22) is a verbatim from Psalm 118:22, but Luke leaves out the following verse “this was done by the Lord and it is a marvel in our eyes” (Ps. 118:23), which is included by both Mark 12:11 and Matthew 21:42. In doing so, Luke heightens the tone of judgment.³⁷¹ Jesus also uses the stone metaphor to express the inevitable judgment. If one strikes the stone, one will be shattered; if the stone falls on any, they will be crushed. Thus, the stone citation serves as a warning for the leadership in Jerusalem.³⁷² The leadership of Israel is taken away from the leaders in Jerusalem and transferred to others due to the leaders’ irresponsibility.³⁷³ For Johnson, therefore, the parable of the wicked tenants is a judgment parable.³⁷⁴ It is noteworthy that the announcement of judgment on those who reject the stone is found only in Luke.³⁷⁵ The wicked tenants are destroyed and the vineyard is given to others completely due to their lack of responsibility. The kingdom of God is given to those who are dutiful. Thus the parable functions as an urgent call to repentance for the audiences of Jesus and Luke.

³⁷¹ Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 306.

³⁷² Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 298.

³⁷³ Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus*, 377.

³⁷⁴ Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 309.

³⁷⁵ Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 732.

Summary of Jesus' Kingdom of God in Luke and Implication for the Mission of the Church

Three exegetical chapters of this thesis have examined Luke's understanding of the kingdom of God. They reveal that the kingdom of God in Luke is an eschatological event and a present reality with ethical requirements. The thesis focuses on the passages in Luke that Jesus explicitly or implicitly relates to God's love for all humankind in the kingdom of God. Those passages also illustrate that love for all kinds of people and social service to the poor and outcasts are central to Luke's understanding of the kingdom of God. Luke emphasizes the importance of the ethical demand of the kingdom of God and earnestly exhorts his readers to take up ethical responsibility for society. I will briefly summarize five main messages regarding the kingdom of God in Luke.

1. Present and Future

The kingdom of God is not merely a place in which believers live after death. The kingdom of God begins in the ministry of Jesus, as manifested in his proclamation in the synagogue in Nazareth (4:16-30), his miraculous works throughout his ministry (e.g., 5:12-16; 8:40-42; 9:37-43), his fellowship with the poor, the marginalized and the sinners (e.g., 7: 36-50; 19:1-10), and in his parables on the kingdom of God (e.g., 8:4-8; 13:18-19, 20-21). Although its beginning is insignificant, the kingdom of God that Jesus reveals will surely become a powerful reality to astound everybody. The kingdom is growing gradually but will produce bountiful fruits. It should also be noted that, whereas Luke understands the kingdom of God as a present

reality, the consummation of the kingdom of God in all its fullness is still a future reality. Thus the children of God should continue to pray for the kingdom to come, that is, to come in full force in the future (cf., 11:2). The children of God look forward to the time when they will eat in the kingdom of God (13:28-29; 22:16, 18), then the hungry will be fed and the weeping will laugh (6:21). The Church, therefore, lives in the joy of the kingdom of God already now and also awaits with hope the coming of Jesus in glory (21:27). Jesus' teaching on the kingdom of God, therefore, calls the Church to become the vessel of God. The Church should continue Jesus' ministry, testifying to the kingdom of God by words and deeds to all people in the world.

2. God's Salvation

The salvation of God is embodied in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Jesus is the One anointed by the Holy Spirit with a message of good news for the poor (4:18). In him, prophecies of God's grace for the world are fulfilled (4:16-21; 7:22-23; 10:23-24). Through him, salvation has come upon God's people, those who accept by faith (1:68-71; 3:6; 19:9-10). In his narrative, Luke particularly highlights the fact that Jesus offers promise and hope to those who have experienced misfortune and identify with Jesus (6:20-49). The poor, the hungry, those who weep, and those who are despised and overlooked, are recipients of the kingdom of God (6:20-21). All people are welcomed into the kingdom of God (14:15-24). God's grace is specifically offered to the sinners and outcasts (15:4-7, 8-10, 11-32). The salvation of God is not only for the Jews but for the Gentiles as well. Thus the Church should show concern and love for all people, including the marginalized. Whether they are believers or non-believers,

the Church should not exclude them from the kingdom of God. Jesus' death and resurrection are presented as a divine saving plan for human beings. Both Jesus' suffering and resurrection are fulfillment of the Scriptures and are divine imperatives. Moreover, the disciples are sent out to preach what they have seen and experienced in Jesus. It is the mission of the Church to testify to God's salvation of grace to all till the end of the earth (Acts 1:8).

3. Love

Love is a remarkable sign of the kingdom of God. Jesus' basic commandment to his followers is to love God and others (10:25-37). Love of God and love of neighbor are brought together. Neither love of God nor love of neighbor is expressed without the other. Also, love of God and love of neighbor need to be in deed, not in words alone. "Neighbor" is not someone who lives next to us but anyone who meets need with love. The Church should practice and manifest the loving character of the kingdom of God. Followers of Jesus are to be good neighbors to those in need, regardless of race, culture, gender, or nationality, like the Good Samaritan helping the wounded Jew on the way to Jericho. Furthermore, loving others is unlimited, something Jesus has elaborated in 6:27-36, where Jesus calls his disciples to love their enemies. This love is different from the way the world loves (6:32-34). The disciples should exhibit an extraordinary love for others. The children of God are to be marked by compassion and love for others, including enemies. In other words, neighborly love includes love for the enemy. Thus the Church should carry out the commandment to love God and all other people in order to glorify God and benefit people.

4. Social Implications

The kingdom of God, according to Luke, has a remarkable social character. The kingdom of God does not belong only to the righteous people of God or members of the Church but also extends to the poor, the oppressed, women, the sick, the dead, sinners, prostitutes, those exploited and possessed by demons, the imprisoned. As Jesus declares, the poor have the gospel preached to them (1:52-53; 7:22); the oppressed are delivered from demons (4:31-37; 9:37-43; 11:14-20); women are respected (7:36-50), the sick are healed (6:6-11; 7:1-10; 22:50-51); the dead are raised (7:11-17; 8:40-42, 49-56); and sinners are forgiven (7:36-50). He also announces that the marginalized are welcomed into the kingdom of God (5:29-32; 15:1-2; 18:15-17; 22:51); tax collectors are the recipients of the kingdom (7:36-50; 19:7); the Gentiles (5:12-17; 7:1-10; 17:11-19) and even the criminals (22:43) are the beneficiaries of the kingdom because the gracious God cares for the entire spectrum of people, especially the marginalized. Jesus' death further illustrates that the kingdom of God is for the lowly (22:50) and the despised (23:43). Jesus' death also shows the remarkable example of his love for human beings. The Church, as people of God in Christ, should imitate Jesus' example to care for people from all social classes, especially those in need.

5. Discipleship

We have also learned in Luke's Gospel four distinct messages concerning the theme of discipleship in the kingdom of God.

(1) Evangelism. Jesus preaches the gospel of the kingdom of God for all people around him. The resurrected Christ commands his disciples to preach the good

news to all nations (24:47). So, the Church should go into the crowds to preach the gospel and invite them to receive the grace of God in order to fulfill the commandment Jesus gave us.

(2) Wealth. Luke highlights the dangers of wealth, which may lead people to self-indulgence and to forget about God or neighbors (12:13-21; 16:19-31). The disciples should therefore use their wealth wisely (16:1-9). The dangers of wealth visit those who keep wealth for themselves and neglect those they might have helped (16:19-31). So, the Church should realize the danger of wealth and help the poor and needy by sharing possessions.

(3) Accountability. The servants of the kingdom of God should be diligent and faithful in carrying out their duties to serve their Lord for the causes of the kingdom of God (19:11-27; 20:9-19). Those who serve God faithfully will be richly rewarded, and those neglect faithful service of God will be severely judged. Jesus' followers should be faithful and responsible. The Church should faithfully carry out its responsibility to build up the kingdom of God in this world.

(4) Christian character. Service (22:24-30), righteousness (23:50), faith (23:52), and obedience (23:56) are crucial character traits that the disciples of Jesus should cultivate in order to follow his way of love and glorify his name in the world. The children of God are to serve others, especially those who are underprivileged and downtrodden, with willing heart and generous act so that they can become good witnesses to the kingdom of God in their lives.

Conclusion

Social Implications for the Church in China

According to Luke, as I have argued in the previous three chapters of the thesis, the kingdom of God has been realized in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection and through Jesus' word and action. What does the kingdom of God mean to us then? To answer this question, we need to remember that the Gospel of Luke was written in the first century CE for Gentile readers who lived in the Roman Empire outside of Galilee and Judea. Obviously, Luke had to make many cross-cultural efforts to translate and communicate the Jewish understanding of the "kingdom of God" to his Gentile readers who spoke different languages and lived in different cultures and to help them understand the significance and implications of the kingdom of God. For Chinese readers, the Christian idea of the kingdom of God is also a foreign and strange idea, as it must have been for Luke's Gentile readers who tried to understand the Jewish understanding of the kingdom of God from Jesus. In order to help the Church in China better understand and truly accept this important teaching of Jesus, a careful cross-cultural interpretation (from Luke to Chinese) of Luke's cross-cultural presentation (from Jewish to Gentile) of Jesus' kingdom of God is necessary. Such care in interpretation will ensure the sound contextualization and proper appropriation of its message for the belief and life of the Church in China today. My reflection on the Church in China will focus on the time since 1979 at the end of the Cultural Revolution when the Christian Church was reopened and the economy took off.

Jesus' teaching on the kingdom of God in Luke remains relevant for the

Church in China. It is my conviction that Jesus' teaching is timeless, even though it has an obvious imprint of Jewish culture. Although there is a significant gap in time and culture between Luke's readers and Christians in contemporary China, the demands for faithful discipleship are the same for all followers of Jesus across time. The Church in China also needs to bear witness to the salvation of God in and for China. Jesus embodies and manifests the gospel of the kingdom of God in his ministry and his teachings in order to bring spiritual and social change. This gospel can also inspire and guide the mission of the Church in China. Luke's theological insights, especially his emphasis on self-sacrificial love and social service, are central to his understanding of the kingdom of God, which can rectify some of the misunderstandings Chinese Christians hold regarding the kingdom of God.

As a conclusion to this biblical-studies thesis, I will apply Luke's view of the kingdom of God to the Chinese context and make some suggestions as to what the Church in China can do. First, I will briefly describe the social and cultural contexts of China and the current missions of the Church in China. I will argue for the need for a more robust development of social service and outreach missions for the Church in China. Then, I will end with some practical suggestions for how to embody the social implications of the kingdom of God in Luke's Gospel in my Chinese context.

1. Social and Cultural Contexts of China and the Church in China

The Church witnesses the salvation of God in particular contexts. To build up the kingdom of God in and for China, we must understand the social and cultural contexts of China and the Church in China.

1.1 Social and Cultural Contexts of China

The People's Republic of China is a socialist country with multiple religions and multiple cultures co-existing quite well with one another. Among China's approximately 1.4 billion people, there are Buddhists, Taoists, Muslims and Christians, which include both Catholic and Protestant. The culture in Chinese society today is dominated by an atheistic ideology. The Communist Party of China has been the ruling party since 1949, when the new China was founded. Socialism is a relatively recent occurrence in human history. To build up the Church within a socialist society is also something new in church history. As a socialist society, China has developed rapidly in terms of economy and trade in the last four decades, but some social problems have occurred at the same time, such as corruption, an extreme disparity between the rich and the poor, high numbers of unemployment among young people, blind pursuit of materialism, social injustice, moral decline, and so forth. According to one report published by the National Bureau of Statistics of the Central Government of the PRC, there were 16.6 million people living in extreme poverty in the countryside of China at the end of 2018.³⁷⁶ Some Chinese scholars have offered advice to the Church for addressing current social issues. For instance, Xiping Zhuo (卓新平), a prominent professor of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, holds the view that the development of social service ministries would help the Church in China establish a good image in Chinese society.³⁷⁷ Limin Bao (包利民), a professor of Hangzhou University, China, asserts that Christianity could and should positively engage in

³⁷⁶ See http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2019-02/17/content_5366306.htm (accessed March 17, 2019).

³⁷⁷ Xiping Zhuo, "Church in China and Chinese Society," in *Christianity and Contemporary Society*, eds. Xiping Zhuo and Yue-er Sa (Beijing: Religion and Culture Press, 2003), 250.

economic and cultural construction in Chinese society.³⁷⁸ Manghong Lin (林曼红), a professor of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, China, proposes that Christian virtue ethics will enable Christians in China to respond effectively to moral needs in the society.³⁷⁹

But how can the Church in China contribute to the development of better and fairer conditions within Chinese society? Obviously, Chinese Christians should respond to the moral challenges of Chinese society and seek to inspire and enhance morality and reduce corruption. The Church is called to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world (cf. Matt. 5:13-14). Chinese Christians live in a society in which the vast majority of the weak and vulnerable people barely survive, while a small minority of people lives extremely sumptuously. There is severe disparity between the rich and the poor. As we have seen in previous chapters, the Gospel of Luke emphasizes the importance of social service in the kingdom of God that Jesus preached and embodied. Like the early Christians in the Roman Empire, Chinese Christians should take responsibility to advocate and care for the more vulnerable members of society, especially as the country continues to make economic progress. Introducing Luke's message about the kingdom of God into the Church in China would enable the Chinese people to see and experience the gospel of God's love for all.

Traditionally, Chinese culture consists mainly of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. Historically, Chinese people have placed great importance on ethics and

³⁷⁸ Lin, *Ethical Reorientation for Christianity in China*, 32.

³⁷⁹ Lin, *Ethical Reorientation for Christianity in China*, 73.

morality in traditional culture. The heart of Confucius' teaching is the idea of love, which has played an important role in the Chinese people's everyday world. What is to be noted is that love in Chinese language is used to express one's affection and concern through word and action. In Chinese culture, therefore, love should always be translated into action. There are two philosophical terms for love in the Chinese traditional culture. One is "benevolent love" (仁), which is a central concept of Confucianism. This kind of love focuses on good duty, kind action, and genuine attitude towards others. According to Confucius (BC 551-479), "Benevolence means loving your fellow men."³⁸⁰ The person who truly loves others is the one who is able to perform his or her duties to serve and help other people in the society. The other kind of love is "universal love" (兼爱), which comes from the philosophical tradition of Mohism. The Chinese philosopher Mo-tse (Mo Zi) in the fifth century BC expanded Confucius' teaching of "benevolent love" (仁) to propose further the concept of "universal love" (兼爱). For Mo-tse, all people in the world should love one another equally.³⁸¹ This kind of love should be unconditional and be offered to all kinds of people, even those who are different from oneself. Again, love in Chinese cultural understanding may be described as benevolent action towards others based on compassion or affection rather than merely a feeling. In the concept of love, therefore, Chinese Christians can find common ground between Chinese ethical teaching and Jesus' commandment. For the Lukan Jesus, the basic commandment of love is

³⁸⁰ Confucius, *The Analects*, Chinese-English edition, trans. Yang Bojun and D. C. Lau (Beijing: Zhonghua, 2008), 220; Julia Ching, *Chinese Religions* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1997), 58; Hans Küng and Julia Ching, *Christianity and Chinese Religions* (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 69, 118.

³⁸¹ You-lan Feng, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy* (Tianjin: Social Sciences, 2007), 86; Ching, *Chinese Religions*, 70.

expressed by loving God and neighbor. Loving God requires a total commitment to the God who loves us first. Loving neighbor includes loving our loved ones, family, friends, even enemies, and especially those who are in need and suffering. It is not sufficient to know the love commandment; the love commandment needs to be practiced in real life as the Good Samaritan did (10:25-37). Additionally, Chinese culture is more concerned with practical issues in the present time than with theoretical ideas in the future. We have shown that Luke contends that the kingdom of God is already present in Jesus' coming and raises an ethical imperative for his followers to make the world better for everyone. This is another point between the Chinese way of thinking and Luke's view of our daily life in the world. Thus the Church in China can and should apply Luke's understanding of the kingdom of God to its context.

1.2 Social Context of the Church in China

Christianity was first introduced into China in the 7th century (AD 635 Tang Dynasty) in Nestorian form.³⁸² Protestantism came to China in 1807 with the arrival of first Protestant missionary, Robert Morrison, a British missionary sent by the London Missionary Society.³⁸³ A great number of missionaries from the United Kingdom and the United States came to China to evangelize after the First Opium

³⁸² Ching, *Chinese Religions*, 171-172.

³⁸³ G. Thompson Brown, *Christianity in the People's Republic of China* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1983), 22; Wayne Flynt and Gerald W. Berkley, *Taking Christianity to China: Alabama Missionaries in the Middle Kingdom, 1850-1950* (Tuscaloosa: Alabama University Press, 1997), 1; Qi Duan, "The Reconstruction of Chinese Christian Theology," in *Christianity, Religious Studies in Contemporary China Collection*, Vol. 3, ed. Xiping Zhuo, trans. Zhen Chi and Caroline Mason (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 32; Christopher D. Hancock, "Robert Morrison: Missionary Mediator, Surprising Saint," in *Builders of the Chinese Church: Pioneer Protestant Missionaries and Chinese Church Leaders*, ed. G. Wright Doyle (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2015), 30.

War (1840-1842). Although missionaries came to China mainly to spread the gospel and to build the Church, they also developed social services through philanthropy. In order to attract Chinese people to convert to Christianity, nineteenth-century missionaries established Christian schools, universities, hospitals, orphanages, and convalescent homes. Moreover, the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) of China and the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) of China were founded in the early twentieth century. These two Christian associations also carried out important works of social service. Although some Chinese people benefited from these missionary enterprises, few Chinese became Christians. Missionaries attempted to make Christianity acceptable to the Chinese people through evangelization and social service, but they did not change the image of Christianity. The main reason for this is that people in China continued to look at Christianity as a foreign religion that came to China "on the British gunboat" and acted in concert with Western imperial powers, so they looked at Chinese Christians with suspicion and hostility.³⁸⁴ Until the late nineteenth century, most Chinese did not pay attention to western culture.³⁸⁵

After the formation of the People's Republic of China in 1949, all missionaries returned to their sending countries. After that, the Church in China entered a new period of development. In 1954, Chinese Christians established the Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee of the Protestant Churches in China (self-propagating, self-supporting, and self-governing) in order to change the image of Christianity as a

³⁸⁴ Brown, *Christianity in the People's Republic of China*, 36; Georg Evers, "Christianity in China—A Case of Missed Opportunities?" in *China and Christianity*, eds. Felix Wilfred, Edmond Tang and Georg Evers (London: SCM, 2008), 32.

³⁸⁵ Jessis G. Lutz, "The China Christian College a Historical Overview," in *Paper of 'The Influence and Contribution of Christian Colleges/Universities in Modernization of China International Conference,'* Zhiping Lin (Taipei: Cosmic Light Media Center, 1992), 59.

foreign religion. In 1958, the Church in China entered a post-denominational period, when all churches in China were united as one Church—The Union Church. Through the practice of Three-Self principles, the Church in China has gradually changed its image among the people. However, Christianity today is still regarded as a foreign religion by some people in China and it is strange to them, for it is not part of Chinese culture.

All churches and seminaries in China were closed during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) and reopened in 1979, when the state policy of religious freedom was restored. There are approximately thirty-eight million Protestant Christians in China in 2019, but Christians are still a minority in China in comparison to the population at large, like a mustard seed in a vast land. The Church in China is developing rapidly in terms of membership growth, but it remains marginal in the society, and its impact upon the culture is rather weak. There still are a vast number of Chinese people who do not know what Christianity is or what the kingdom of God in the Bible is. Under the present circumstances in Chinese society, the Church in China needs to consider its survival and development. Undoubtedly, theologically minded Chinese Christians need to think about how they can make Christianity more understandable and acceptable to the Chinese people.

2. Applications for the Church in China

We have seen that the message of the kingdom of God is very important to Luke's readers. But how can the kingdom of God be good news for the Chinese people? In fact, the context of the Church in China is vastly different from that of

Jesus or Luke in terms of linguistic construction and cultural traditions, even though some social economic problems are similar. Therefore, Chinese Christians need to think cross-culturally and trans-culturally about the question of how contemporary Chinese Christians can understand the kingdom of God, which Jesus proclaimed and enacted in his first century Jewish culture and Luke then interpreted for his Greco-Roman culture. The mission of the Church is the same in different places and cultures across time; but evangelism in one context is quite different from evangelism in another context.

The relationship between theology and context is a vitally important issue because it concerns our understanding of the mission of the Church. Theology is closely related to context. David J. Bosch is correct to remind us that “mission is always contextual.”³⁸⁶ This means that the way of witnessing to the kingdom of God needs to be adjusted in different contexts. Orlando E. Costas also argues that there is a close relationship between Christian theology and context.³⁸⁷ He advocates for contextual evangelization.³⁸⁸ Duane Elmer explores the relationship between theology and context from yet a different perspective. His exploration concerns the relationship between God’s revelation and culture. He asserts that God’s revelation can be found in different cultures of the world.³⁸⁹ In his view, the revelation of God is universal. God is the Lord of the cosmos. In this sense, Chinese culture can be understood as a vehicle for God’s revelation to the Chinese people. The Church in

³⁸⁶ David J. Bosch, “Mission and Evangelism: Clarifying the Concept,” *ZMR* 68, no. 3 (1984): 173.

³⁸⁷ Orlando E. Costas, *Liberating News: A Theology of Contextual Evangelization* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 8.

³⁸⁸ Costas, *Liberating News*, 20.

³⁸⁹ Duane Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Connections: Stepping out and Fitting in around the World* (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 2002), 45.

China can legitimately apply Jesus' message about the kingdom of God in Luke to its life and theology.

Lesslie Newbigin has argued that the Church should address the relationship between the gospel and culture. He correctly points out that the nineteenth-century Chinese intellectuals rejected Christianity in China due to the fact that they regarded Christianity as a foreign culture.³⁹⁰ I am convinced that a cross-cultural approach can help Chinese Christians better understand how the Church in China can build up the kingdom of God. Therefore, the Church in China needs to consider how to make Christianity a part of Chinese culture in order to gain the Chinese people's acceptance.

2.1 Necessity of the Development of Social Service

Samuel Escobar asserts that social transformation is the core of Christian mission.³⁹¹ Indeed, theological convictions should be manifested in concrete social contexts. The ultimate task of the mission of the Church in China is thus both to speak to and to live out the ideal of the kingdom of God as Jesus has taught us by words and deeds so that we can transform Chinese society by our actions of love to become even better and more fair to all of its citizens.

In order to make some contributions to the goal of social transformation, the Church in China should embrace a mission that goes beyond evangelism, understood as saving individual souls and building more churches, and involves the social responsibility to serve all people, especially those in need. Social service is the best witness to the kingdom of God. Therefore, I encourage Chinese Christians to learn

³⁹⁰ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in A Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 190.

³⁹¹ Samuel Escobar, *The New Global Mission: The Gospel from Everywhere to Everyone* (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 2003), 143-144.

from the teaching of the Gospel of Luke and to engage in social service, charities, and volunteerism in practical ways in order to build up the kingdom of God in China for all to see and to be benefited. There are three important reasons why the development of social services for the Church in China is vitally important.

First, social service is a part of the mission of the Church in China.

Evangelization is one of the most important missions of the Church. Jesus proclaims the good news to the poor (4:18) and other marginalized groups (6:20-21). It is evident that one of the purposes of Jesus' ministry is to preach the gospel to all people. As Luke summarizes, "He [Jesus] went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God" (8:1). People living in both big cities and small villages have the opportunity to hear Jesus' gospel and witness his deeds of mercy and wonder. Before his ascension, the risen Jesus also commissions his disciples to proclaim the gospel to all nations from Judea, Samaria, unto the end of the earth (24:47; Acts 1:8). To obey Jesus' commission and mandate for evangelism, the Church in China is therefore responsible for preaching the good news of the kingdom of God to those who have not yet heard it. The Church in China has continued to grow in numbers. The Three-Self Patriotic Church has around sixty thousand churches and approximately thirty-eight million members, fourteen thousand clergy and twenty-two thousand full-time preachers, twenty-two seminaries and Bible schools nationwide to educate and train church leaders, and about 6300 seminarians.³⁹² Additionally, there are tens of thousands of house churches not yet

³⁹² Rev. Feng Gao, "Testimony by Numbers and Abundance of Grace," A Report for the Tenth Representative Conference of Christianity in China, November 28, 2018.

registered. My own calling is to teach at Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, China.³⁹³ It is important for those of us in teaching positions to better equip faithful and effective pastors who can interpret the Scriptures, preach the gospel, and lead the churches to serve all people, Christians and non-Christians.

It should be noted that social service and evangelism come together in Jesus' own ministry of evangelization. Jesus says, "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45). In his ministry, Jesus combines the spoken word with action. Jesus' teachings inform his actions, and his actions give witness to his teachings. Put another way, teaching and action complement each other. In fact, if there is no concrete expression of love and care through action, the teaching remains merely an empty theory. Jesus' actions make his teachings more persuasive, and his teachings render his actions more easily understood. For instance, Jesus' receiving of children is a concrete expression of social responsibility for the most vulnerable and unimportant members of the society (Luke 18:15-17). Evangelism is not just a matter of words because actions are more compelling than words. John Stott asserts that social service is not simply a means but an aim of evangelization. Evangelism and social service are like two wings of a bird.³⁹⁴ For this reason, the Church has to embrace the important relationship between evangelization and social service. Thus the Church in China should continue

<http://www.ccctspm.org/skyinfo/36> (accessed March 15, 2019).

³⁹³ Nanjing Union Theological Seminary is the flagship theological seminary of Protestant Christianity in China. It is managed by the Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee of the Protestant Churches in China and the China Christian Council (TSPM/CCC). Founded in 1952, NJUTS trains men and women to serve as clergy for churches and as teachers for regional and provincial seminaries. NJUTS now offers four academic degree programs: Bachelor of Theology, Master of Theology, Doctor of Ministry, and Doctor of Theology. There are 455 full-time students in 2019.

³⁹⁴ Yaping Li, "Social Service and the Building Up of the Church," *CTR* 11:1 (1996): 11.

to develop and enhance its social service ministries so that it may preach the gospel of Christ to the Chinese people.

Second, social service enables the Church in China to take root in Chinese society. Justo Gonz ales maintains that Christianity cannot be separated from the world.³⁹⁵ If the Church separates itself from the surrounding social reality, Christian faith means nothing.³⁹⁶ Building up the kingdom of God takes place in the actual social environment. Only if the Church takes root in the society will it be able to make an appropriate response to any kind of challenges. The Church in China is located in a socialist society and must build a good relationship with that society. For the Church in China, genuinely taking root in Chinese society is an important way of making Christian faith acceptable and welcome in China.³⁹⁷ The contextualization of the Christian faith in China is therefore one of the most important tasks for the Church in China, especially for theologians and church leaders. One of the ways in which the Church in China is trying to contextualize Christian faith in modern, socialist China is to connect the two C's, Christ and China or Christians and Communists.³⁹⁸ Bishop K. H. Ting's theological reconstruction emphasizes God's love more than human sins. His effort is to "dilute" (淡化) not to dismiss the doctrine of justification by faith but

³⁹⁵ Justo Gonz ales, *History of Christian Thought*, trans. Zemin Chen, Tong Situ and Ruxi Mo (Nanjing: Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, 2002), 18.

³⁹⁶ Anping Xiao, "The Church in the Modernization of China: A Theological Interpretation," *CTR* 18 (2004): 38.

³⁹⁷ Baoping Kan, "'Jesus is Christ' as the Basis for Efforts at Indigenization and Contextualization in the Chinese Church," *CTR* 16 (2002): 73.

³⁹⁸ K. H. Ting, *Love Never Ends: Papers by K. H. Ting*, trans. and ed. Janice Wickeri (Nanjing: Yi Lin, 2000), 135-136. K. H. Ting (1915-2012) was former Anglican Bishop in mainland China, President of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, China, Chairperson of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee of Protestant Churches in China and President of the China Christian Council (1952-2009); President emeritus of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, China, Chairperson emeritus of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee of Protestant Churches in China and President emeritus of the China Christian Council (2009-2012).

to invite people, especially those who have not yet believed in the gospel, to recognize God's love before they feel condemned and as a consequence reject the gospel.³⁹⁹

This is particularly important for the missiological endeavor of the Church in China.

For Ting, the purpose of theological reconstruction is to “recover what the Bible teaches [them], that is, the Christianity should be a religion that stresses ethics and morality.”⁴⁰⁰ Bishop Ting's emphasis on ethics and morality echoes what the Lukan Jesus teaches us by words and deeds. His exhortation will enable Christians in China to respond to social crises.

It should be noted once again that Chinese society emphasizes the combination of thought and action.⁴⁰¹ The parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37 clearly demonstrates that love of God and love of neighbor must be made visible in concrete deeds of service to the person in suffering. In order for the Church in China to build up the kingdom of God in China, it is vitally necessary to emphasize the importance of social service. Ethical behavior can serve as a bridge for showing hospitality to Chinese society.⁴⁰² Through actions of love, the Church in China will be able to engage Chinese people at a deeper and more personal level through social services.

Third, social service can make Christianity an accepted part of the culture for Chinese people. Chinese culture focuses on ethics and morality. For the Church in China, therefore, an emphasis on ethics or morality is crucially important. Bishop Ting was very perceptive when he said: “For Chinese intellectuals especially, a

³⁹⁹ Ting, *God Is Love*, 125-126, 161-162; Ting, *Love Never Ends*, 206-207, 413.

⁴⁰⁰ K. H. Ting, “Greetings to the Sixth National Chinese Christian Conference,” *CTR* 12 (1998): 3.

⁴⁰¹ Xiaofa Zhang, “The Popularization of Theological Reconstruction,” *CTR* 18 (2004): 25.

⁴⁰² Christoph Stückelberger, “Straight to the Future: The Visionary Bishop K. H. Ting,” in *Seeking Truth In Love*, ed. Peng Wang (Beijing: Religious Culture Publisher, 2005), 296.

discussion of ethics will be more effective than a discussion of paradise.”⁴⁰³ As a matter of fact, there are many Chinese people who like Christianity as a religion because they were first touched and moved by the ethical teachings of Jesus. For example, Y. T. Wu, who was an outstanding leader in the Chinese Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement, famously confessed that he was converted to Christ after hearing Jesus’ high ethical teaching in the Sermon on the Mount.⁴⁰⁴ For testimonies like that, Chinese Christians must take ethics and morals into account when they bear witness to the kingdom of God, and they must seek to exemplify high ethics and moral standards.

In summary, social service enables the Church in China to carry out its mission, to gain acceptance in Chinese society, and to become an integral part of Chinese culture. For these reasons carrying out benevolent social service is an essential and indispensable part of the mission to bear witness to God’s kingdom in China.

2.2 Development of Social Service

The mission of the Church in China is not merely to proclaim the gospel to people in China but also to guide the Chinese people to recognize God’s love for them in their lives as the good news. How then can the Church in China develop its special ministries of social service?

First, the Church in China should actively respond to the urgent needs of Chinese society. There are still large numbers of homeless, disabled, powerless, vulnerable people and victims of natural disasters in China today. What should the

⁴⁰³ Ting, *Love Never Ends*, 510.

⁴⁰⁴ Ting, *Love Never Ends*, 335.

Church in China do? There is no doubt that the Church in China should not escape from its responsibilities to the present world. It ought not to be indifferent to the suffering and miseries endured by these people. On the contrary, it must actively bear the burdens of society and help them with actions of love.⁴⁰⁵ The Church in China is called by God to become salt and light to the Chinese society, so it should convey God's blessings to the vulnerable members of the society and show concern for those who are powerless and helpless. In order for the Church in China to grow healthily, social service is a positive response to the reality of the present needs in the Chinese context. The Church in China should actively serve society, provide timely help for those who are needy, and strive to make contributions to the development and progress of the society. Christians in China are to take responsibility for showing hospitality to those who are needy as a duty in the present kingdom of God.

Second, the Church in China should continue to engage in generous acts of charity. Social service plays a vitally important role in witnessing the kingdom of God in China. To perform Jesus' commandment to love God and love neighbor, the Church in China has established social service organizations, taking responsibility for society. Currently, there are many kinds of Church service programs. For instance, the Amity Foundation, founded in 1985, responds to the needs of the times. Since its founding, it has served millions of Chinese people who are needy. For more than three decades, the Amity Foundation has consistently focused on people in need. Amity's presence covers 521 counties and districts in 31 provinces of China, benefiting over 10 million

⁴⁰⁵ Li, "Social Service and the Building Up of the Church," 20.

people directly and over 220 million indirectly.⁴⁰⁶ In 2003, the national Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee of the Protestant Churches in China and the China Christian Council (TSPM/CCC) also established the Social Service Department to undertake its social responsibility to live out Christ in life. The department oversees senior homes, orphanages, hospitals, kindergartens, centers for special needs, disaster relief, poverty alleviation, and social welfare.⁴⁰⁷ Thousands of people have been benefiting from the department's work. All these programs named above can be important means for Chinese Christians to serve their neighbors and to bear witness to the kingdom of God in China. The Church in China has been playing a crucial role in the ethical behavior of Chinese people.⁴⁰⁸ This gives expression to the unity of love for God and love for others, and the unity of the present and future kingdom of God. Many Chinese Christians manifest Christianity's good image. The good image consists in taking a positive attitude toward others by treating persons with kindness and engaging in building up the kingdom of God by serving society with willing hearts. The Church in China is welcomed and accepted by Chinese people through playing a positive role in fostering a harmonious society. The development of social service makes Chinese people feel that Christianity is not so alien to them, and their misunderstanding and prejudices against Christianity are gradually removed.

Third, the Church in China needs to make even more and better efforts in social service. The Church in China is facing a time of radical change in the Chinese

⁴⁰⁶ See <http://www.amityfoundation.org/eng/> (accessed March 10, 2019).

⁴⁰⁷ See <http://www.ccctspm.org/> (accessed March 10, 2019).

⁴⁰⁸ Xin Leng, Hua Xie, Hui Xia, Yong Zhou and Jianfeng Li, "Contributing to the Construction of Social Morality and Harmonious Society: A Study of the Protestant Churches in Shanghai," *CF: JCCRC*, no. 9 (2008-2009): 203.

social environment, which is confronted by corruption and disparity. People are frustrated by moral decay, even as the economy of the country is growing strong. The Chinese people today are searching for a moral society in which all people are treated justly and fairly. If every Chinese Christian actively makes his or her contribution by working hard and honestly at their jobs and by generously caring for those who are less fortunate and underprivileged, people will appreciate their love and recognize them as disciples of Jesus. Their actions of charity and kindness will inspire others to imitate and reciprocate and thereby help form a moral and good society for China.

Finally, and most importantly, the Church in China is to imitate Jesus and show forgiveness and love for enemies. Jesus requires his followers to love their enemies. The disciples should exhibit an extraordinary love for others. The commandment to love one's enemy rings like a trumpet, calling the Church in China to respond actively to Jesus. In reality, however, love for one's enemy is challenging because it is against human instinct. Chinese culture has a history of revenge-seeking. There is a Chinese idiom: "Bills will always be paid." However, Jesus requires his disciples to love their enemies: "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you" (6:27). Chinese Christians particularly need the help of the Holy Spirit to love our enemies as Jesus has taught and exemplified (23:34). According to the Lukan Jesus, love of enemy is a basic requirement for disciples (6:27-36). Although no one can fully embody Jesus' command to love enemies all the time, Jesus' followers are to carry out that commandment in their lives. As an agent of the kingdom of God on earth, the Church is responsible for testifying to the love of God to those who have

not yet known it. If the Church in China actively encourages Christians to love their enemies through social services, there will be a far-reaching influence on the development of the Church in China. Social service will not only enable the Church in China to establish a good image, but it will also transform Chinese society. If Chinese Christians can manifest self-sacrificial love for others as Jesus has done for us, I believe that in the near future the Church in China will become an influential witness to the kingdom of God.

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