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Lessons from Jesus's Table Talk
A Survey of Selected Texts in Luke's Gospel

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

In Luke 7:34, Jesus summarizes the Pharisees perception of him early in Luke's narrative as "a glutton and a drunkard" and "a friend of tax collectors and sinners." This assessment and emotion are repeated several times throughout Luke's account (5:29 - 33, 15:2, 19:7). Jesus was unphased by this characterization of His character around the motif of food, hospitality, and banqueting tables and instead continued the focus of teaching and ministering at every opportunity. This thesis will examine food expressions, hospitality, and banqueting table scenes in a series of selected Lukan passages to unveil how Jesus used these opportunities to advance the Kingdom of God.

The theme of hospitality holds hands with the theme of food in Luke's Gospel. The frequency with which the Lukan Jesus was invited to meals indicates the high regard hospitality was held during that time. In Luke's Gospel, Jesus is often either going to a meal, at a meal, or coming from a meal.¹ *In A Meal with Jesus*, Chester noted that the purpose for Jesus's coming was to serve, to give His life as a ransom, to seek and save the lost, and the means of His coming was that He came eating and drinking.² Jesus Himself makes this announcement; "The Son of Man has come eating and drinking and you say, "Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!" (Luke 7:34)³

¹ Robert J. Karris, *Eating Your Way through Luke's Gospel* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2006), 9.

² Tim Chester, *A Meal with Jesus: Discovering Grace, Community, and Mission around the Table* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 23.

³ Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008).

Statement of Purpose

Luke uses food related motifs to set the scene for controversial, direct, and confrontational conversations about the Kingdom of God through the use of the table talk that Jesus engaged in several texts in his Gospel. The topic, dialogue, and message around the table varied depending on the dining partners. This thesis aims to perform a responsible examination of food and banqueting related passages in Luke, to understand the context and circumstances, the people involved, and the lessons Jesus taught around the table. The food, banqueting, and hospitality related texts in Luke range from abstaining from food, invitation to meals, conversations at mealtime, multiplication of food, and the last supper with Jesus breaking bread with the disciples. This research will examine five of these texts (5:27-31, 7:36-50, 9:10-17, 14:1-15, and 22:7-29), which include the disciples, the crowds, tax collectors, women, and pharisees and the ensuing table fellowship or talk that is present. These texts were selected because they represent a cross section of the various groups that interacted with Jesus, provide extensive table talk, and address several cultural, discipleship and religious issues and situations. Focus will be given to the historical and cultural contexts of the texts to highlight Luke's purpose and theology, the conditions in which Jesus ministered, and the response to Him from those around the table.

Much research is available on the role of hospitality in the New Testament, church growth, Jesus's preference to dine with outsiders (tax collectors, women, and sinners), and meals in the various Gospels. The world landscape is also embroiled in cultural shifts, and attitudes towards conservative ideas and, ultimately, perspectives towards the Gospel and Christians are changing. As the world moves to a post-Christian worldview, it is prudent that the church begins to consider all the options available to reach the lost in and outside the walls of the church building as the attitudes towards Christianity shift. Some of the shifts have manifested in the

aggressive attitude towards the tenets of the faith, as well as the elevation of personal experiences, autonomy, and scientific reasoning over the Bible and the traditional Judeo-Christian world view. Lastly, shifts have also been observed in an increase in the number of millennials exiting the church. Paul Gould, in *Cultural Apologetics*, identified some reasons for the exodus, including the failure to help with interaction with anti-Christian ideas, simplistic and judgmental treatment of sexuality, and claims of exclusivity, while dismissing doubters.⁴ Jesus did not stay in the synagogues and temple courts in His time of controversy. Instead, He was out talking to prostitutes and tax collectors and teaching the crowds.

Various scholars commenting on Luke's Gospel account identify his use of the symposium genre of table talk motif where Jesus teaches while at a meal. While the other Gospel accounts also make use of this theme, Luke's Gospel has made a much broader use of this theme than others.⁵ There is a concentration of banqueting references in which Jesus engages with those around the tables, announces the coming of the Kingdom of God, elaborates on the Kingdom characteristics, and addressed behaviors and misplaced expectations of the Pharisees and other religious leaders. Nonetheless, the act of eating is used by Luke only as a backdrop when necessary for his story telling and to set the stage for Jesus's table talk. Klinghardt likens Luke's use of eating scenes to the great majority of literary accounts of meal gatherings in antiquity, where the first part of the two-part meal is not mentioned but rather always presupposed, and the

⁴ Paul M. Gould, *Cultural Apologetics: Renewing the Christian Voice, Conscience, and Imagination in a Disenchanted World* (Grand Rapids, MI: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2019).

⁵ Dennis E. Smith, "Table Fellowship As a Literary Motif In The Gospel of Luke," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 106, no. 4 (Dec.,1987): 613- 638.

second part, the symposium, is of much greater importance. Since the symposium provided the occasion for the typical table talk which inspired a whole literary genre.⁶

Statement of Importance of Problem

While there is a reasonable amount of literature and writing about hospitality, most present practical solutions for identified congregations and or people groups for ongoing church growth initiatives, challenges, and issues. At the other end of the spectrum is research that provides extensive review of the historical context for hospitality and makes recommendations for their application. This thesis will review the lessons Christ delivered around selected food and table pericopes from Luke's Gospel and examine the context and circumstances around such hospitality scenes.

Statement of Position on the Problem and Thesis Statement

Opportunities are available to the church as modeled by Christ and the early church to use hospitality to advance the kingdom in challenging circumstances. The environment of the world is changing towards Judeo-Christian values and there is increased intolerance of the salvation message and Christian way of life. The importance of using hospitality in an environment hostile to Christian beliefs to extend the Gospel message to all cannot be understated. Jesus emphasized the importance of inclusivity, compassion, and humility, providing valuable lessons for the church to support evangelism and discipleship efforts and foster community regardless of the cultural climate. This thesis will maintain that in Luke's Gospel, Jesus engaged in table fellowship in a way that challenged societal norms and

⁶ Matthias Klinghardt, "Meals in the Gospel of Luke" in *T&T Clark's Handbook on Christian Meals in the Greco-Roman World* (New York: NY, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019), 108–120.

boundaries, and the Kingdom of God was always central to His engagement. The context and environment in which the selected food and banqueting related New Testament texts mentioned above occurred will be illustrated. Along with the cultural issues that were present towards the gospel, the assumptions, and expectations of the Jesus's disciples that He had to challenge, and the lessons that can be learned from the table fellowship.

Limitation/Delimitations

This thesis will present results as high-level possible applications that will require appropriate analysis and tests to confirm validity.

Research Methods and Questionnaires

This will be an exegetical and textual Biblical thesis that will utilize readily available bibliographic research material that can be accessed through the Liberty University Library and other similar platforms. Various sources will be consulted for consistency in information presented as well as to capture similarities and messaging related to the biblical position on hospitality and church growth. Sources will mainly be primary and secondary sources. An extensive exposition will be undertaken of the various texts, along with a review of the texts in their original and modern forms. Commentaries, books, and journal articles will be reviewed and consulted to properly place and understand the various texts.

Since this is biblical review, tests or questionnaires will not be utilized in undertaking the research for this thesis. Instead, a systemic review of primary and secondary sources will be undertaken to establish a cogent literary, cultural, and historical context that will be used to inform the research.

Data Collection and Analysis

This research will collect information from the review of Scripture, books, and articles. Commentaries on Luke, books and articles on hospitality and church growth will be reviewed for information usable in the various chapters of this thesis. The multiple databases available via Liberty's Jerry Falwell Library will be employed. Information will be reviewed two to three months prior to the commencement of research on this thesis. The anticipation is that the data and writing of this thesis will occur within a year. Data will be collected, classified, and reviewed within that timeframe.

Information collected will be reviewed using literature review tools to identify applicable themes and consensus. A working definition of hospitality will be suggested based on a review across primary sources and identification of common terminologies used to communicate a shared understanding. Then a review and exposition of the texts will be completed. Data gathered from secondary resources will then be used to support the information collected from primary sources, as well as to define and develop the exegetical work some more.

Background of the Gospel of Luke

According to the opening prologue (Luke 1:1-4), the Gospel of Luke is "an orderly account" written for "most excellent Theophilus" so that he "may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught." Luke does not claim eyewitness status about the gospel events or that he received them directly from the eyewitnesses. Instead, he reflects a situation in which it is the early church, as a collective whole, which has the testimony from the eyewitnesses, and he picks the story up as part of the church.⁷ It is usually agreed that the author of Luke is to be

⁷ Leon L. Morris, *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008), 19.

identified with the writer of Acts, with style and vocabulary favoring unity of penmanship.⁸ Tradition unanimously affirms this author to be Luke,⁹ with the earliest extant identifications of him as the author of this Gospel coming from the late second century C. E., in Bodmer Papyrus XIV.¹⁰ The author's profile that emerges from various writings, correlated with New Testament passages and the "we" section of Acts is of a physician who was Paul's "companion"¹¹ Luke does not claim that he depended on any of the other Gospel accounts (Mark and Matthew), only that their existence created a problem. Exploration typically attempts to assert which Gospel was written first and which used the other as a source. Church history has implied that Matthew was the primary Gospel based on placement as the first book in the New Testament Bible.¹² As we have them, patterns of similarity and dissimilarity between the synoptic Gospels, have convinced the world of scholarship that there is dependence, almost certainly of a literary kind, between the three synoptic Gospels.¹³ Early Christianity also worked from the same assumption of canonical placement. However, in the late nineteenth century, scholarly opinion began to move away from Matthean priority to what has become known as the Two Source Hypothesis.¹⁴ Only one of the five texts (Luke 14:1-12) included in this research is unique to Luke. Two have similarities with

⁸ John T. Carroll, *Luke: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster, 2012), 2

⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁰ John Nolland, *Luke 1:1-9:20*, Volume 35A, edited by Bruce M. Metzger, et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: HarperCollins, 2016), 32.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 20.

¹⁴ *The Synoptic Problem: Four Views*, edited by Stanley E. Porter, and Bryan R. Dyer (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 22.

the other two synoptic Gospels (Luke 5:27-31, 7: 36-50), and the last two have similarity with the other Synoptics and John's Gospel.

Luke does not give or suggest a date of his writing, and there are many schools of thought on a likely date. Scholars have inferred that the author's reference in the prologue of his account to "many accounts prior to his Gospel account," along with other characteristics, that Mark's Gospel was likely one of those accounts.¹⁵ Since Mark is usually dated at approximately 55 - 65, Luke's writing and initial dissemination are typically placed in the period 75 - 95 AD,¹⁶ about a decade later. There are several theories built around this date, but passages in Luke referencing the fall of the Temple (13:34- 35; 19:43- 44; 21:20- 24) also corroborate the likelihood of a date after 70.¹⁷ Most conservative evangelical scholars argue for Luke to be prior to 70 AD; others will date Luke to 75 to 80 AD. Since the writer of the Gospel of Luke is also often credited with writing the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, consequently, the date for Acts is often tied to Luke. While the Gospel of Luke describes the life of Jesus, the Book of Acts illustrates the spread of the new message through a few primary witnesses. Acts is considered the sequel to Luke and as such would have been written after Luke's Gospel. Bock believes that the absence of a series of pivotal events introduces consideration for another likely date for the writing of both Acts and Luke. The absence of events like Nero's persecution in AD 64, Paul's death in approximately AD 67, or the Jewish war in the late 60s point to a date of writing of both before their occurrence.¹⁸

¹⁵ Carroll, *Luke: A Commentary*, 4.

¹⁶ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 37.

¹⁷ Carroll, *Luke: A Commentary*, 4.

¹⁸ Darrell L. Bock, *Acts: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 60.

Luke is considered a theologian by some scholars who accurately refers to historical events and balances the narration of events in his writing with sound theological truths based on the teachings of Christ for the church. Others consider him an historian; and some consider Luke primarily an evangelist. Classification of Luke depends upon how a scholar interprets the purpose of Luke-Acts. Scholars also believe that both Luke and Matthew may have used a common source that either was a written document or consisted of oral tradition.¹⁹

Themes

While a close relationship has been traced with the other two synoptic Gospels, Matthew and Mark, Luke's account has several features that highlight the distinctiveness. He provides historical context beginning with the prologue (1:1) where he indicates the research he has done and provides contexts on Herod and John the Baptist's ministry. Several narratives, parables, and perspectives are included in Luke that are only featured in his account. Luke includes Mary's perspective on the birth of Jesus, her song, and her visit to Elizabeth. The account of the angels appearing to the shepherds announcing the birth of Christ is also unique to Luke. Close observation of the book shows that Jesus is slowly traveling (9:51–19:27) to Jerusalem to suffer, die, and be raised. In the Gospel, Jesus travels from heaven to earth. He is born in Bethlehem, ministers in Galilee, makes his way to Jerusalem to suffer and die, and then is raised from the dead.²⁰

Jesus is at the core of Luke's story, and the salvation of man is the central message. At the birth of Christ, the Angels announce to the Shepherds out in the field, "For unto you is born

¹⁹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *ESV Expository Commentary Volume 8: Luke* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 958.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 961.

this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” (2:11) Grant Osbourne sees the primary question Luke wants his readers to ask as, “Who is this?” (5:21; 7:49; 8:25; 9:9).²¹ Luke denotes Jesus as the “Son of Man” about twenty-five times, and “Son of God” seven times. Son of Man is used out of Jesus’s own mouth in three contexts, like the other Gospels: coming at the end of time in judgment, His earthly ministry (including the ability to forgive sins and supersede the Sabbath), and suffering. The term seems to indicate more than just the “human one” and Edwards opines that Jesus’s titular use of it in the third person “designates a divinely ordained office of humiliation, suffering, and exaltation according to God’s plan.”²² Luke’s account supports the dispensation of this salvation message through the travels and spread of the message of Christ, through repentance for the forgiveness of sins. (24:47).

The Holy Spirit is also featured prominently in Luke, appearing seventeen times and playing the role of inspiring prophecy, “coming upon” Mary to conceive the holy Son of God (1:35), and filling Elizabeth to confirm Mary as the Mother of “my Lord” ((1:43) to name a few.

The Lukan Jesus is also very interested in women, the poor, and sinners who are the marginalized population of the community. The theme passage for Jesus’s ministry, drawn from Isaiah 61:1–2, states that the Spirit has anointed Jesus to “proclaim good news to the poor” and liberate the oppressed (4:18–19).²³ Women were included in the group of disciples and the people who followed Jesus as he went through cities and villages proclaiming the good news the kingdom. (8:2-3) Grant Osbourne asserts that Luke emphasizes the significant impact women had, with thirty eight percent of the names listed in the book being that of women. This is

²¹ Grant R. Osborne, *Luke Verse by Verse* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2018), 22.

²² Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 37.

²³ Osborne, *Luke Verse by Verse*, 22.

particularly interesting given that in the Jewish and even Roman worlds, women were for the most part restricted to the home and had little public persona or impact.²⁴ Luke's portrayal of Jesus's emphasis on social justice and engagement with the marginalized has earned criticism by of portraying a low Christology.²⁵

The author uses the term Lord to describe Jesus across his account, and He is also addressed as Lord by others. On Mary's visit to see Elizabeth while they were both pregnant, Elizabeth acknowledges her as the "mother of my Lord" (1:43). This is significant since the LXX uses (Κύριον) as the default rendering for YHWH and, in this context, was referring to Jesus.²⁶ Peter's response to the net-breaking catch of fish, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (5:8), is considered by scholars as an Old testament theophany (Isaiah 6:1-7).²⁷ He is also called the "Lord of the Sabbath" and when people considered following Him as disciples, they called him Lord. (9:59, 61)

Kingdom of God

The Kingdom of God (βασιλείαν τοῦ Θεοῦ) is a central theme in Luke's account. It represents a significant topic in Luke's presentation of Jesus's teaching. It is mentioned thirty-two times, as well as "kingdom" in seven other instances, to refer to God's Kingdom or Jesus's. Luke uses three different forms of the Greek word (βασιλεύω) meaning rule, reign, royal, to be king, to reference the kingdom in various contexts. In the announcement of Jesus's birth to Mary by Gabriel in chapter one, Luke states: "He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His

²⁴ Osborne, *Luke Verse by Verse*, 22.

²⁵ Crispin H. Fletcher-Louis, *Luke-Acts: Angels, Christology and Soteriology* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 21.

²⁶ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 32.

²⁷ Schreiner, *Luke*, 966.

kingdom (βασιλείας) there will be no end.” (Luke 1:33) Walther considers the announcement of the eternal duration of Jesus’s kingly rule over Israel as part of Luke’s formulation of a high profile Christological statement. His kingdom will never end, based on the eternal continuation of the Davidic dynasty from Nathan’s promise, (2 Samuel 7.13, 16; Psalm 89.3- 5; 132.11- 12; Isaiah 9.6; Ezekiel 37.25).²⁸ The Kingdom is present with Jesus’s coming but is also to come. This idea is elaborated at the last supper in chapter twenty-two, by Jesus’s response to the dispute on greatness among the disciples elaborates: “I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom (βασιλείαν), that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom (βασιλεία) and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” (22:29-30a). Bock views this as Jesus appointing His disciples to a role in the kingdom when the victory is gained and marking them out with authority over the twelve tribes in the future, showing that He is forming a new community from his disciples.²⁹

In Luke, God’s Kingdom denotes His rule and saving promises by which the world will be reclaimed for His Lordship.³⁰ The kingdom has come with the King, with the Messiah, who is of course Jesus.³¹ The kingdom can be sought after (12:31) and experienced. From Zacharias’ speech (Luke 1:68-79; and other beginning oracles in Luke 1 and 2), this kingdom was the Old Testament one that Jews expected: a literal earthly reign of the Messiah. However, Luke presents the inauguration of that kingdom partially fulfilled with Jesus, but completely consummated

²⁸ Michael Wolter, *The Gospel according to Luke: Volume I (Luke 1-9:50)* (Waco, TX: Baylor University, 2016), 81.

²⁹ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke, The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Harper Collins, 1996), 72.

³⁰ Schreiner, *ESV Expository Commentary Volume 8: Luke*, 962.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 964.

upon his second return.³² It is in the light of this later conception that we should understand the New Testament teaching about the kingdom of God. Jesus inaugurates the kingdom: it “drew near” with the inception of His public ministry and was released in power by His death and exaltation.

The Lukan Jesus teaches about the kingdom (4:43, 8:1,9:11), and sends the disciples to proclaim the same message (9:1-2, 60). When they told the story of Jesus, the apostles proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God. Carroll suggests that the character of God’s reign that Jesus taught and practiced, redefines conventional notions, as well as He in turn expects the disciples to live by the countercultural vision He presented.³³ In two brief parables in Luke chapter thirteen, Jesus compares the kingdom of God to a mustard seed and yeast. Both parables fundamentally make the same point that the presence of the kingdom starts out small but will eventually cover the earth. Edwards believes that in choosing these illustrations for the kingdom of God, Jesus highlights not its extravagance but its necessity to life, identifying the kingdom with the daily routines of His world.³⁴ Bock considers Jesus’s analogy important in light of the Jewish expectation that the kingdom would come all at once and with great power.³⁵ Luke presents the kingdom of God as the primary method Jesus employed to indicate the order of things He was about to establish. Schreiner opines that many in Israel fail to see that the kingdom has come in Jesus because they expect the kingdom to come in apocalyptic power and to destroy all enemies. However, the kingdom has come in a surprising way and therefore it

³² Daniel Steffen, Professor of New Testament, Liberty University, 2023.

³³ Carroll, *Luke: A Commentary*, 438.

³⁴ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 37.

³⁵ Bock, *Luke, The NIV Application Commentary*, 26.

looks like the hour of decision has not come.³⁶ God's rule through His kingdom is active and present in Jesus's ministry of teaching and healing, and transformational in impact, though in a manner that is hidden and indeed imperceptible to many observers. God is expressing his authority and distributing the benefits of life through the community He is forming.³⁷ The final manifestation of the kingdom requires the Lord's return.³⁸

This thesis adopts the idea that the kingdom emphasizes the care of God in providing salvation and a place of righteousness and peace. The church is a representation and expression of Christ, and the kingdom is working in and through the church. The kingdom refers primarily to God's sovereign rule in human life and the affairs of history, and secondarily to the realm where that rule takes place. It was specially manifested in the life of the nation Israel and among Jesus' disciples; it is expressed progressively in the church and through the lives of Christians; and it will be fully revealed throughout eternity.³⁹

Banquets and Food

Commentaries frequently point out that in Luke's Gospel, compared to any of the other three, Jesus is frequently eating. James Edwards notes that the sheer quantity of the New Testament evidence for our author's regular accentuation of guest and host roles in his two-volume work suggests that the whole matter is more than peripheral to his concerns.⁴⁰ Similar to current times, eating and drinking were central to the culture and context of the Lukan Jesus.

³⁶ Schreiner, *ESV Expository Commentary Volume 8: Luke*, 1279.

³⁷ Bock, *Luke, The NIV Application Commentary*, 26.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Richard N. Longenecker, *The Expositors Bible Commentary: Luke---Acts Vol 10*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (*Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan*, 2007), 818.

⁴⁰ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 24.

Duyen Nguyen believes that Luke depicts hospitality as God's love and salvation expressed through a guest-host relationship that reveals God's reign on earth.⁴¹ The Lukan Jesus embraces all, especially the marginalized around the table and displays different ways of expressing hospitality.⁴² He challenged societal and cultural norms of the day that had ostracized categories of people with His dining choices. Sinners like prostitutes and tax collectors, the sick (leprosy, blindness), and women were all offered access to the Kingdom. Jesus's open handedness, flexibility, and focus conveyed actions that would not have been acceptable around the table. Luke repeatedly portrays Jesus as the main character in a banquet, or around food, making Him the center of the typical table talk is central to the lessons that this thesis seeks to enumerate. He participated in various kinds of social gatherings, focusing on expressing the Kingdom, welcomed outsiders, while challenging the religious status quo. Encounters around the table resulted in salvation, healing, and forgiveness for those who were open to His teaching. This thesis will maintain that contemporary evangelization efforts can be maximized by learning from Jesus's maximization of hospitality opportunities amid challenging social circumstances and rebuff.

Luke is clearly at home in the world of ancient Mediterranean hospitality, which is demonstrated by his frequent use of hospitality and journeying scenarios as well as his fluent

⁴¹ Duyen Thi My Nguyen, *Hospitality in Luke's Gospel, and Implications for Contemporary Living* (Australasian Catholic Record 99/2, 2022), 163-175.

⁴² Ibid.

deployment of hospitality lexemes.⁴³ The banquet table is a favorite Lukan narrative setting (5:29; 7:36; 9:16; 11:37; 14:1; 22:14; 24:30).⁴⁴ The meal setting frequently serves as the context in which Jesus's teaching defines the community of God's people. These meal scenes are also understandable in the Greco-Roman context, in which banquets/symposiums defined the boundary of one's circle of association.⁴⁵ In ancient literature, a symposium was a gathering where a group of guests, reclining as they ate and drank, discussed a philosophical subject. In this tradition, this tended to consist of elevated conversation on a topic of interest to all in the group. While this motif is present in the other Gospels, Luke makes a much broader use of it than any other.⁴⁶ The Lukan Jesus often teaches while at a table and provides imagery strongly related to the motif of philosophical table talk. For example, at dinner in the house of Levi, the tax collector, when criticized for eating with tax collectors and sinners, He replies, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (5:31-32). While dining at the house of Simon the Pharisee, in response to the woman who washes his feet, He teaches the parable of the two debtors (7:36-50).

Banquets were also the most important social institution and seemingly the only setting in which secondary groups could meet, interact, experience community, and negotiate their social

⁴³ Joshua W. Jipp, *Divine Visitations and Hospitality to Strangers in Luke-Acts: an Interpretation of the Malta Episode in Acts 28:1-10* (Boston: MA, Brill, 2013), 218.

⁴⁴ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 21.

⁴⁵ Dennis E. Smith, "Table Fellowship as a Literary Motif in the Gospel of Luke", *Journal of Biblical Literature* 106 (1987): 613.

⁴⁶ Carroll, *Luke*, 123.

relations and defined the group's limit.⁴⁷ As such, participation at a meal defined affiliation to a group. This is significant as Jesus consistently pushed boundaries to force the inclusion of those who ordinarily would have been excluded or who were not of the appropriate social caliber. His association and dining with sinners and tax collectors was inadvertently His identifying with them socially and going against the grain. In the case of the contemporary church and efforts to evangelize, the diversification of fellowship and meals should look more like the wider circle Jesus advocated to establish versus the current "inside the wall of the church" focused hospitality ventures.

Lukan banquets hosted unexpected and sometimes offensive guests— the outcast, sinners, and the sick, poor, lame, and blind and His disciples, while Pharisees, who would top most guest lists, were often rebuked.⁴⁸ Like the Kingdom of God Jesus represented and came to reveal, guest lists were diverse, contrary to the traditional or expected for the day. He was interested in embracing everyone who was open to his teachings, and all were welcome regardless of their status in society. In addition, only some of those who were present were participants in the meal. It was the custom to allow others to be present to hear the teaching and discussion of those around the table adding to the diversity of purpose around the table.

Luke uses various tactics in his writing, juxtaposing sinners, Pharisees, repentance, and food intermingled as antagonists and protagonists. He uses food and banqueting motifs to introduce plots that provide the conduit to deliver Jesus's teachings and lessons from the ensuing

⁴⁷ Matthias Klinghardt, "Meals in the Gospel of Luke" in *T&T Clark's Handbook on Christian Meals in the Greco-Roman World*, 108–120.

⁴⁸ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 24.

table talk around the table. His accounts include various scenarios and people with food, the common denominator, and Jesus's teaching the expected outcome and focus.

The following is an exposition of five selected food and banquet related scenes where Luke presents Jesus dining with sinners, Pharisees, the crowd, and finally the disciples. The context of each text will be portrayed via the hosts, the guests, and Jesus's table talk. These scenes share similarities with Greco-Roman symposia to include the table setting, Jesus's teaching in a dialogical exchange, and the discourse about relative status of those around the table. A pattern emerges in four of the five texts, where the meal or banquet launches with Jesus and the disciples present. The disciples are addressed directly or as part of the crowd observing or facilitating the scene and a conflict is introduced that necessitates Jesus's response or intervention, and His table talk ensues.

Chapter 2: Dining with Sinners

Luke 5:27-31

In this pericope, Luke presents Jesus's encounter with Levi the tax collector in Capernaum in the northeastern part of Galilee, and the intrusion of the Pharisees and their Scribes to the invitation to dine extended to Jesus. Matthew (9:9-13) and Mark (2:13-17) include the same story and refer to the tax collectors as representative of "sinners" in general. In contrast Luke focuses more particularly on tax collectors alone.⁴⁹ At this point in the narrative, Jesus has called Peter (5:8) and James and John (5:10) to follow Him. Jesus makes the fourth request to Levi of "Follow me" as one of the twelve disciples that are listed in 6:13-16. All the Twelve were Jews, although none were from the religious elite of the day. Peter, James, and John were fishermen, and were much less objectionable recruits than Levi, who was a cog in the opprobrious Roman tax juggernaut.⁵⁰ John T. Carroll believes that while the call of the three fishermen implied Jesus's engagement with "sinners", the episode centering on the tax collector Levi explores at greater depth the interaction between Jesus's call to discipleship and his embrace of sinners—and again highlights the criticism that Jesus's conduct elicits. This new praxis of God's reign does not mix well with conventional ways of ordering the community's life.⁵¹

In verse twenty-seven, Jesus goes out and sees (ἐθεάσατο) the tax collector Levi, sitting at the tax booth. His actions indicate that He "observed" or "studied" him (collecting taxes on

⁴⁹ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 132

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁵¹ Carroll, *Luke: A Commentary*, 102.

trade goods passing through) long enough to be impressed.⁵² Edwards viewed the use of (ἐθεόσατο) as somewhat unexpected (“to look at intently and purposively”), indicating that Jesus was not eying a despised official but looking at, even into, a real person with a name, Levi.⁵³ Based on the history of their solidarity with Rome on fleecing the average Jew in first-century Palestine, there was zero expectation to view a tax collector as anything other than a criminal who had sold their souls to the Roman authorities in exchange for wealth. The taxes that Levi collected are likely to have been toll or customs duties rather than poll tax. Tax collectors were heartily disliked both as collaborators and as extortioners. As a class, they were regarded as dishonest, and the Talmud classed them as robbers.⁵⁴ There is no prior account in the narrative of Jesus and Levi being acquainted, but Jesus requests him to “Follow me.” The call does not depend on Levi, but on the sovereign authority of Jesus, to which Levi must respond.⁵⁵ While Levi’s circumstances differ from those of Peter, James, and John, discipleship still requires the same of him that it does of them: “he left everything and followed (Jesus).” Only Luke adds the detail that he “left everything,” as Simon and his partners had done (5:11). Daniel Wallace notes that had Luke used two indicatives to describe Levi’s actions, there would have been more equal weight to them. With the attendant circumstance participle, however, the focus of the text is not on what he left, but on him following Jesus.⁵⁶ In Luke’s Gospel, discipleship requires a radical response that includes renunciation of wealth.⁵⁷ Levi irrevocably walked out on his job at Jesus’s

⁵² Osborne, *Luke Verse by Verse*, 102.

⁵³ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 23.

⁵⁴ Morris, *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*, 139.

⁵⁵ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 23.

⁵⁶ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 643.

⁵⁷ Carroll, *Luke: A Commentary*, 132.

request. Edwards believes this signifies that Levi reoriented his life, perhaps even forsook the tax trade. However, he evidently did not divest his possessions, for in the following verse, he throws a banquet for Jesus.⁵⁸ The ingressive tense of the Greek word for “followed” signifies that Levi’s discipleship was not momentary but enduring. Leon Morris saw that this act must have meant a considerable sacrifice for Levi, for tax collectors were usually wealthy.⁵⁹

Levi further cements the joyous impact of his decision to follow Jesus and “made Him a great feast in His house.” (5:29a) This feast, or banquet, was not a simple dinner between new friends but rather a grand banquet invitation in keeping with cultural norms in the marking of a significant occurrence and the ensuing life change, along with the privilege to follow Jesus. Edwards believes that in hosting “a great banquet for Jesus at his house”, Levi further attests to the sincerity of his discipleship.⁶⁰ Morris suggests that based on his reaction, Levi had no regrets, but on the contrary gathered a large company for a great feast in celebration.⁶¹ Levi found it an exhilarating thing to forsake wealth for Christ. Magnifying Luke’s preoccupation with the banqueting theme, he adds the detail to his account that the “great feast” was for Him, meaning Jesus. Both Matthew and Mark, mention Jesus “reclining at the table at the house” but do not call out that the banquet was in His honor.

At the banquet, “there was a large company of tax collectors and others reclining at the table with them.” (5:29b). This inclusion can be seen as further confirmation of Levi’s joy about his decision is in the invitation list around the table for the time with Jesus. In addition, he

⁵⁸ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 23.

⁵⁹ Morris, *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*, 140.

⁶⁰ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 23.

⁶¹ Morris, *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*, 139.

seemed excited to introduce fellow tax collectors (sinners) to Him and invites a crowd or multitude of his friends or associates. While the identity of “others” around the table is unclear, based on the direct accusation from the Pharisees in verse thirty, an inference can be made that the disciples Jesus had amassed were also at the table. Guests were at ease and fully participating in the banqueting activities, and Jesus along with the other guests were reclining around the table as was customary for these occasions. Matthew and Mark add additional details about the guest list that is not found in Luke; “Tax collectors and sinners, were reclining with Jesus and His disciples.” (Matthew 9:10; Mark 2:15)

As expected, the line of questions and commentary by the Pharisees and their scribes to the disciples about Jesus’s participation at the banquet and honoring of Levi’s invitation, separates them from the activities around the table. “The Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?” (v.30) Grant Osbourne is convinced that the Pharisees were not guests at the event as they would never demean themselves with such untouchables (literally, for to touch them was to be defiled by them).⁶² While the timing and placement of their complaints are not provided in the text, the idea that such banquets were public events could mean they could have been onlookers to the event in real-time. The irony at the moment is not lost that the joy and celebration representative of the banquet and Levi’s newfound direction is contrasted by the dour and stale demeanor of the Pharisees in their zeal to uphold the traditions and law. That the Pharisees complained or grumbled (ἐγόγγυζον) to the disciples highlights the direct misalignment that Luke records between Jesus’s approach to evangelism and the Pharisee’s tenets. Luke uses the same word in chapter six of the Book of Acts to describe the complaints raised by the Hellenists against the

⁶² Osborne, *Luke Verse by Verse*, 103.

Hebrews to protest the neglect of their widows in food distribution. (Acts 6:1). Edwards regards the word used for their complaining like the reference to the Israelites “murmuring” against Moses and God in the wilderness. This is not a reaction sparked by ill-temper or circumstance but an expression of obstinacy and resistance. In context then to Jesus’s table fellowship with tax collectors is, like the wilderness, a refusal of the redemptive work of God.⁶³ Longman asserts that their complaints were more than a superficial attempt to find fault, rather than because the Galilean people had a reputation (not always deserved) for disdainful scruples and disregarding the traditions.⁶⁴

The complaints to Jesus’s disciples are very specific, “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?” (v.30), hinting at their opinion of the mutual acceptance and broad implications of the lively fellowship. Given that the most important social function of meals is defining the group’s limits, affiliation to a group is represented by participating in its meal. Jesus’s meal community with sinners and tax collectors warrants a discussion about who should be admitted to the table.⁶⁵ Their grievance is not limited to Jesus but extends to the disciples as well. Edwards comments that the Pharisees view of others as blatant “sinners” equates to the “wicked” of the Psalms (Psalm 1, 7, 10, 34, 37, 58, 73, 119) who are not occasional transgressors of Torah, but the reprobate who stands outside it.⁶⁶ Morris believes that the Pharisees strict rules of ceremonial purity are what was unthinkable to them that they would have

⁶³ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 23.

⁶⁴ Walter L. Liefeld and David W. Pao, *The Expositors Bible Commentary: Luke---Acts Vol 10*, 184.

⁶⁵ Matthias Klinghardt, "Meals in the Gospel of Luke," in *T&T Clark's Handbook on Christian Meals in the Greco-Roman World* 108–120.

⁶⁶ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 24.

eaten with people such as Levi and his associates.⁶⁷ To them, joining in table fellowship with irreligious “sinners” is to cast doubt on one of the essential assumptions of Pharisaic teaching. Implicit in their teachings was strict adherence to both law and tradition, including necessary rites of purification and separation from all whose moral or ritual purity might be in question.⁶⁸ Interestingly, the complaint is directed at the disciples, not Jesus. This is their unwillingness to argue with Jesus himself at this point.⁶⁹ This is worth noting and is a reasonable response by the Pharisees who appear to have learned a lesson about interacting with Jesus. In the earlier context with the paralytic man (5:21), after Jesus’s statement on the forgiveness of sins, they had begun to question His methods and statements in their hearts. Jesus had perceived their thoughts and answered their unspoken questions by questioning their motives about His methods.

Jesus’s Response

In response to the questions of the Pharisees, Jesus provides a direct answer in the form of a parable, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.” (5:31). Once again, Jesus responds to the Pharisees questions about his actions by perceiving their thoughts. (5:22) Osborne asserts that, in His response Jesus answers the scribes and Pharisees with an aphorism that they could understand as they are wrong to restrict their work to those who do not need it.⁷⁰ Jesus makes His mission clear with this statement: Sinners and those who are rejected are part of His mission. The implication of physician and the sick indicates access to the required healing or cure for the identified ailment. Part of His mission, He seemed to be

⁶⁷ Morris, *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*, 139.

⁶⁸ Walter L. Liefeld and David W. Pao, *The Expositors Bible Commentary: Luke---Acts Vol 10*, 184.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Osborne, *Luke Verse by Verse*, 104.

restating, was to provide the necessary treatment for their sin and not to avoid or ostracize them as the Pharisees would prefer. Edwards affirms that the saying does not mean that Jesus is indifferent to righteousness, but rather that his fellowship with the disreputable was an unforgettable hallmark of His ministry, and an enduring lesson to the church to embrace the socially marginalized or outcast.⁷¹

Jesus clarifies His response and mission further by adding, “I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.” (5:32). In this clarifying statement, He makes it clear that He is not ministering to the self-righteous Pharisees but to the honest sinners who admit to their proper stance with God. Osbourne projects that this hardly means God is not interested in the Pharisees; Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea both came to Christ.⁷² Jesus was clear that He was going after those who were open to His teachings with His eye on their repentance from their wrong ways, not those in opposition regardless of their righteousness status. Edwards surmises that the Lukan Jesus embraces those whom society shuns, and seeks the lost, not just in compassion, but to rescue them. When repentance leads to rescue, it is a cause of great joy. Luke places repentance in the context of feasting (15:7, 19:10).⁷³ Jesus’s reference to “the righteous” seems to be ironical or, at best, a play on words based on the actions of the Pharisees and their view of their standing with God. Instead of a fixation on their sin, Jesus appears to be calling the religious leaders higher to see sinners as sick people who need healing and are capable of being healed.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 24.

⁷² Osbourne, *Luke Verse by Verse*, 104.

⁷³ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 24.

⁷⁴ Walter L. Liefeld and David W. Pao, *Luke---Acts*, 180.

Lessons

Around this table, Jesus is willing to disrupt the notion of who the religious leaders deemed acceptable dining companions to call sinners to repentance. Tim Chester sees it as Jesus taking a situation that should be considered as scandalous because of the traitorous acts of tax collectors and making them dining or partying companions.⁷⁵ Jesus was willing to upend the highly regarded cultural practice of dining and the associated boundaries that defined the socially acceptable dining guests, to extend the Kingdom of God and reach sinners and those in need of a Savior. He crossed cultural boundaries that were considered “boundary markers”, marking the restrictions between different levels of intimacy and acceptance.⁷⁶ He does not deny that the “tax collectors and others” are sinners, but rather clarifies, and emphasizes His purpose and call to call people to repentance from a lifestyle of sin and a place in the Kingdom. This was the focus and outcome for His outreach and ministry.

The lesson is about inclusion and acceptance of those outside the church walls in efforts to evangelize them through hospitality. Jesus redefined the boundaries and refused to let cultural, social, and preconceived judgment about tax collectors get in the way of extending the Kingdom. Edwards sees Jesus’s restatement of His mission to call sinners to repentance as an enduring lesson to the church to embrace the socially marginalized or outcast, given the fact that the grace of God extends to and overcomes the worst forms of human depravity.⁷⁷ For instance, considering the current cultural shifts towards the mainstream acceptance of the LGBTQ

⁷⁵ Tim Chester, *A Meal with Jesus: Discovering Grace, Community, and Mission around the Table* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 125.

⁷⁶ Mary Douglas, “Deciphering a Meal,” in *Implicit Meanings: Essays in Anthropology* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), 249–75.

⁷⁷ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 34.

community, the church must not react by ostracizing members of this community from evangelism efforts based on condemnation of their lifestyle. Conversely, intentional outreach should demonstrate God's love and grace in tandem with truth about the lifestyle.

Evangelism in the humanistic culture that the contemporary church currently operates in can be well served by employing the perspective that Jesus had at this table and for most of His ministry, as documented by Luke and the other Gospel writers. Both Matthew (9:13) and Mark (2:17) report that Jesus called tax collectors and sinners unconditionally, but Luke adds that he called them "to repentance." For Luke, Jesus embraces those whom society shuns, and He seeks the lost, out of compassion, but also to rescue them. This banquet table and the other similar gatherings Luke mentions allowed the Pharisees and Scribes to question Jesus directly and for Him to respond. Schreiner's observation that joining in table fellowship with irreligious "sinners" is to cast doubt on one of the essential assumptions of Pharisaic teaching⁷⁸ is well stated, and another lesson for the church to note. Jesus's willingness to upset members of one of the sects dedicated to upholding the Jewish way of life, particularly as related to their laws and traditions, demonstrated His commitment to the kingdom message, His mission and reaching sinners. The lesson for reaching those who are typically shunned for their apparent "Sin" is found in how far the church will go to make room at tables for those labelled as outcasts or sinners. Bock comments that in this context, because tax collectors were defectors from Israel and notorious sinners, the question faced here is whether Jesus and his disciples should practice a type of separatism like that of the Pharisees.⁷⁹ The same question is posed to the contemporary church's evangelism efforts. Will those efforts target everyone in need of a Savior, or will they

⁷⁸ Schreiner, *Luke*, 977

⁷⁹ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke, The NIV Application Commentary*, 189.

be insular and, in effect, a form of separatism from the world and people Jesus embraced? Luke recounts a successful attempt to call sinners to repentance through Jesus's radical immersion into their social circumstances and environment at the expense of His reputation and the upsetting of the religious elite.

Bock sees the call of Levi as one of the most direct bridges from Luke's Gospel to the church's evangelism efforts in Jesus's message of salvation and healing for sinners and the restoration of their relationship to God.⁸⁰ The message is for the church to understand the criticality of seeing the importance of reaching out to others and initiating that contact. While concern for appropriate separation is essential, the church must separate from the "deeds of darkness," from the acts of sin,⁸¹ but isolation from sinners is not the lesson Jesus taught and modeled.

⁸⁰ Bock, *Luke, The NIV Application Commentary*, 189.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 189.

Chapter 3: Dining with Pharisees

Luke 7:36-50

In this pericope, Luke presents Jesus dining at a Pharisee's house and the unexpected intrusion of "the sinful woman" at the event, washing Jesus's feet with an ointment. Each of the other three Gospels has a story of an anointing of Jesus by a woman (Matt. 26:6–13; Mark 14:3–9; John 12:1–8). Luke's account occurs earlier in Jesus's ministry, while the other three are at the end of His ministry and life. This scene is first of the three included in Luke's Gospel of Jesus being invited into a Pharisee's home for a meal (11:37-42 and 14:1-24). In this narrative, Luke begins with "One of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with Him," (7:36a) It would seem he is elaborating on the narrative from the preceding storyline with this opening. In the earlier narrative, Jesus talks about John the Baptist's influence and impact and the critical response from the religious leaders. The account ends with Jesus's infamous statement:

"For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is justified by all her children." (33-35).

Following this statement, ironically, one of the Pharisees invites Jesus to dine with him.

Pharisees have been mentioned six times previously (5:17, 21, 30, 33; 6:2, 7), each time in antagonism to Jesus's mission.⁸²

In his narration, Luke refers to Jesus's host only as the Pharisee four times in four verses (v36-39). He only gives the host a name once Jesus calls him by name, Simon, in verse forty of the chapter. Joshua Jipp believes the reader is invited to see this Pharisee as a representative character, as one of the characters Luke has just described in 7:29– 35, namely, as

⁸² Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 34.

a representative portrait of one who rejects “the purpose of God” (7:30) by rejecting God’s prophet.⁸³ Accepting the invitation to dine, Jesus “went into the Pharisee’s house and reclined at table” (7:36b). Edwards asserts that the fact that a Pharisee would invite Jesus to a banquet in the first place and that in doing so he was sufficiently assured of Jesus’s acceptance is significant to the outcome of the story. Two things (among many) were incumbent on a Jewish host were: (1) not to leave a worthy guest uninvited; and (2) not to invite a guest who might decline the invitation. The first mistake shamed the guest; the second, the host.⁸⁴ Carroll views the invitation by the Pharisee to Jesus, the man with the well-earned reputation of enjoying a good meal and befriending sinners, as an opportunity in a social banquet setting where he can befriend the ‘righteous’.⁸⁵ Any opinion of the Pharisees considered as righteous by Christ could be considered sarcastic, given that most encounters recorded ended with Him questioning their motives, priorities, and expectations. Liefeld, on the other hand, considers the acceptance of this invitation as one reason Jesus cannot be accused of spurning the Pharisees socially.⁸⁶

An intruder enters the dining scene, and as Luke describes, “a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that He was reclining at table in the Pharisee’s house and brought an alabaster flask of ointment” (7:37). He does not elaborate on why the woman was referred to as a “sinner”. However, the classification simply aids to qualify her for the pronouncement Jesus had made earlier in the Gospel: “I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.”

⁸³ Joshua W. Jipp, *Divine Visitations and Hospitality to Strangers in Luke-Acts: An Interpretation of the Malta Episode in Acts 28:1-10*, 175.

⁸⁴ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 34

⁸⁵ Carroll, *Luke: A Commentary*, 175.

⁸⁶ Walter L. Liefeld and David W. Pao, *Luke---Acts*, 228.

(5:32). Many commentators seem to indicate that “woman of the city” with an expensive “flask of ointment” were indications of a prostitute or street walker. Others made a case for the flask as an inheritance and the loose hair and her actions as sign of a single woman with deep sorrow. Liefeld asserts that the woman took advantage of the social customs that permitted needy people to visit such a banquet to receive some of the leftovers and came specifically to see Jesus.⁸⁷ Luke does not include details of how she knew who Jesus was, but assumptions can be made that she had been part of the crowds listening to Him teach or may have just heard of Him from the miracles he had performed. With the use of ἐν τῇ πόλει Luke, emphasizes that the woman was known in the whole town as a “sinner.”⁸⁸ so that the corresponding recognition of the woman by the Pharisee (7:39d) is explainable. Nevertheless, that does not seem to dissuade her from taking the initiative to intrude on the banquet, with her flask of oil and attention focused on Jesus – the reason she was there. Michael Wolter views Luke’s account of a “woman sinner” together with Jesus in the house of a Pharisee of all places as further evidence of subtle irony,⁸⁹ that is found throughout the narrative. She is not formally introduced or identified but referred to repeatedly and anonymously as “woman” (37, 39, 44, 50), “sinner” (37, 39, 49), or simply as she.

Since Jesus was reclining at the table as referenced above per custom, she had access to Him, “and standing behind him at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed His feet and anointed them with the ointment.” (7:38). She kisses Jesus’s feet repeatedly and anoints them with perfume. The string of imperfect-tense verbs (“[she] kept drying . . . kept kissing . . . [and] anointing”) makes the

⁸⁷ Walter L. Liefeld and David W. Pao, *Luke---Acts*, 229.

⁸⁸ Wolter, *The Gospel according to Luke: Volume I (Luke 1-9:50)*, 319.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 319.

gestures more dramatic and, for the host, offensive.⁹⁰ Carroll opines that while her ability to gain access to the banquet room is not alarming for readers concerning ancient Palestinian homes, the audacity of her actions towards Jesus, particularly given Pharisaic concern with ritual purity and her own status as a sinner was what stunned the onlookers.⁹¹ Leon Morris believes that the woman was clearly completely oblivious to public opinion in the grip of her deep emotion, which will explain her kissing of the feet. While there are examples of the kissing of the feet of a specially honored rabbi, it was far from usual.⁹² The tears should be understood as tears of remorse and the mention of tears encourages the readers to place the woman's action in its proper context. While one possible connotation of the woman's unbound hair is sexual, another (preferable) cultural option is to see her unbound hair as indicative of religious devotion or perhaps a sign of grief over her sins. The reason for the woman's tears is not explicitly identified. However, given the context focusing on response and repentance (especially 7:29–30 with 3:10–14), they are likely tears of repentance for her sins or loving gratitude to Jesus.⁹³

The arrival of the sinful woman changes the dynamic of the event and solicits negative reactions from the host; “Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner.” (7:39). Once again, Luke portrays the internal monologue of a Pharisee as he had earlier (5:22), Jesus's awareness of those thoughts, and His public response to their questions. This reaction of the Pharisee is another ironic introduction by

⁹⁰ Carroll, *Luke: A Commentary*, 177.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 178.

⁹² Morris, *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 167.

⁹³ Joshua W. Jipp, *Divine Visitations*, 175.

Luke that is juxtaposed with the woman's extravagant generosity. In verse forty, by addressing his internal musings, Jesus finally identifies the Pharisee as Simon. While the woman displays an extravagant response to Jesus, Simon the Pharisee festers inwardly and wonders if Jesus is indeed was a prophet He should know what kind of woman was touching Him. Interestingly, Edwards notes that Simon is vexed not by the presence of the sinful woman in the room; he is vexed because Jesus does not know and judge this sinful woman.⁹⁴ Jesus does not employ clairvoyance to satisfy the expectations of his host in keeping with His rising reputation as a prophet. The accusation was that He should have known and further halted the irreligious display from the "sinner."

In his discourse on the topic, Mikael Parsons advanced that from Simon's perspective, nothing in her appearance or gestures indicated impropriety in her actions or that she was a sinner; this fact was previously known to him since they were from the same city.⁹⁵ The Pharisee's musings can be viewed as contrary to fact condition - "If this man were a prophet - indicating that for him, Jesus's conduct disconfirms his prophetic credentials - he would have known who...for she is a sinner."⁹⁶ The Pharisee's remark showed that he doubts Jesus' prophetic credentials. Paradoxically, Jesus's ability to read his mind confirms what Simon was debating in his mind. Wolter offers that Luke seasons this reaction with a powerful shot of irony, for the readers know, of course, that the Pharisee is correct, Jesus is, indeed, no prophet, but in a completely different way than he thinks: Jesus is the authentic representative of God's salvific

⁹⁴ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 34

⁹⁵ Mikeal C. Parsons, *The "Sinful Woman" and Simon The Pharisee; Character and Characterization in Luke 7:36-50* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2017), 34.

⁹⁶ Carroll, *Luke: A Commentary*, 178.

presence in Israel. Therefore, he also knows, of course, that the woman is a “sinner”.⁹⁷ Justo Gonzalez proposes viewing the Pharisee’s thoughts from a different, more positive perspective by considering that Simon is weighing the possibility that Jesus may truly be a prophet, but the way Jesus responds to the woman causes him to doubt that.⁹⁸ But there is no evidence in the text or the Greek to support his claim.

Jesus’s Response

Luke introduces Jesus’s response as an invitation to what could at first glance be perceived as an invitation to a dialogue, “Simon, I have something to say to you.”(v.40a) For the first time, Jesus speaks, and it is forthright and personal, addressing his host not by his office but by his name.⁹⁹ Osbourne notes that in the culture of the day, Jesus’s statement would have been interpreted as introducing a pointed comment correcting another person.¹⁰⁰ Simon’s unrehearsed and anticipatory response to Jesus’s invitation is recorded as, “Say it, Teacher.” (7:40b) This becomes the first time in Luke’s account that Jesus is addressed as Teacher (διδάσκαλε), as He would subsequently be called several times in the Gospel by others in the crowd and leaders. In Luke, outsiders always address Jesus in this way, and never the disciples. Liefeld considers the Pharisee’s response as perfunctory, perhaps expecting some stock word of wisdom from his teacher guest.¹⁰¹ Though skeptical of Jesus’s standing as prophet, Simon still recognizes his role

⁹⁷ Wolter, *The Gospel according to Luke: Volume I (Luke 1-9:50)*, 319.

⁹⁸ Justo L. González, *The Story Luke Tells: Luke's Unique Witness to the Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 58.

⁹⁹ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, (Eerdmans, 2015), 35.

¹⁰⁰ Osborne, *Luke Verse by Verse*, (Lexham Press, 2018), 58.

¹⁰¹ Walter L. Liefeld and David W. Pao, *Luke---Acts*, 229.

and authority as a Teacher based on his respectful response.¹⁰² Based on the translation of the Greek word (εἰπέ) of this response, Morris proposes that the Pharisee's reply is rather 'Speak on' than 'What is it?', indicating that his words are polite but not encouraging.¹⁰³

Jesus once again responds to questions about his affiliations with "sinners" with a parable that ends with a question, "A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?" (7:41-42). In this parable, Jesus presents an incredulous story of a moneylender that appears overly kind and, possibly in the eyes of his host, even unwise for being so open handed. The question Jesus adds at the end of His statement seems obvious for the breadth of the action and consideration of five hundred versus fifty denarii. Nonetheless, both amounts are significant debts, and the two debtors have reason to be grateful. A denarius was the standard wage for a day's work and sums owed the lender translate to debts approximating two years' and two months' wages, respectively.¹⁰⁴ The image of debt cancellation (from the verb χαρίζομαι meaning to pardon, forgive or show kindness) prepares for Jesus's declaration of the sinful woman's forgiveness in verses forty-seven to forty-eight (ἀφίημι meaning to release, forgive). Simon's response to Jesus's question reflects the obvious, "The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt." (7:43a). While the addition of "I suppose" may seem to indicate a grudging statement, this response appears to be on target with Jesus's expectation, as He responds to Simon with, "You have judged rightly." (v7:43b). Jesus

¹⁰² Carroll, *Luke: A Commentary*, 177.

¹⁰³ Morris, *Luke*, 167.

¹⁰⁴ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 34.

seems to be providing clues to the Pharisee to indicate the extravagance he witnessed from the woman's actions. At this point in the narrative, Simon has not deduced the connection.

In what appears to be a preempted move to refocus the narrative back to the woman, Jesus turns to her and direct His comments to Simon. This appears to be an attempt by Jesus to get Simon to consider her beyond the reputation she was known for, "Do you see this woman?" (v7:44a). He then makes a series of observations in the form of a comparative analysis of actions towards Him; "I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment." Jesus's comments are reminiscent of the parable of the two debtors He told earlier, comparing the woman's actions with the Pharisees and inviting judgment based on those actions as his host. In this narrative, Carroll refers to Luke's writing as an effective choreography that heightens the contrast between Pharisee host and uninvited guest on which the parable is commenting.¹⁰⁵ Wolter contends that the extraordinary nature of the woman's actions is further intensified rhetorically by the inaction of the Pharisee, which is described not only as the omission, but also as surpassed by the actions of the woman in material respects.¹⁰⁶ The listing of the actions that Simon left undone is not intended to accuse the Pharisee of failing to fulfill his obligations as a host, for such attentions in relation to eating guests were by no means generally common and such actions were certainly not expected from the host.¹⁰⁷ The contrast remains

¹⁰⁵ Carroll, *Luke: A Commentary*, 179.

¹⁰⁶ Wolter, *The Gospel according to Luk*), 324.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 324.

strong because of the extraordinary nature of what the woman did. In effect the uninvited woman had been a better host to Jesus than the implied mediocre reception from Simon.

Jesus concludes His address to Simon by bringing the focus back to the woman with the statement, “Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little” (7:47). Edwards asserts that with this statement, Jesus receives the woman’s hospitality as an eloquent though unspoken confession of repentance.¹⁰⁸ He does not overlook or keep her sins hidden. Alternatively, He refers to them as “many” and offers the prescription. The structure of Jesus’s statement implies that this woman was forgiven because of her grand act of love. In comparison to the parable Jesus told about the money lender (7:41), love was demonstrated after the forgiveness of the debts, and in verse 7:47b, those forgiven little, loved in return little. Wolter sees this as a blatant contradiction of the Gospel message of forgiveness leading to love.¹⁰⁹ Liefeld argues that the use (ὅτι, “for”) in the sentence is not to show causality but evidence.¹¹⁰ The Today’s English Version Bible has the statement translated as “the great love she has shown proves that her many sins have been forgiven.” John T. Carroll also recognizes the surprising tension in the inversion in verse forty-seven (a) and suggests that this may hint at the idea that there is no simple calculus of forgiveness and love in Jesus’s ministry. Sometimes it may be initiated by a sinner drawn to Jesus that precedes the offer of forgiveness or healing.¹¹¹ Jesus moves back to address the woman within earshot of the attendees directly, “Your sins are forgiven.” (7:48a) The Greek verb (Ἀφένονται) is in the perfect passive

¹⁰⁸ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 118.

¹⁰⁹ Wolter, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 324.

¹¹⁰ Walter L. Liefeld and David W. Pao, *Luke---Acts*, 230.

¹¹¹ Carroll, *Luke: A Commentary*, 179.

indicative, appears to indicate prior forgiveness. This is also the same word used in the earlier declaration of forgiveness to the paralytic, “When Jesus saw their faith he said, ‘Man, your sins have been forgiven.’” (5:20). Jesus’s statement on her forgiveness creates consternation for the guests at the meal, who are mentioned for the first time in the narrative. They begin discussing among themselves asking, “Who is this, who even forgives sins?” (7:49a). Forgiveness of sin was relegated to God only. Based on his thoughts, at most, Simon had begun to consider the likelihood of Him being a prophet (the same could be assumed for his community). However, the language of conferring forgiveness of sin seemed beyond what they could reconcile with their beliefs. In effect, they are asking about the legitimacy of Jesus’s claim to be able to forgive sins and, in this way, to claim for himself an exclusive right of God.¹¹² While the line of questioning mimicked that from Luke 5 and the paralytic as referenced above (5:21), they accused Jesus of blasphemy in their questions for saying He could forgive sins. At the same time, this group appear astounded by His capacity to forgive sins.

Jesus does not address any of the questions from around the table related to His statement on forgiveness. Instead, He refocuses on the woman and states, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.” (7:50b). He effectively frames the woman’s actions towards Him from earlier in the narrative and explains her extravagance. Her actions are now portrayed as a visualization of her faith,¹¹³ and repentance. Identical phrasings are found in the same position in other Gospel narratives, mainly at the end of healing stories. Wolter sees this as Luke allowing new light to

¹¹² Wolter, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 325.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

fall on the understanding of the woman's actions. They express that she regards Jesus as her "savior." They have nothing to do with "remorse" or the like.¹¹⁴

Lessons

Despite the ruffled feathers, questions about the legitimacy of His call as a prophet, or His association with sinners and authority to forgive sin, Jesus maximizes the invitation to dine and proceeds to deliver a series of lessons around this table while maintaining focus on restoring sinners. First, the invitation to dine from the Pharisee was honored despite the direct opposition directed towards Him by the sect. Luke describes the increasing hostility towards Jesus related to the company He kept, the actions of disciples on the Sabbath (6:2), healing on the Sabbath (6:11), and statements announcing forgiveness of sins which they considered blasphemy (5:21). In this text, Jesus did not allow the known issues, differences, or animosity directed towards Him to deter Him and result in a separatism or non-fellowship approach as it relates to social association with the Pharisees. Second, unlike others around the table, Jesus's focus was fixed on the forgiveness of the "many sins" of the woman and her salvation, not on her reputation or the crowd's opinion about Him due to His association with her. He interpreted her actions as a display of gratitude and love and commended her, instead of His host, for treating Him appropriately. The lesson to the church is to develop the capacity to cultivate (if not currently present) and maintain an approach to evangelism via hospitality that resists the tendency to categorize sinners by the perceived magnitude of their sins and inadvertently exclude them from access to the forgiveness and grace found in Christ's sacrifice and the Gospel message.

¹¹⁴ Wolter, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 326.

At the table, the woman, considered a pariah in the city, is welcomed and accepted despite her series of non-traditional actions that she displayed. Tim Chester describes this as Jesus's willingness to be socially disruptive to bring the Kingdom of God to sinners. His radical grace shown is disruptive to social situations.¹¹⁵ He receives her and her offering of love at the risk of His own reputation, focusing on her restoration and not the perception of His dining companions or self-preservation. At the same time, Jesus acknowledges and uses the expected customs and traditions on table protocol to teach on the correlation between the sin forgiven and the nature and quality of love displayed. The final lesson returned to the woman and her restoration based on her display of faith. Jesus proclaimed that her sins were forgiven twice (7: 48 and 50).

In an approach to bridge the context of what was occurring around this table to current day, Bock states that the contrasting attitudes, that of Jesus and the Pharisees, reveal a fundamental paradigm for relating to the world.¹¹⁶ While the Pharisees in their zeal for purity separate themselves from sinners; Jesus, on the other hand, consistently talks about sin and the Kingdom of God but does not separate Himself from sinners, like the woman in the story. He understands that for light to shine in darkness, there must be engagement. Bock summarizes that the texts ask hard questions of the church; "Do we see sinners for who they have been or for what God can make of them?"¹¹⁷ If the church believes that it has something to offer, it should show concern and the potential to relate in a new way to God, as Jesus did.

¹¹⁵ Chester, *A Meal with Jesus: Discovering Grace, Community, and Mission Around the Table*, 127.

¹¹⁶ Bock, *Luke, The NIV Application Commentary*, 262.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 189.

The church should approach sinners with the awareness of how the grace of God has delivered them instead of a self-righteous view that hinders the outreach efforts. Tim Chester writes that involvement with people, especially the marginalized, must begin with a sense of God's grace. But not just God's grace to them, but His grace to all humans.¹¹⁸ The church must be the bridge back to God for all, regardless of their reputation and sin. Access to the grace of God for forgiveness must be the paramount concern of the church in evangelism efforts and not the preservation of self, rather than requiring sinners to clean themselves up before they are worthy of the Gospel message.

Luke 14:1-24

In this pericope, Jesus is invited to dinner at the home of a prominent Pharisee, and the invitation is accepted. Different scenes in the narrative address questions connected with aspects of banquets, - guests (14:1- 11), hosts (14:11- 14), and invitees (14:15- 24). The host was possibly a member of the Sanhedrin, who could be a leader of the synagogue or a priest, but not necessarily part of the Sanhedrin.¹¹⁹ The story does not indicate the location. This is the third time Luke has recorded Jesus dining in a Pharisee's home (7:36 and 11:37). On this occasion, the event is on the Sabbath. Jesus had already had questions raised about His activities with His disciples on the Sabbath. This is the fourth record in Luke (6:1-5, 6-11; 13:10-7) of interactions with Pharisees and their cross-examination of Jesus's motives and regard for the Law by His healing of the sick or the disciples breaking and eating grain. At this dinner, Luke notes that "they were watching him carefully" (14:1b), picturing the Pharisees as guardians of the faith as

¹¹⁸ Chester, *A Meal with Jesus: Discovering Grace, Community, and Mission Around the Table*, 38.

¹¹⁹ Alvin Thompson, Professor of New Testament, Liberty University, 2023.

they wait for some theological flaw to appear in Jesus's teaching.¹²⁰ The Pharisees were one of many different groups of Jews in the first century. They were also divided into different schools depending upon their application and interpretation of the Law. There is little significant "theological" distinction between Pharisees and Jesus. What is different is the application of Law. With the use of (παρατηρούμενοι) meaning to watch closely, to observe scrupulously, the implication is surveillance prompted by malice. This is used by Luke on two other occasions in which opponents are seeking to catch Jesus in a serious mistake (6:7; 20:20).¹²¹ The frequency of Luke's reference to the Sabbath debate between Jesus and the religious leaders indicates that this was a significant issue for them. The guests included Pharisees, scribes, and "a man...who had dropsy" (14:2b), whose presence seems almost staged or planted before Him to see what Jesus would do. Edwards sees it as irregular for a man with bodily edema, which seems to compromise Torah rules related to bodily discharge, to be at a Sabbath meal in a Pharisee's house.¹²²

Jesus's Response

Jesus responds to the Pharisees and lawyers that were present and delivers what, at first glance, appears to be a lesson on proper table etiquette. Luke does not record what prompted His response but simply begins with; "And Jesus responded." Wolter comments that the introductory (ἀποκριθείς) translated responding is not used for actual "answering" but merely for "reacting" to a certain situation (Luke also uses this form in several places in his account).¹²³ On the other hand, Morris believes no one had spoken and that Jesus was answering the action, or perhaps the

¹²⁰ Walter L. Liefeld and David W. Pao, *Luke---Acts*, 261.

¹²¹ Schreiner, *Luke*, 290.

¹²² Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 124.

¹²³ Wolter, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 210.

thoughts of his enemies.¹²⁴ Nonetheless, Jesus responds by asking a question; “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?” (14:3b). This question is similar to the earlier discourse around the healing of the woman who was bent over in chapter thirteen. No response was given to His question; “They remained silent.” (14:4a) Wolter opines that the sweeping way Jesus formulates the question is unanswerable based on Jewish presuppositions. Therefore, it is not surprising that His “dialogue partners” become silent.¹²⁵ Schreiner thinks the Pharisees and lawyers are present not to be questioned but to question Jesus. They are unwilling to be examined themselves, for they position themselves as critics and judges, not those willing to learn and grow.¹²⁶ Given their lack of response, Jesus heals the sick man and sends him away (v. 4b). This miracle is only found in Luke’s account. He continues to question His dining partners about their objections to the healing on the Sabbath; “Which of you having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?” (14:5). Luke had previously (13:15-16) used the example of the untying an ox or donkey over concern of the hypocrisy of the indignance of the ruler of the synagogue because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath. The use of a son as an alternative in this text has some commentators and manuscripts attempt to explain away the seeming incoherence. This is a text critical decision. The earliest and best manuscripts have "son" which seems to have been altered to "donkey" due to scribal activity that conformed 14:5 to the previous 13:15.¹²⁷ Nonetheless, with this question Jesus makes a statement about the needs of humanity over mindless devotion to laws and rules.¹²⁸

¹²⁴ Morris, *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*, 248.

¹²⁵ Wolter, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 210.

¹²⁶ Schreiner, *Luke*, 1290.

¹²⁷ Steffen.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 1291.

When He noticed how seats of honor had been chosen at the table, Jesus continues to call out the guests' behavior. He applies the observations to a parable about being invited to a wedding and choosing to sit down in a place of honor instead of waiting to be asked by the host to take the place of honor and face shame from being demoted (14:8). He also offers the antidote for self-promotion: "But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, 'Friend move up higher.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you." (14:10). This lesson is about humility and the ills of self-promotion. This is made more evident by the climax statement of the parable, "Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (14:11). Edwards sees this as the use of the theme of eschatological reversal, which is common to Luke and used to conclude in 13:30, and exact words reappear almost verbatim in 18:14. The passive voice here is a "divine passive," a reference to God without using God's name, meaning "God will humble the exalted and exalt the humbled!"¹²⁹

Jesus also gives a lesson to His host related to the other guests he had invited to dine in the form of an admonition; "When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you are repaid." (14:12) Based on earlier inclusions by Luke, we know that the guest list at this table included other Pharisees and lawyers, people like the host himself. Guests that are most likely equipped to repay the host in kind. Chester opines that it was not just the Jewish world where you ate with your own: "Central to the political stability of the Empire was the ethics of reciprocity, a gift-and-obligation system that tied every person, into an intricate web of social

¹²⁹ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 124.

relations, and expectations of reciprocity were naturally extended to the table.”¹³⁰ While this was not unexpected, Jesus challenges this status quo as well. He continues further with an alternative and shocking approach for inclusion in a dinner guest list; “But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind” (14:13) Bock comments that with this statement Jesus was overturning norms as usual by asserting that the best hospitality is given, not exchanged.¹³¹ Wolter on the other hand views this as a demand to invite only such people for a meal who are not in a position to return the favor with a reciprocal invitation and cause the addressee to receive social recognition.”¹³² In this context, *quid pro quo* actions were not going to be commended by God; “and you will be blessed, for they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.” (14:14). The divine reward for goodwill to those who have no means to repay in this lifetime will come in the resurrection of the righteous.

A third lesson is delivered after one of the guests makes an exclamation after Jesus describes the motive and reward described in verse 14; “Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!” (14:15b). Jesus responds to this statement with a parable about a great banquet. Luke appears to shift from the practical temporal choice and placement of dining guests to the blessing and eternal placement of the messianic banquet. A variant of this parable is found in Matthew 22:1-10. While both are based on a similar story line, they only have a few phrases in common. Morris believes Jesus’s reference to resurrection in verse fourteen sparked off the pious exclamation from the man because he clearly had no doubt that he would be included in the

¹³⁰ Chester, *A Meal with Jesus: Discovering Grace, Community, and Mission Around the Table*, 69.

¹³¹ Bock, *Luke*, 109.

¹³² Wolter, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 216.

resurrection.¹³³ Jesus's parable challenges his sincerity. Carroll sees his assumption as precarious, given the warning that Jesus has issued in Luke 13:22 – 30 that some who expect to feast will be denied admission, or banished.¹³⁴ The man hosting the great banquet “invited many” (v16b) guests, but when it came time for the banquet to begin, the guests “all began to make excuses” (14:18a) to the man's servants as to why they could not attend. Due to the frivolousness of the excuses, the man asked the servants to “Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame,” (14:21). This parable repeats the unconventional guest list from the earlier lesson almost verbatim. Edwards comments that this indicates that Jesus was enjoining the Pharisee to call to his banquet the people whom God calls to His.¹³⁵ The man is determined to fill out the banquet, which reflects his heart. He is determined that his feast be full, no matter what the social station or class or pedigree of the persons who come.¹³⁶ The parable ends with a pronouncement by the man “I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste of my banquet.” (14:24). This can be viewed as a somber verdict on those who were first invited but made excuses. There would be no second chances as they had squandered their opportunity.¹³⁷

Jesus does not provide an interpretation for this parable. Longman finds in it an allusion of the extension of the gospel to the Gentiles. Those who had the benefit of the original invitation are perhaps best described by Paul as Jews with all their heritage and spiritual advantages in

¹³³ Morris, *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*, 248.

¹³⁴ Carroll, *Luke: A Commentary*, 179.

¹³⁵ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 124.

¹³⁶ Card, *Luke: the Gospel of Amazement*, 178.

¹³⁷ Morris, *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*, 253.

Romans 9: 4 -5.¹³⁸ Bock interprets it to mean the original invitees represent those Israelites that refuse to believe in Jesus as Messiah, especially the leadership. They are not responding, but the celebration of the kingdom coming and its blessings will go ahead with invitations extended to others previously thought excluded from the celebration. Israel, though first in line, misses her present chance to sit at the table.¹³⁹ Nonetheless, in Acts, many Israelites indeed believe including many Pharisees.

Lessons

Jesus dismantles cultural norms and patterns in place of kingdom expectations at this table. Consideration is given to the needs of others versus religious regulations and social norms. There is a call for humility versus self-promotion; kindness (based on quid pro quo considerations) versus blessings for extending kindness to the needy and sick without any means to repay; and extending the kingdom to all.

Jesus's compassion was the trademark of His ministry, and the pressure from being at the home of a ruler of the Pharisee and his friends did not preclude the healing of the sick man on the Sabbath. The man's need was more important than the judgment of His host and associates or the religious expectations that seem to devalue people in place of stringent application of the Law.

Social status and social stratification were vital considerations in the structuring of life, with one's status based on the perception of those around a person regarding his prestige.¹⁴⁰ Jesus offered an alternative to this mindset that encouraged a significant and jarring shift from

¹³⁸ Walter L. Liefeld and David W. Pao, *Luke---Acts*, 230.

¹³⁹ Bock, *Luke*, 2

¹⁴⁰ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 460

acceptable norms or the desire to be first or most important. This lesson is also found in Proverbs 25:6-7.

The Kingdom of God is accessible to all, regardless of social or economic status, but not all invited will accept the invitation. Targeting the inclusion of the marginalized and social outcasts, while not popular or part of the norms, is a Kingdom mandate. The church should ensure that access to the Kingdom through evangelism activities is not one dimensional in objective, scope, and methodology. All people groups should be afforded equal access balanced with the acknowledgement that each person's response to the invitation to the gospel message is theirs to make.

Chapter 4: Dining with the Crowd

Luke 9: 10 - 17

In this pericope, Luke presents Jesus asking the disciples to feed the five thousand men plus women and children who had intruded on their plans and followed them to Bethsaida. This is one of the only miracles in all four Gospel accounts (Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44; John 6:1-14). Most commentators believe Luke's account is based literally on Mark's. Food elements in this text are discussed, displayed, multiplied, and eventually distributed. Luke's narrative begins with the twelve disciples returning from the mission Jesus had sent them on (9:1-6) to preach the gospel and heal everywhere they went. "On their return, the apostles told him all that they had done." (9:10a) They had returned and gave Him their reports. The Greek word used (διηγήσαντο) told, reported, or related, is the same root word that Luke used to describe his composite Gospel narrative in the prologue, and in the proclamation of the demoniac, which Jesus commanded him to make in the Decapolis (8:39). Edwards offers that the term is dedicated to the "good news," the apostolic witness to the kingdom of God, and the miraculous healings attendant to it.¹⁴¹

In response to their successful reports, "He took them and withdrew apart to a town called Bethsaida." (9:10b) Luke uses the word translated withdrew (ὑπεχώρησεν) one other time in his account in chapter five and in that context, Jesus would withdraw to desolate places and pray (Luke 5:16). Osbourne proposes that Luke's use of (καλουμένην Βηθσαϊδά) "called Bethsaida" is evidence of his unfamiliarity with the town and instead recycled information from

¹⁴¹ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 128.

Mark 6:45 and 8:22.¹⁴² Luke is the only one who mentions the name of the location. In Mark's version of this story, after the apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught, he includes the details of Jesus saying to them, "Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while." (6:31-32). In Matthew's account, Jesus sought seclusion after He heard of the beheading of John the Baptist via John's disciples, and "He withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by Himself" (Matthew 14: 12 - 13a) but was followed by the crowds.

The plan for solitude is short lived, and instead the crowds that have been following Jesus catches up with them; "When the crowds learned it, they followed him" (9:11a). Despite the plan for rest, Jesus, on the contrary does not seem irritated by the intrusion, "and he welcomed them and spoke to them of the kingdom of God and cured those who had need of healing." (9:11b). And as is typical for Him, Jesus seizes the opportunity to present the Kingdom, and heal the sick and those oppressed. Mark includes the imagery of a shepherd in his narrative, "He had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things" (Mark 6:34). John, in his account, includes the observation that the crowds were following Him "because they had seen the signs He was doing on the sick" (John 6:2b), as well as the fact that the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand (John 6:4).

As the day advances, the twelve disciples approach Jesus with a proposition in apparent concern for the well-being of the people gathered, "Send the crowd away to go into the surrounding villages and countryside to find lodging and get provisions, for we are here in a desolate place." (9:12b). Only Luke mentions the need for lodging in his account of this event. Grant Osbourne proposes that the note about lodging is likely because people have come to hear Jesus from far away and reflects the Near Eastern concern for hospitality. Jesus is hosting

¹⁴² Osborne, *Luke Verse by Verse*, 166.

a great crowd and is responsible to provide for their nourishment and safety.¹⁴³ Wolter takes it further and suggests that Luke presents a justification for the disciples with use of the statement (ὧδε ἐν ἐρήμῳ τόπῳ ἐσμέν) “here in this desolate place.”¹⁴⁴ Liefeld on the other hand, calls the recommendation from the disciples an unimaginative suggestion,¹⁴⁵ which generates an even more incredulous response from Jesus. In John’s account, it is Jesus who surveys the large crowd coming toward Him and proposes to Philip, “Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?” (John 6:5b). John adds that Jesus said this to test him, for He Himself knew what he would do. Carson believes John adds this comment to forestall any reader from thinking that Jesus was surprised by the miracle that was eventually performed. The Evangelist avers that Jesus already had his own plan, but that the problem itself gave him a further opportunity to test Philip.¹⁴⁶

Jesus’s Response

Jesus surveys the crowd on the heels of the disciples’ apparent statement of concern. On the contrary, unlike the disciples, the size of the crowd, their location or the time of the day does not elicit the same reaction from Him. Instead, He said to the disciples, “You give them something to eat.” (9:13a). This perspective, at face value, seems to exacerbate the situation versus alleviate the concerns they raised. The “you” is emphatic, and Edwards sees this as laying responsibility on the disciples to solve the problem.¹⁴⁷ The Twelve are expected to continue to

¹⁴³ Osborne, *Luke Verse by Verse*, 166.

¹⁴⁴ Wolter, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 128

¹⁴⁵ Walter L. Liefeld and David W. Pao, *Luke---Acts*, 230.

¹⁴⁶ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 238.

¹⁴⁷ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 128.

actively participate rather than only be observers of Jesus’s ministry. Carroll opines that Jesus has reversed roles on the apostles, having returned from a mission tour on which they relied for basic needs on the hospitality of strangers who hosted them; He was now asking them to do the same for the people.¹⁴⁸ The emphasis of the personal pronoun (ὕμεῖς) gives Jesus’s exhortation a completely different orientation. He was asking the disciples to own and solve the problem. Wolter views this as Jesus asking the twelve to adopt the role of the host of the crowd.¹⁴⁹

The disciples, in consternation, respond to Jesus’s request, “We have no more than five loaves and two fish—unless we are to go and buy food for all these people.” (9:13b). Commentators agree that the response was mostly indignance at the idea of the miracle required to feed the crowd. This effectively places the situation, as termed by Wolter, under the rubric of “unsatisfactory attempts to find a solution with the expositional motifs of a miracle story.”¹⁵⁰ John’s account of this story in his Gospel reveals that the supply of five loaves and two fish was a young boy’s lunch in the crowd (John 6:9). This implies that they had taken some initiative and scanned the crowd for supplies as part of their option to address the seemingly impossible request. In addition to the disciples voicing their access to limited supply, Luke restates the count of people. It seems to supplement or justify the inconsequential impact of the food available, “For there were about five thousand men.” (9:14a) The Greek word for “men,” (ἄνδρες) meaning man or husband, which would amount to a much larger crowd when women and children were counted. Matthew adds the additional detail of the makeup of the crowd to his account, “Those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.” (Matthew 14:21).

¹⁴⁸ Carroll, *Luke: A Commentary*, 208.

¹⁴⁹ Wolter, *The Gospel according to Luke Volume I*, 376.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

Jesus directs the disciples to “have them sit down in groups of about fifty each.” (9:14b), a command that has generated various discussions that are not conclusive as to Jesus’ intention beyond the manageability of the crowds. The presence of (κλισίας) translated group, which means a place where one may recline or rest, couches for reclining at a meal or company reclining around a table. Wolter sees this as a metonymic designation for table fellowship, which when paired together with the size of the groups into which the crowd is divided, aligns with the model of meal celebrations of the Greco roman culture of the Lukan period.¹⁵¹ The disciples obeyed and had the crowd sit down. The Greek word (Κατακλίνατε) translated “sit down”, means to incline or recline, to bend, lie sloping towards. In the New Testament, it is used only for the posture at meals. Joel Green comments that although the vocabulary “service at the table” is missing, the concept is present as the disciples participate actively in the provision of food for this huge crowd, organize them for distribution, and then set the food before them.¹⁵² Jesus took the five loaves and the two fish, looked up to heaven and said a blessing over them. He breaks the loaves and gives them to the disciples to set before the crowd (9:16). While saying a blessing before a meal was commonplace for Jewish families at mealtime, the language used of glancing to heaven has many commentators referencing the presence of overtones of the Last Supper in Luke 22:19-20. The account ends with a summary of the miracle of multiplication, with Luke’s inclusion of “And they all ate and were satisfied. And what was left over was picked up, and twelve baskets of broken pieces.” (9:17). The crowd was filled or satisfied from the meal indicating the grandeur of this miracle, with the twelve baskets of leftover food adding to magnify the significant impact. Edwards comments that the twelve baskets may symbolize the

¹⁵¹ Wolter, *The Gospel according to Luke Volume I*, 380.

¹⁵² Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 340.

twelve tribes of Israel,¹⁵³ a conjecture that is strengthened by the emphatic placement of the Greek word (δώδεκα), “twelve,” as the final Greek word of the miracle.

Lessons

Around this table fellowship scene, Jesus demonstrates what hospitality could look like to the disciples. They had recently returned from proclaiming the kingdom of God and healing the sick as commanded by Jesus and had also been instructed to “take nothing for your journey” (Luke 9:3a). The disciples were now thrust into a faith lesson around hospitality to the crowds and provision, as they witnessed Jesus proclaiming the kingdom of God and healing the sick just like He had commanded them to do. Green sees this as an object lesson on the blurred lines between any distinction in activity by Himself and the disciples, as well as in expectations about hospitality.¹⁵⁴ While their plan for embarking to a deserted area may have been intended for rest, recuperation, and fellowship, the presence of the crowds and their needs did not eliminate Jesus’s focus on the kingdom and serving the people. The seemingly logical proposal to dismiss the crowds to fend for themselves was met with the higher calling for the disciples to feed them – and be hospitable. Bock opines that this is the timeless dynamics of the call to all disciples of Christ.¹⁵⁵ The call is to serve and provide for others out of compassion by stepping beyond self-preservation and thinking outside the box on how to help others. The church is given a model of the mission to care for those in need and the importance of meeting physical needs as a reflection of God’s love and mercy. Lastly, the importance of sharing with the community and stewardship of resources should be a major emphasis of the church.

¹⁵³ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 120.

¹⁵⁴ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 339.

¹⁵⁵ Bock, *Luke, The NIV Application Commentary*, 269.

There is imagery of provision that some commentators say points back to some Old Testament texts, like the provision of manna in the wilderness (Exodus 16) and Elisha's miraculous provision of oil for the widow (2 Kings 4). The disciples had embarked on their missionary journey with the directive to take no food, money, or other such necessities. The implication was that this was a test of their faith, and Jesus was asking them to rely on God to provide as they proclaimed the Kingdom. This pericope appears to replicate the same storyline: the resources available are insufficient compared to the need to feed the crowd. However, Jesus once again tests them to see if they would believe for provision for a great need of this size. The church should not lose sight of divine provision in efforts to spread the Gospel. While efforts need to be measured and planned, human and financial constraints should not become the primary determining factors.

Jesus expected the disciples participate fully in the events that unfolded. First, they were asked to feed the crowd instead of sending them away. Then, they sourced the five loaves and two fish in an attempt to respond to Jesus's request to provide for the crowd. Jesus instructed the disciples to prepare the crowd to be served by assembling them in groups, and finally, they were also asked to serve them the food and pick up the leftovers. Jesus is offering discipleship on the way of the Kingdom versus their expectations. The lesson provided to the church is the importance of faith, obedience, and trusting in God's power to work miracles through acts of humble obedience.

The church should be inspired to look for opportunities to multiply impact, whether through collaborative efforts with other organizations or strategic initiatives that have far-reaching effects. There is a call to deepen commitment to hospitality, service, trust in God's

provision, community building, and a shared sense of purpose in advancing the Kingdom of God.

Chapter 5: Dining with the Disciples

Luke 22:7-30

In this pericope it is Passover, and Jesus sends Peter and John to “Go prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat.” (22:8b). The food elements are predictable in the Passover meal. Luke includes a lengthy discussion around the table and Jesus’s table talk while hosting the meal. Of the five texts included in this research, this pericope, and the feeding of the five thousand (Luke 9) provide the most interaction with the actual food while providing valuable teachings to the disciples that confront their expectation of operations in the Kingdom. Luke appears to linger around the food elements in this text compared to any of the others reviewed. Given the placement of this account at the end of his Gospel account, with Jesus’s death and resurrection imminent, his intentional and broader coverage of the meal is evident.

Peter and John, tasked with preparing the meal, ask Him “Where will you have us prepare it?” (22:10). Their question is not unnatural since they were Galileans and would need guidance as to where they should go in Jerusalem. Given the lateness of their plans, there would likely only be a few places still available, despite the traditional readiness of the Jerusalemites to make such accommodation available without charge.¹⁵⁶ Jesus provides a very detailed description of where to find the large upper room for them to eat the Passover in the city and directs them to a man carrying a jar of water to whose master they were to say, “The Teacher says to you, where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?” (22:10-11). This leads Schreiner to opine that Luke shows that Jesus had already initiated plans for the

¹⁵⁶ Morris, *Luke*, 323.

Passover arrangements.¹⁵⁷ They were to use the large furnished upper room they were shown to prepare for the meal (22:12).

They found things just as Jesus told them and prepared the meal (22:13). The Passover meal was an important festival unlike any other meal. Luke also calls it the Day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed (22:7). This was one of the great pilgrimage festivals for which Jews gathered annually in Jerusalem, which is associated with the exodus from Egypt in Exodus 12. A year-old unblemished male lamb or goat (Exodus 12:5) was ritually sacrificed in the temple and eaten after sunset in gatherings in community.¹⁵⁸ While not explicitly called out in the text, Jesus seemed to have made the arrangement with the house owner privately to preclude any premature activities around Judas' betrayal. Hence, none of the disciples knew the location until He revealed it.

Jesus's Response

Once preparations are completed as directed, Jesus is again seated around a table. This time, the disciples are with Him, but the meal, the words of Jesus, and His claim of betrayal have the disciples questioning one another. While reclined at the table, Jesus made what Bock refers to as a Semitic expression indicating great emotion,¹⁵⁹ "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer." (22:15). The mention of approaching suffering adds pathos to what follows during the meal. Osborne believes that while the disciples think this will be an annual regular celebration, Jesus wants them to know that this was a special meal since the Greek word used is very strong (πιθυμία ἐπεθύμησα) "with desire I have desired", expressing a

¹⁵⁷ Schreiner, *Luke---Acts*, 180.

¹⁵⁸ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 191.

¹⁵⁹ Bock, *Luke*, 165.

deep-seated desire to share this Passover meal and all its implications with his disciples.¹⁶⁰ This is a Semitic cognate dative, which is primarily to *emphasize the action of the verb*. However, when an author chooses his words so that the noun in the dative is cognate to the verb, this is a clue that the cognate idea (i.e., that of emphasizing the action of the verb) is the main thrust of the dative.¹⁶¹

Many scholars believe that Luke's rendition of the last meal of Jesus with his disciples becomes an occasion for a poignant farewell discourse through which Jesus interprets for the Twelve the events about to take place, including his death, and equips them for their future roles.¹⁶² Jesus takes the cup, gives thanks, and asks the disciples to pass it from one to another (22:18), and then takes the bread gives thanks, breaks it, and gives it to them. He refers to the bread as "His body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me" (22:19b), stressing this as a memorial meal, and the wine "the cup poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood" (v.20b). The drinking of four cups of wine was obligatory at Passover (Luke references two in this pericope), as well as the breaking of bread which would not have surprised the disciples.¹⁶³ The addition of the reference to the wine as blood and the bread as His body on the other hand, has solicited varied comments from scholars. The injunction to "do this in remembrance of me" (22:19) is not present in Matthew or Mark's account and is believed to be derived from the Pauline tradition (1 Cor 11:24). The Passover meal was the quintessential feast

¹⁶⁰ Osborne, *Luke Verse by Verse*, 327.

¹⁶¹ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 168–169

¹⁶² Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 594.

¹⁶³ Morris, *Luke, An Introduction and Commentary*, 324.

of remembrance (Exodus 12:14; 13:8– 9; Deut 16:3) in which the family head recounted the exodus story.¹⁶⁴

Luke follows the Last Supper with four discourses of Jesus (vv. 21– 23, 24– 30, 31– 34, 35– 38), each initiated by Jesus and each a forewarning of the imminent challenges awaiting the Twelve. The first two are also in Matthew (26:21– 25; 20:25– 28) and Mark (14:18– 21; 10:42– 45) before the Passover meal. The third (31-34) is similar to Matthew 26:33-34 and Mark 14:29-30, and the fourth is unique to Luke.¹⁶⁵

The first discourse adds to the already somber mood around the table. Jesus makes an even more startling statement, “But behold, the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table. For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed.” (22:21-22) As can be expected, this creates anxiety and confusion among the disciples, and they question one another to determine which of them would be guilty of such betrayal. The Greek word (ὀρισμένον) means to determine, resolve, decree. It is only used in this instance in Luke as a passive meaning what God has predetermined. The word and the concept also occur in Acts concerning divine providence generally (Acts 10:42; 17:26, 31) and specifically to the necessity of Jesus’s suffering (Acts 1:16– 20; 2:23; 4:27– 28). This is the second of three references Jesus makes of Judas in Luke 22 (3, 21, and 47-48). The betraying hand of Judas at table with Jesus is poignant and tragic since the table is a place of intimate and trusted fellowship in Judaism, and the Passover table is viewed as the central image of the

¹⁶⁴ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 200.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 201.

gathered community.¹⁶⁶ Morris believes that Jesus's statement is not vindictive but an expression of grief over the undefined but unpleasant future that he has brought down upon himself.¹⁶⁷

With the second discourse, Luke introduces a dispute using the Greek word (φιλονεικία), meaning a contention, or more literally, a love of contention, among the disciples about greatness (22:24). Luke already had the disciples argue about this same question (9:46). Commentators appear to agree that the catalyst for the contention may be due to the discussion of the coming Kingdom and their expectations for placement or position at its imminent approach. Bock sees it as ironic and evidence of the disciples' preoccupation with power versus service that Jesus was displaying.¹⁶⁸ This is the second time during this somber meal that the disciples are distracted with cross conversation among themselves, first trying to figure out who the betrayer is and now who is the greatest. Jesus rebukes them, draws comparison between their actions; "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors." (22:25). He offers a contrary approach; "But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you becomes as the youngest, and the leader as the one who serves." (22:26-27). Jesus is not teaching that his followers cannot be rulers or benefactors, but that their manner of ruling and benefaction must be utterly transformed.¹⁶⁹ To drive home the point further, Jesus asks and answers questions of the disciples using His own actions as illustration; "For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves." (22:27) Bock observes that by noting the character of His

¹⁶⁶ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 202.

¹⁶⁷ Morris, *Luke, An Introduction and Commentary*, 324.

¹⁶⁸ Bock, *Luke*, 71

¹⁶⁹ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 607.

ministry, Jesus sets forth a contrast that is the new example. It is better to be a servant than to be served.¹⁷⁰

Jesus describes a contrary approach to leadership and status as compared to the world. Greatness in the kingdom is demonstrated through service and humility and not preoccupation with rank and status like those in the world. The greatest must become like the youngest, taking, the lowliest place. In the ancient world, it was accepted that age gave privileges; the youngest was, by definition, the lowest.¹⁷¹ This reversal of social expectation reveals the true nature of God's kingdom. Although one of the twelve will "betray" Jesus, Luke suggests in this ironic way that all twelve of them will "betray" his basic kingdom message with its immediate implications for issues of status and position.¹⁷² All twelve will abandon Him; one will betray Him more than others; and another will deny Him publicly.

Jesus is not dismissive of the disciples but instead addresses their devotion to Him; "You are those who have stayed with me in my trials" (22:28) Edwards believes this verse defines "the cost of discipleship" that emphasizes its importance for the disciples with the sense of endurance and solidarity with him.¹⁷³ He addresses their concern for position over each other by offering them a place of rule in the kingdom to come; "and I assign to you, as my Father to me, a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." (22:29-30) The Greek word used (*διατίθεμαι*) commonly means to arrange and dispose of one's effects by will and testament, to bequeath a thing to anyone, allow

¹⁷⁰ Bock, *Luke*, 71.

¹⁷¹ Morris, *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*, 326.

¹⁷² Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 605

¹⁷³ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 471.

or assign. This is the grand reward for standing with Him through trials rather than the temporal positional greatness they were seeking. They will share table fellowship again with Him and serve as judges. In Matthew's account, he adds that part of the reward for following Him is that they will also sit on thrones judging the tribes of Israel along with Jesus (Matthew 19:28).

Osborne opines that both may well be intended and sees a reflection to Psalm 122:4–5, which speaks of “thrones for judgment, the thrones of the house of David,” when peace will be restored to Jerusalem.¹⁷⁴ Green proposes that Jesus reverses expectations on the disciples twice, once about the definition of greatness, and by conferring regal authority on them even though they demonstrated failure to embody His message by their squabbles.¹⁷⁵

Jesus foretells Peter's denial of Him in the third discourse. He singles out Peter by calling out his name twice. Luke also has Jesus making a statement with the use of repetition in His lament over Jerusalem in chapter thirteen with, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem...” (13:34a). In this instance he addresses Peter as “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat.” (22:31a) The Greek word (ἐξήτησατο) translated demanded to have in the ESV, means to claim back for oneself or demand something be delivered up and carries a sense of Satan placing a claim for Peter to be turned over to him in order that he may “sift him like wheat” (22:31b). This introductory saying of Jesus has the function of tracing back Peter's denial to the activity of the devil, as well as evidently presupposing a heavenly scene, which resembles the scenes narrated in Job 1.6-12 and 2:1-6.¹⁷⁶ In the backdrop of the metaphor of the violent shaking required to separate the chaff, Jesus's next statement introduces a new dynamic

¹⁷⁴ Osborne, *Luke Verse by Verse*, 331.

¹⁷⁵ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 607.

¹⁷⁶ Wolter, *The Gospel according to Luke, Volume II*, 474.

to Peter's sifting in comparison to Job's; "but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." (22:32). While permission has been asked to sift Peter, Jesus's intercession for him will ensure that though he will experience failure (his denial of Him which occurs later in the chapter in verse 60), he will return to the faith. This foretells Peter's repentance and commentators believe it is analogous to Luke's writing in Acts, which describes turning from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God (Acts 26:18). Green believes that Jesus's awareness of this plan is an added indication of His omniscience within the Lukan narrative.¹⁷⁷

Luke revisits an earlier account of Jesus's fourth discourse, which, as noted earlier, is unique to him and has the dialogue broadening beyond Peter to the other disciples at the table. In chapters nine and ten, Jesus references the mission journeys they had been sent on and asks, "When I sent you out with no moneybag or knapsack or sandals, did you lack anything?" They said, "Nothing." (22:35). Osborne sees it as Jesus reminding them of how thoroughly God had taken care of them.¹⁷⁸ He goes on to give them instructions that appear to be contrary to the earlier commands; "But now let the one who has a moneybag take it, and likewise a knapsack." (22:36a) The presence of "but now" has commentators consistently calling it ironical since the Greek word (Ἀλλὰ νῦν) is strongly contrastive.¹⁷⁹ Things are changing for them, and Jesus wants to prepare them. The people they counted on previously to provide for them may not do so after His death, and they must now take what they need on their mission journeys, as attitudes toward them may be hostile. He also adds "And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy

¹⁷⁷ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 610.

¹⁷⁸ Osborne, *Luke Verse by Verse*, 332.

¹⁷⁹ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 208.

one.” (22:36b) With this statement, Jesus adds another note of preparation for a future that is different from what they expect, in which it appears they would need a sword more than a cloak. The Greek sentence for the text has varied responses from commentators. Some call the Greek awkward, while others see the phrasing closer to the Hebrew version than the Septuagint. Green opines that the possibility that Jesus’ followers are literally to respond to hostility with a sword—that is, with violence—is negated in 22:49–51 and elsewhere in the third Gospel. “Sword” has been used as an image of animosity.¹⁸⁰ Jesus further explains the purpose of the hostility that would be aimed at Him by quoting Isaiah 53:12 on the Servant of the Lord “And he was numbered with the transgressors. For what is written about me has its fulfillment.” (22:37b). The Greek word (ἀνόμων) translated transgressors in the ESV, means lawless in the sense of transgressing the law, a transgressor, wicked.¹⁸¹ Jesus will be reckoned among criminals (“transgressors”), and, by implication, so will those who identify with Him. Bock sees Luke’s emphasis on this portion of Isaiah on the Servant of the Lord as more about the wrong way He will be perceived versus His suffering.¹⁸²

The disciples take His reference to swords literally, take inventory among themselves and report back, “Look, Lord, here are two swords.” (v38a) Jesus responds to what commentators refer to another miss by them “It is enough.” The disciples misunderstood him and produced weapons. Jesus said that was enough to end a conversation they had failed to understand. The way of Jesus, as they should have known, was not the way of the sword but the way of love.¹⁸³

¹⁸⁰ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 612.

¹⁸¹ *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament (Chattanooga: TN, AMG, 1993)*.

¹⁸² Bock, *Luke*, 72.

¹⁸³ D.A. Carson et al, *New Bible Commentary* (Downers grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1995),650.

Jesus's response, and action later in the chapter (22:51), when the crowd comes to arrest Him, confirms that violence was not His intention.

Lessons

Around this table, fellowship provided the setting for extended discussion and conversation at a pivotal time in Jesus's ministry. Commentators agree that the disagreement and the ensuing dialogue about greatness and rank of the members of the community should not come as a surprise since the life of the community was being discussed. Nonetheless, Jesus effectively makes use of current protocols and status symbols in the Greco-Roman world to show the disciples that the world standards for inclusion, status, and position were different in the kingdom. The lesson for the church is that if Jesus could take on the role of serving the disciples, following His example in service to one another in love and humility should be part of discipleship efforts.

That Judas is present at Passover with Jesus is illustrative of the openness of His practices of table fellowship but is also reminiscent of His earlier warnings in chapter thirteen that sharing table fellowship with Him, even listening to His teachings, are no guarantee of entry into eschatological redemption (13:22–30).¹⁸⁴ Additionally, there is an effective highlight of the free will each person has to choose between good and evil. Edwards opines that the Son of Man becomes the effective sin-bearer of the world because His self-offering is freely chosen out of love and obedience; the man Judas becomes the consummate sinner because he freely rejects both.¹⁸⁵ Jesus honors those who identify with Him, and the blessings that results from this

¹⁸⁴ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 604.

¹⁸⁵ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 203.

association are abiding principles in this text. Though what Jesus gives the Twelve here is unique, He will give His servants praise one day for their faithfulness (1 Cor. 3:12–14; 4:5).¹⁷⁰

While both Peter and Judas failed, the crucial differences in their responses provide a path of repentance. Judas took active action against Jesus and becomes a painfully remembered, condemned, and pathetic figure in Acts 1:15–20. Peter sought to distance himself publicly from Jesus and is eventually restored as part of the disciples in Acts 1:13.¹⁸⁶ Peter's testing and imminent victory was to be used to strengthen the brethren. Jesus's intercession for him before the occurrence was going to ensure that He would withstand the onslaught of Satan and be restored to fellowship. There is a path of restoration for believers who lean into God's love in times of failure versus self-reliance (1 Corinthians 10:12) for victory against temptation.

¹⁸⁶ Bock, *Luke*, 73

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The goal of this thesis was to examine Luke's recurring use of food motifs and banquets to uncover a thematic portrayal of Jesus where He is engaging in fellowship in a way that challenges societal norms and boundaries, with the table talk or teachings about the kingdom of God central to His engagement. Luke includes more food related texts in his Gospel than any of the other three accounts, and five of those texts were examined in this research. This research was undertaken to provide a template for deducing implications for the contemporary church on hospitality related motifs for evangelism efforts in current culturally challenging environments, and for discipleship activities within church walls.

Table fellowship has marked many societies and was central to the Greco-Roman culture in which Luke penned his Gospel. Most literature from the era writing on the typical two-part formal dining event focuses heavily on the symposium portion rather than the meal itself because of the ensuing philosophical conversations. Like antiquity, this thesis showed that Luke used the well-known motif and focused on presenting Jesus's teachings. In effect, he used food motifs as a narrative device to launch Jesus into the community through His engagement with sinners, the disciples, the crowds, and the Pharisees. A thematic formula emerged that suggests that Luke mostly used the food motif as a backdrop or preamble to the engagement and the ensuing table talk through which Jesus delivered teachings about the kingdom. The food was not the main event. The table talk was.

Additionally, a narrative pattern also emerged from the texts examined with plots that begin with acceptance of an invitation to dine, or in the case of the crowds, Jesus asking the disciples to feed them. Second, uninvited or socially unacceptable guests are present at the scene. A question or statement is then addressed directly to Jesus, perceived or asked by Him which

launches the table talk segment of the gathering. Jesus's stance on inclusivity upended the norms and cultural expectations of those days. While responses around the varied tables and scenes reviewed were mixed based on the hosts and guests present, Jesus's unwavering emphasis on teaching the ways of the kingdom was similar in the five texts examined.

In the four categories of dining companions (sinners, Pharisees, crowd, and the disciples) that Jesus engaged, the emphasis of His teachings mainly focused on those who believed they were righteous or deserving, compared to those labeled as or were sinners. In the Feeding of the Five Thousand and the Last Supper, the focus was on the disciples. While healing, forgiveness, and multiplication of bread occurred, most of the table talk addressed inaccurate self-perceptions and corrected projected expectations of the kingdom based on cultural norms. In the case of the crowds, it was the disciples He addressed and challenged rather than the crowds who had followed them to the secluded place (9:13). While dining with the tax collectors, it was the Pharisees and scribes who grumbled to the disciples that Jesus addressed (5:30). At the home of the prominent Pharisee, with the sinful woman present, it was the host that Jesus addressed or questioned for his insinuations about Him (7:39). Finally, at the home of the prominent Pharisee, it was the guests present who were carefully watching to see if He would heal on the Sabbath that He addressed.

This research used five well-known texts from Luke's Gospel to demonstrate Luke's careful use of the food theme. Jesus accepted dining invitations from different people with diverse guests on the guest list, demonstrating His openness to all. Proving that He was not intimidated by their opposition, Jesus dined with Pharisees who had repeatedly challenged and questioned His motives and openly rebuked Him for what they considered blasphemy. He was comfortable in the house of the tax collector and friends, and willing to make room for the sinful

woman. The crowds did not intimidate Him, and He was also able to craft an intimate dining experience with the twelve disciples, including Judas who would later betray Him, at His last dining experience before the cross. The table talk, where He delivered timeless lessons, was the paramount takeaway in all the abundance of food and banqueting references.

Research Application and Recommendations

This research primarily was an exposition of the five texts to demonstrate that the central focus of Jesus's dining engagements was the extensive dialogue that ensued around the food motifs or table about the kingdom. Some lessons applicable to the contemporary church in consideration for hospitality-based evangelism in challenging circumstances were extrapolated to the extent possible given limitations in this biblically focused research. There is opportunity for further study of the cultural climate, Jesus's inclusive approach and teachings, and their practical application to the contemporary church in evangelism efforts that incorporates hospitality. In the current challenging post Judeo-Christian world, with continuing shifts away from a biblical worldview, research that delivers recommendations or solutions to support the church's efforts and initiatives will complement this thesis and add tremendous value.

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