

LUKE

Chapter 18

The Parable of the Persistent Widow

And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. 2 He said, “In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. 3 And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, ‘Give me justice against my adversary.’ 4 For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, ‘Though I neither fear God nor respect man, 5 yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.’” 6 And the Lord said, “Hear what the unrighteous judge says. 7 And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? 8 I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?”

Between the ascension and the Last Day, disciples will desire to “see one of the days of the Son of Man” (17:22). Jesus has made it clear that there will be a period of time between the inbreaking of the eschaton *now* at his death, resurrection, and ascension, and the full coming of the eschaton *not yet* at the last judgment (17:20–37). Therefore, he now encourages his disciples to continue in prayer and not to lose hope if the delay seems long. This parable goes well with the preceding pericope, with its themes of vindication and the coming of the Son of Man. But it also shares the theme of prayer with the next parable, the Pharisee and the tax collector (18:9–14). Luke is a first-rate narrator, and in his orderly account the two parables that begin Luke 18 both look back on Jesus’ eschatological teachings (17:20–37) and look forward to his final teachings and miracles before he enters Jerusalem (18:15–19:27). This parable is more about Christian life in the kingdom than about the (first) coming of the kingdom. In light of Christ’s coming in flesh and grace, and in view of his coming in judgment, the disciple is to pray continually, “let your kingdom come” (11:2). Persistence in prayer is the church’s posture until the parousia. (CC pp. 670–671)

This parable of the unrighteous judge may have a literary precedent in Sirach 35:14–19. There also seems to be a parallel to Jesus’ teaching on prayer in 11:1–13, particularly the parable of the friend at midnight in 11:5–8. In K. Bailey’s chiastic arrangement of the Lukan journey narrative, 11:1–13 balances 18:1–14 with the theme of prayer (see K. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*, 80–82). (CC p. 671)

The pericope is easily divided into the evangelist’s introduction (18:1), the parable (18:2–5), and the Lord’s interpretation (18:6–8), which concludes with an anxious question. (CC p. 671)

K. Bailey, *Through Peasant Eyes*, 131, 137, points out the twice-repeated order of judge, God, man, widow in 18:2–5 and the frame of “vindication” around the cries of the elect and God’s long-suffering in 18:7–8. (CC p. 671)

18:1 a parable – The central point of this parable is “let us persist in prayer.” (Aho)

they ought always to pray – τὸ δεῖν—Following a passion prediction where δεῖ is used (17:25), Luke introduces a parable that speaks about the necessity of continual prayer. On δεῖ, see comments at 4:43 and 9:22. δεῖ is also used at 2:49; 13:33; 24:7, 26, 44. (CC p. 669)

Lukan introductions are always significant, but this one is especially important. Here the evangelist shows his catechetical interests by not only identifying this as a “parable” but by telling us the point of the parable, that is, “to show that they [the disciples] must always pray and not grow weary.” “Always pray” (πάντοτε προσεύχεσθαι) is *not* to pray continuously, that is, uninterruptedly and without ceasing, but continually, that is, regularly and with perseverance from the moment of Jesus’ ascension to his second coming. Prayer for the coming of the kingdom (11:2) is part of the divine necessity (δεῖ) of the disciples’ participation in that kingdom. As they pray, the disciples are not to become discouraged or give up if their petitions are not answered immediately. Here is a thematic link with what went before, and Luke will conclude this parable with another link to Jesus’ eschatological teaching (18:8b: “Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he even find the faith on the earth?”). The addressees here (αὐτοῖς) are the same as that of the previous section: the disciples (17:22). There will be a shift in audience back to the Pharisees in the next parable (18:9). (CC p. 671)

not lose heart – They would soon be discouraged by their weaknesses and the death of Jesus, who urges them to prayer. Augustine: “Faith pours out prayer, and the pouring out of prayer obtains the strengthening of faith.... So far temptation advances as faith gives way: and so far temptation gives way, as faith advances” (NPNF 1 6:454). (TLSB)

18:2 *there was a judge* – From OT times the gate area of an Israelite city was the central place for commerce and the dispensing of law. There judges – often the wise elders of the community, who had many civic responsibilities – would hear cases and administer justice fairly. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 4)

The parable itself is simple and straightforward on the surface, but several subthemes run through the story. In the first part (18:2–3), the basic setting of the narrative is presented: an unrighteous judge has a persistent widow pestering him for vindication against her opponent. In the second part (18:4–5), the hearer sees the results of the woman’s persistence: the judge vindicates her! But in this simple narrative lie several issues to be resolved. (CC pp. 671-672)

neither feared God – One difficulty is to sort out the relationship between the judge and the widow. There could not be a greater contrast than the one between these two people. The judge holds all the cards; the widow, particularly in ancient society, is helpless.

Isolated in arrogance, the judge fears neither those above nor below him. (TLSB)

Luke shows a great concern for widows in his gospel and in Acts: Lk 2:37; 4:25–26; 7:12; 20:47; 21:2–3; Acts 6:1; 9:39, 41. The only other place “widows” occur in the other gospels is in Mk 12:40–43 and in the *Textus Receptus* of Mt 23:14. (CC p. 672)

The interaction between these two people on opposite ends of the sociological spectrum helps illustrate the theme of persistence in prayer until there is vindication. The hearer must ask, “What does it mean that the judge does not fear God or respect people?” especially since this is stated twice, once in each section of the narrative (18:2, 4). Jesus will later call the judge “unrighteous” (18:6), the same word he used of the unrighteous steward (16:1–8). By saying the judge does not fear God, Jesus is telling the hearer that the judge is a pagan, for throughout the OT “the fear of

Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom” (Prov 1:7). One who fears God is part of Israel’s faithful remnant. (CC p. 672)

“Fearing the Lord” is regularly used to describe the pious in the Psalms (LXX 14:4; 21:[24]; 24:12; 32:18, etc.). Luke uses the expression “God-fearers” for Gentiles attracted to Judaism in Acts 10:2, 22, 35; 13:16, 26. In effect, the man is not religious and has no scruple. ... Any “God-fearing” jurist would feel obliged by Torah to take special care of her [the widow] (see Deut 10:18; 14:29; 16:11, 14; 24:19–21; 26:12–13). ... Doing justice for widows becomes shorthand for covenantal loyalty among the prophets (Mal 3:5; Isa 1:17, 23; 10:2; Jer 5:28 [LXX]; 7:6; 22:3; Ezek 22:7; Ps 93:6 [LXX]). In contrast to those who fail this obligation, God is judge who will come to the aid of widows (LXX Ps 67:[6]; 145:9). This motif is developed fully in Sirach 35:14–18, which some readers think underlies the present parable. (CC p. 672)

nor respected man. Unconcerned about the needs of others or about their opinion of him. (CSB)

His sin of callousness is especially serious because judges were to represent God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 4)

More perplexing is the statement that the judge does not respect people. What would such a statement mean in Palestinian culture? Many have observed that honor/shame is a major motivational factor in life at the time of Jesus. The judge’s lack of respect for people manifests itself in a *lack of shame* in his relationships with others. In other words, he operates outside of the normal social patterns of his day to the extent that he observes neither Torah (doesn’t fear God) nor the basic social mores of his day. This widow cannot influence him because he is not ashamed to ignore someone whom his society and God require that he take notice of and help.

K. Bailey, *Through Peasant Eyes*, 131–33. See also the parable of the friend at midnight and Bailey’s translation of ἀναίδειαν at 11:8 as “avoidance of shame.” In 20:13 the same concept occurs in the parable of the workers in the vineyard. (CC p. 672)

The widow’s behavior is also unusual, but in that culture, a woman could act as she does, pestering the judge.

See K. Bailey, *Through Peasant Eyes*, 134–35. He says: “How did the *widow* get attention? Obviously her shouting was different from [that of] the others. In traditional society in the Middle East women are generally powerless in our man’s world. But at the same time, they are respected and honored. Men can be mistreated in public, but not women. Women can scream at a public figure and nothing will happen to them” (p. 135; emphasis Bailey). (CC p. 673)

Her behavior tends toward shamelessness, but not so thoroughly shameless as the judge’s. (CC pp. 762-673)

B. Malina and J. Neyrey, “Honor and Shame in Luke-Acts,” 63, note: “In 18:1–8 we are told of a widow who is becoming shameless. Evidently there is no male to defend her, no husband and no son; and so she is defenseless and at the mercy of her adversary. So desperate has she become that she publicly badgers the city’s ‘judge’ to defend her interests (18:3). Her public reproach to the judge indicates shameless behavior.” (CC p. 673)

18:3 *a widow*. Particularly helpless and vulnerable because she had no family to uphold her cause. Only justice and her own persistence were in her favor. (CSB)

She was vulnerable because she had no companion to advocate for her (Ac 6:1; Jas 1:27). (TLSB)

kept coming to him – ἤρχετο πρὸς αὐτόν—The imperfect verb accents the widow’s persistence. (CC p. 669)

In both testaments widows often suffered abuse at the hands of those better off. This widow has an adversary, an opponent in the matter of justice. Perhaps she had been defrauded or victimized by a scam, as many elderly are today. Her husband was dead, and she apparently had no relative or friend to intercede in her behalf. She “kept coming” to the official whose business it was to adjudicate matters of that kind the durative imperfect of *archeto* in this verse implies that she returned again and again. Her plea was for justice. In this context, the verb *ekdikew* probably means that she wanted the judge to force her opponent to pay her restitution (compensatory damages) for what she had suffered, and perhaps also to fine or imprison him (punitive damages). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 4)

So this story of persistence and vindication pits against each other two shameless people who are stepping outside of the expectations of their society. The surprise is that the helpless widow wins! (CC p. 673)

give me justice – Her plea could include reparation for her as well as punishment of the wrongdoer. (TLSB)

18:4 *said to himself* – εἶπεν ἐν ἑαυτῷ—This self-reflection is common in the Lukan parables, e.g., the rich fool (12:18–19), the prodigal son (15:17–19), the unrighteous steward (16:3–4), and the Lord of the vineyard (20:13). (CC p. 669)

Like the rich fool in ch 12, the judge does not share his thoughts with others. (TLSB)

18:5 *because* – γε—Although left untranslated, its presence in the Greek shows the contrast between the judge’s lack of fear for God and respect for people and his decision to vindicate the widow. (CC p. 669)

so – ἵνα—It is often difficult to distinguish between “purpose” and “result” clauses with ἵνα; the judge’s “intended result” is his “purpose”: that she stop bothering him! (CC p. 669)

eventually – εἰς τέλος—“Until [the] end” may refer to the end of the woman’s harassment. It complements the notion of persistence from 18:3. However, the reference to Christ’s second coming in 18:8 and 17:22–37 may suggest that Christ’s return is the “end.” (CC p. 669)

not beat me down – ὑπωπιάζη—“Wear me out” (RSV) is a weakened sense. The literal meaning, “strike under the eye,” “give a black eye” (BAGD) captures the pathos of this scene and the shame this widow would give the judge if she continued harassing him. This is probably not to be understood literally as a physical blow to the face, but metaphorically (as also the English idiom has it), that she would “blacken” his reputation. See comments at 11:8. L. T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 270, also translates “end up giving me a black eye” and notes that “in this case, the literal rendering of *hypopiazo* maintains the delicious ambiguity of the original. She may in

fact give him a sock in the eye! The term may also mean to damage the reputation, as it does in English. Although the judge has ‘no regard for humans,’ he may depend on some sort of reputation to continue being a judge.” See I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 673–75, for an exhaustive treatment of the meaning of this word in this context. (CC pp. 669-670)

The judge waits for a long time before he acts, but *even though he does not fear God nor respect people*, he decides to vindicate this poor widow on account of her persistence “with the result that she not keep coming until [the] end and give me a black eye” (18:5). This is a remarkable statement for a man who does not feel appropriate shame. He seems to be worried about the embarrassment the harassment of this woman is causing him. Contrary to what he has said about himself and what the narrative has confirmed, he *does* care what other people think about his behavior. Could he even fear God too? And so the story ends with the judge’s intent to vindicate the widow as a result of her persistent pestering of him *who does not want a “black eye.”* At the end of the parable, *the reputation of the judge* is also an issue. (CC p. 673)

Her persistence is the key feature of this parable. (TLSB)

18:6 *unrighteous* UNJUST – ὁ κριτῆς τῆς ἀδικίας—The genitive τῆς ἀδικίας is adjectival, describing the judge as “unrighteous.” (CC p. 670)

The unrighteous judge himself gives the parable’s application. (TLSB)

18:7 *will not God give justice . . . ?* If an unworthy judge who feels no constraint of right or wrong is compelled by persistence to deal justly with a helpless individual, how much more will God answer prayer! (CSB)

God is not an unrighteous judge. But if even an unrighteous man will give justice to the persistent, how much more will our righteous God do so? (TLSB)

οὐ μὴ ποιήσῃ—οὐ μὴ with the subjunctive in a rhetorical question expects the hearer to answer “yes!” (CC p. 670)

And so an apparently straightforward story ends with a note of ambiguity. Thinking that the parable is about the widow’s persistence as a model for the disciples’ persistent prayers as they wait for God’s final vindication, the hearers are surprised to find themselves focused on an unscrupulous judge who is finally broken down by a widow because she is beginning to undermine his reputation. At this point Jesus provides words of interpretation (as he did in the parable of the unrighteous steward in 16:1–9). He calls the judge “unrighteous” (as he did the steward; 16:8). And then he gives this parable a new depth of meaning as he compares this unrighteous judge to God and concludes with a veritable *crux interpretum*. (CC p. 673)

The difficulty is that the *unrighteous* judge is the God figure in the parable. A similar difficulty appears in 16:1–13, where Jesus might be seen as praising the dishonest steward, and in 19:12, where the severe king is the Christ figure. But in this pericope, the point of comparison between God and the judge is not, of course, their unrighteousness. Rather, the point of comparison between the two is that character trait that motivates eventual vindication because one’s *reputation* is at stake. As much as it may appear to himself and his society that he does not fear God nor respect people, the judge, when pushed by a shameless widow, *does* care about his reputation. In a similar way—and this involves moving from the lesser to the greater (*a minori ad maius* or an *a fortiori* argument)—God will be true to himself and his Word: the time of vindication for his faithful saints will come. Even though vindication is delayed, it will come

because God is merciful and long-suffering. If the human judge in the parable, whose reputation is that of shamelessness, finally succumbs to the widow's persistence and vindicates her, how much more will God, whose reputation is one of mercy and compassion, vindicate his elect. The judge finally gives vindication because he is harassed and doesn't want a black eye; God will eventually give vindication because he has promised salvation to the elect, who cry to him day and night. (CC p. 673)

As do the parables of the prodigal son and the unrighteous steward, this parable teaches us about *the fundamental characteristic of God: his compassion and mercy for sinners*. (CC p. 674)

elect who cry to him – ὧν βοώντων αὐτῷ ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτός—These words modify “his elect” (τῶν ἐκλεκτῶν αὐτοῦ) and describe what God's chosen people do when they are suffering. They cry out to God. (CC p. 670)

The first of three keys to the parable is the verb “to be long-suffering” (μακροθυμέω). With Sirach 35:19 in the background, many translate μακροθυμεῖ ἐπ’ αὐτοῖς as “will he delay long over them?” (RSV) This question could well be in the minds of the Lukan readers, who long to see “one of the days of the Son of Man” (17:22). However, that understanding takes μακροθυμεῖ as a Law term since it would imply that God is indifferent or unresponsive to the cries of his elect. Elsewhere in the NT, the term is always in Gospel contexts of God (or his people) being patient and faithful, leading to the translation “[will he not] be long-suffering to them?” This coordinates the two verbs in this rhetorical sentence: “will not God make vindication?” and “be long-suffering to them [the elect]?” It also captures this essential characteristic of God that lies at the heart of the parable.

On μακροθυμεῖ, L. T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 270, notes:

The overwhelming use of *makrothymeo* and its cognates is within the context of judicial restraint and long-suffering, or tolerance (cf. e.g., Jer 15:15; Prov 19:11; Sir 29:8). It is a quality most associated in the LXX with God (see Sir 18:11), so that *makrothymios kai polyeleos* (“long-suffering and rich in mercy”) are regular attributes of the Lord (e.g., Exod 34:6; Num 14:18; Neh 9:17; Pss 7:11; 85:15; 102:8; 144:8; Wis 15:1).

This goes beyond the interpretation of BAGD, 3, relying on Sirach 35:19. (CC pp. 674-675)

God will vindicate the elect who cry to him day and night in their suffering, not because of their persistent prayers and cries, but because he is merciful and compassionate. God has every right to punish the elect because of their sins, but he is long-suffering as they journey from Baptism to death/judgment as *simul justus et peccator*. God's elect are declared holy in Christ, but sin dwells in their mortal bodies and produces transgressions. As they await the coming of the Lord, they cry out to him continually (“day and night”) because of the suffering they undergo by living in a world that is still in bondage to sin, sickness, death, and the devil.

J. Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, 871, notes:

The reference to God being long-suffering remains obscure until we look at how that verb is used of God in the OT. There we find that it expresses an aspect of the generosity of God in his dealings with his People. He does not lash out at the sins of his People, but rather exercises restraint (the word involved is often translated “slow to anger” in the OT). On a strict scale of justice, God's own People may not deserve the vindication that

they crave. But, while God may well discipline his recalcitrant People, he works for their vindication in the end. (CC p. 675)

They pray “let your kingdom come” and “forgive to us our sins” (11:2, 4). (CC pp. 674-675)

delay. God will not delay his support of the chosen ones when they are right. He is not like the unjust judge, who had to be badgered until he wearied and gave in. (CSB)

καὶ μακροθυμεῖ ἐπ’ αὐτοῖς—This phrase can complement ποιήσῃ τὴν ἐκδίκησιν (“and he will be patient/long-suffering to them”) or introduce an adversative or concessive thought (“but he delays over them” or “indeed, will he delay over them?”). The participial form of the variant reading does not resolve the problem. See BAGD μακροθυμέω, 3; I. H. Marshall, *Luke*, 674–75; and the interpretation below. (CC p. 670)

18:8 *speedily* – The most decisive act of God in vindicating His elect, namely, Jesus’ death and resurrection, was near. (TLSB)

ἐν τάχει—This is translated “quickly,” the most common meaning, i.e., after being long-suffering with his faithful for what seems an endless period of time, God will act *quickly* without warning. (CC p. 670)

And they pray confident of the coming of God’s vindication—“quickly.” Here is a second key phrase at the end of Jesus’ interpretation: ἐν τάχει. The parable carries on the eschatological tension in Jesus’ teachings about the last things by pointing to Jerusalem as a revelation of God’s final justification. God’s vindication does indeed come “quickly” at Christ’s atonement:

But, in regard to the faithful, how does God vindicate them? ... must it necessarily mean the distant future? This passage is in Luke 18. The beginning of the passion story is only a few verses away. Jesus’ enemies are gathering strength for the final act of their opposition. Will God vindicate *him*? The reader is given a clear answer, but what an answer! Yes, God will vindicate His Son who also prays to Him day and night, but that vindication *will be seen in resurrection and will come by way of a cross*. ... Where is God’s vindication? And surely the right answer is that God’s vindication of *this* prophet far exceeded his followers’ wildest dreams. He was vindicated at an empty tomb, and the path to that empty tomb led across Golgotha. If such was the vindication of Jesus, what of his disciples? (CC p. 675)

If God’s vindication would be accomplished “quickly” (from this point of view) in Jesus’ death and resurrection, it will also be certain and quick for the disciples who are hearers of Luke’s gospel in the time of the church.

The long-suffering God who vindicates quickly wants his elect to pray constantly and confidently. That is what this parable is about on the surface: the persistent prayers of the saints who cry out to God in their suffering. The principal character, finally, is not the judge or the widow, but God. And the underlying reality is the Good News that God is merciful and long-suffering and he will deliver his elect in Christ. The prayers of the disciples fit into that construct. Why are they to pray continually? The answer is given in Jesus’ final words: “Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he even find the faith [τὴν πίστιν] on the earth?” (18:8b). (CC pp. 675-676)

when – ἀρα – ἄρα—This interrogative particle, “even,” suggests the deep anxiety with which the question is posed. (CC p. 670)

will he find faith ... ? Particularly faith that perseveres in prayer and loyalty (see Mt 24:12–13). Christ makes a second application that looks forward to the time of his second coming. A period of spiritual decline and persecution is assumed—a time that will require perseverance such as the widow demonstrated. (CSB)

Rhetorical question, urging faithfulness, which is the key ingredient in the prayers of the saints. (TLSB)

τὴν πίστιν—It is a surprise to find an article with πίστις. This is translated “the faith” to describe the faith of the community that awaits the coming of the Son of Man to judge the living and the dead. (CC p. 670)

A third key, τὴν πίστιν, could mean either “this faithfulness,” i.e., disciples’ loyalty of this sort, expressed in their *faithful* praying; or “the faith,” i.e., *the* faith of the church, encompassing both *fides quae creditur* (the objective faith or doctrine that is believed) and *fides qua creditur* (the subjective faith by which Christians believe; faith in the heart).

While this is therefore also “saving faith” (W. Arndt, *Luke*, 378), it is foreign to the context to interpret this anxious (ἄρα) question as expressing fear that at the parousia no one will be saved, there being found no one with “faith” (*fiducia cordis*, the faith that is found in the hearts of believers). The *elect will be vindicated*, and the days at the end will be shortened for the sake of the elect (Mt 24:22). It is, moreover, quite permissible to understand πίστις as “loyalty” that results from saving faith and that is (or is not) evident in behavior, as in 2 Tim 2:13, where Paul contrasts εἰ ἀπιστοῦμεν, “if we are unfaithful,” with God, who remains πιστός, “faithful.” (CC p. 676)

There is no need to choose, for the first meaning opens up into the second. The persistent prayers of the saints that God’s kingdom come to relieve them from their suffering is a sign in the world of *the faith* of the church. Will there be a faithful community awaiting at the coming of the Son of Man? Persistent prayer of loyal disciples is evidence of the community’s faith in God’s faithfulness as she watches for Christ’s coming. Jesus’ question alerts the hearers to the urgency of listening carefully to Jesus’ catechesis so that they will be found in the praying, believing community (with people like the widow). (CC p. 676)

18:1–8 If even an unworthy judge responds to persistence, God certainly hears His people’s faithful prayers. Pray without ceasing (1Th 5:17). God will answer speedily as He has promised in Christ. • Lord, grant me enduring faith and persistence in the face of every trouble. Amen. (TLSB)

The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector

9 He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: 10 “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed[a] thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ 13 But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

This passage may be seen as the second of two parables about prayer (18:1–14) or as the first pericope of a series of three that illustrate “entry into the kingdom of God from a position of inferiority (the sinfulness of the tax collector, the limitations of the children, the self-impoverishment of those who have sold or left all for the sake of the kingdom to follow Jesus).” It certainly has clear links with the preceding, for it portrays a man whose prayer is evidence of the faith Christ hopes to find when he returns in judgment (18:8b). This passage, along with the rest of Jesus’ teachings on this final part of his journey to Jerusalem, is related to discipleship. (CC p. 678)

The contrast between the Pharisees and the tax collectors is at its starkest in 18:9–14, in the unique Lukan parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector. These two groups have been representative of those who receive Jesus in faith (tax collectors) and those who reject him because he does not meet their expectations (Pharisees). Jesus has already spoken about these two categories of hearers of his Word. In Jesus’ discussion of his relationship with John the Baptist, only Luke includes this parenthetical observation: “And all the people and the *tax collectors* having heard, they acknowledged God as just, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the *Pharisees* and the lawyers rejected the plan of God for themselves, not being baptized by him” (7:29–30). Pharisees and tax collectors have appeared together in two other crucial places in the gospel: the banquet with Levi the tax collector (5:27–39, which was Jesus’ first public meal in the gospel) and the introduction to Luke’s parables of mercy and joy (15:1–2), where the animosity against Jesus reached a climax and prompted the parable of the prodigal son and his elder brother, who represent tax collectors and Pharisees, respectively (15:11–32). This parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector, in which God shows mercy to a sinner who stands before him and acknowledges his own sinfulness, is linked with the parable of the prodigal son, in which the father shows mercy to his son who stands before him and acknowledges his sin. (CC pp. 678-679)

It might be surprising to the hearer that such a parable occurs so late in Jesus’ ministry. By now the hearer must surely understand that Jesus came for sinners *like the tax collectors*. After all, in the first confrontation between Jesus and the Pharisees over Jesus’ table fellowship with tax collectors and sinners, Jesus announced, “I have not come to call righteous, but sinners to repentance” (5:32). Yet in good catechetical fashion, Jesus reiterates his themes, providing moments that are either programmatic adumbrations (E.g., Lk 4:16–30; 10:1–24; 20:9–19) or recapitulating summations. (E.g., Lk 14:1–6; 17:20–37; 24:13–35) The parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector is such a summation, about those who receive Jesus and those who reject him. Although this parable does not figure in Luke’s table fellowship matrix as a meal or a meal metaphor, it affirms with crystalline clarity what the hearer already knows: Jesus’ ministry is characterized by bringing sinners to repentance (he who humbles himself), a direct attack against the self-righteousness of the Pharisees (he who exalts himself). (CC p. 679)

18:9 *told this parable* – καί—This parable is connected to the preceding discourse. Jesus *also* told this parable. (CC)

to some – καί (also)—This parable is connected to the preceding discourse. Jesus *also* told this parable. (CC p. 677)

who trusted in themselves – As in 18:1, Luke begins with a very direct introduction that reveals the point of the parable. The parable itself is directed against those who fit Jesus’ assessment of Pharisaic attitudes: “to some who were trusting in themselves that they were righteous and who were despising others” (18:9). The most recent reference to the Pharisees as

part of Jesus' audience occurred at the beginning of his eschatological discourse (17:20). Those who trust in themselves (πεποιθότας ἐφ' ἑαυτοῖς) include the Pharisees, as the Pharisee in the parable holds up his own deeds before God. (CC pp. 679-680)

Believing their lives were acceptable to God. (TLSB)

others – The Pharisees are also among those who are despising “others” (τοὺς λοιπούς), for the Pharisee in the parable shows how he despises others when he thanks God that he is not like “the rest” (οἱ λοιποὶ) of men (18:11). “The rest” are probably other Jews, the common people, or ‘*am—ha’arets* (“people of the land”), and not Gentiles, since Gentiles would not even figure in the Pharisee’s worldview. (CC p. 680)

In the Lukan context, Jesus has set up two challenging thoughts before the Pharisees. In 17:21, Jesus responds to a question concerning the coming of the kingdom by saying, “The kingdom of God is among you” (17:20–21). Then Jesus answers the question of whether the Son of Man will find the faith on the earth (18:8) with the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector in 18:9–14. The kingdom is present in the ministry of Jesus, particularly in the ministry of Jesus at table with tax collectors and sinners. The Son of Man will find faith on the earth in those who accept God’s plan (βουλή; 7:30) as it manifests itself among sinners (such as the tax collector in this parable) who repent and join the table fellowship of Jesus. The immediate context and Luke’s introductory verse have set the stage for the parable itself. (CC p. 680)

18:10 *went up into the temple* – For public prayers. (TLSB)

ἀνέβησαν—One “goes up” to Jerusalem since the city and the temple were built on mountains, with the temple hill being the highest point in the city. At the end of the parable, the tax collector “goes down” (κατέβη) to his home justified. (CC p. 677)

The structure of the parable is very simple. Jesus provides us with a frame that contains a circular movement of two men going up to the temple to pray (A—18:10) and returning from the temple to their homes (A’—18:14a). In between, we observe the actions of these two men, first the Pharisee (B—18:11–12) and then the tax collector (B’—18:13). In view of their actions while praying in the temple, Jesus makes a judgment about the two men (18:14a), out of which flows his concluding restatement of the principle of the Great Reversal, which he previously announced in 14:11. (CC pp. 680-681)

The first part of the frame identifies the place—the temple—and the persons—a Pharisee and a tax collector. They are going up to the temple (τὸ ἱερόν) for the purpose of public prayer (A—18:10). The temple plays a significant role at the beginning of Luke’s gospel

One of the major themes in the infancy narrative is the shift in the locale of God’s presence from the temple in Jerusalem to the flesh of the infant Jesus. See comments at 1:5–25; 1:26–38; 1:39–45; also 2:21–40; 2:42–52. The infancy narrative is framed by references to the temple, for the last two scenes are in the temple when Jesus goes to the temple for the presentation of his mother (2:21–40) and at twelve years old (2:42–52). ναός (“sanctuary”) occurs at 1:9, 21, 22, again in 23:45, and twice in Acts (17:24; 19:24). ἱερόν (“temple precincts”) is used at Lk 2:27, 37, 46 in the infancy narrative and frequently at the beginning of Acts (2:46; 3:1, 2, 3, 8, 10; 4:1; 5:20). (CC p. 681)

and at the end of Jesus’ ministry.

At the very end of his ministry, Jesus enters the temple and cleanses it so that it may serve as a locale for his final teaching (19:45, 47; 20:1; 21:5, 37, 38). Jesus remarks at his arrest that he has been available to his opponents in the temple ever since he entered the temple on Palm Sunday (22:53). At the moment of Jesus' death, the curtain in the temple (23:45; *ναός*) tears in two. As many have observed, Luke frames his gospel with the temple, for in the very last verse of his record of Jesus' life, the Eleven and the other disciples return to the temple to bless God (24:53). (CC p. 681)

Between the infancy narrative and Jesus' Jerusalem ministry there are only two references to the temple: at the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness, where the devil begs him to throw himself down from the pinnacle of the temple (4:9), and the reference here in the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector. Is not the inclusion of this parable, set in the temple, at this point in the Lukan narrative significant? We are on the threshold of Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem, signaled as imminent since 13:31–35. Naming the temple as a scene for a parable reminds the hearer of the significance of the temple in the gospel and that Jesus will soon enter the temple, cleanse it, and teach in it until his crucifixion renders it obsolete (cf. 23:45). But it is still the locale of God's presence, and the hearer asks, "Do both the Pharisee and tax collector enter into this holy place with reverence for the presence that is located there, a presence that brings salvation?" (CC p. 681))

to pray. Periods for prayer were scheduled daily in connection with the morning and evening sacrifices. People could also go to the temple at any time for private prayer. (CSB)

προσεύξασθαι—An infinitive of purpose. (CC p. 677)

Implicit in the account is also a possible time framework, since Jesus tells us that the purpose of their going up was for prayer. Public prayer was permitted in the temple in the morning and the evening during the atonement sacrifice, which was made at 9 a.m. and again at 3 p.m. Private prayer could occur at any time. It is possible that the two men came to the temple at one of the two times set aside for corporate prayer, during which time it was customary for people to offer their own private prayers, specifically at the offering of incense after the morning or evening atonement sacrifices. (CC pp. 681-682)

Cf. K. Bailey, *Through Peasant Eyes*, 144–47. He notes this about the public hour of prayer:

Anyone on any unspecified day on his way to corporate prayers in the temple would naturally be assumed to be on his way to the atonement sacrifice. This service was the sacrifice of a lamb (for the sins of the people) at dawn. A second similar sacrifice was held at three in the afternoon [cf. A. Edersheim, *The Temple* (London: The Religious Tract Society, n.d.) 152–73]. ... The time of incense was especially appropriate as a time of personal prayer because by this time in the service the sacrifice of the lamb had covered the sins of Israel and thus the way to God was open. The faithful could *now* approach Him (Edersheim, *Temple*, 157). The incense arose before God's face and the faithful offered their separate petitions to Him. This background appropriately combines for us the idea of private prayers (which the two actors in this drama do indeed offer) in the context of corporate worship (in that the atonement sacrifice is mentioned in the parable) in a place of public worship like the temple (which is specified as the scene of the action) (pp. 146–47; emphasis Bailey). (CC p. 682)

Thus, these two figures may have come to the temple, the locale of God's presence, precisely at the time of the atonement sacrifice, and atonement was the reason for the temple's existence. This context would point to the promise of the sacrifice of *the lamb*, who would take away the sins of the people *once and for all*. (CC pp. 6810682)

18:11 *Pharisee standing himself* – σταθείς—There is nothing unusual about the Pharisee standing up for prayer. This is the normal posture for prayer in the temple. “Having taken his stand” suggests that the Pharisee made himself visible to all. J. Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, 875–76, captures the sense of this verb when he says: “The verb probably implies a standing posture, but usually it indicates arrival at an intended destination and taking up a position there for whatever is to follow.” In contrast, the publican, stood “at a distance,” behind the Pharisee and the other worshipers. (CC p. 677))

The elements of the narrative are remarkably balanced with parallels between the Pharisee and the tax collector. They are introduced by a ὁ (“the”)/ὁ δέ (“but the”) construction: ὁ Φαρισαῖος (“the Pharisee”; 18:11). ... ὁ δὲ τελώνης (“but the tax collector”; 18:13). And the prayer of each begins with the same greeting, “O God” (18:11, 13). The Pharisee, first, is presented with the worst of the traits a Pharisee might have. He stands by himself (πρὸς ἑαυτόν)

This could be translated in four different ways: he prayed to himself silently; about himself rather than God; to himself rather than to God; or by himself apart from others. The last alternative seems the most natural. Clearly, he prayed about himself, as his prayer indicates. It seems too much to suggest that he prayed to himself rather than to God. See L. T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 271, on the first three possibilities and K. Bailey, *Through Peasant Eyes*, 147–49, on the fourth. (CC p. 682)

apart from the other worshipers, but in a central location where everyone may see him. Even in private prayer, Jews usually do not pray silently, so this Pharisee probably prayed so that others would hear him. This is the point of his prayer! The picture here, then, is of a man who is arrogant and elitist. He sets himself apart from the rest of the worshipers but within earshot so that they can observe his piety and hear his prayer. He wants to impress those around him. The Pharisee uses the first person singular five times in two verses: “*I* thank you ... *I* am not like the rest of men. ... *I* fast ... *I* pay tithes on everything *I* obtain” (18:11–12). The Pharisee’s prayer is *eucharistic* and not *petitionary*, but he gives thanks to God *for himself* and not for the gifts God has given him. He petitions God for nothing since he needs nothing. He believes he is already perfect. (CC p. 682)

C. Talbert, *Reading Luke*, 171, says: “The Pharisee’s posture is unmasked as idolatry. He was usurping the prerogatives of God, which is how the devil acts. To judge is God’s prerogative (cf. 1 Cor 4:5), not ours.” (CC p. 682)

prayed thus – πρὸς ἑαυτόν—Of course, the prayer is *directed to* God. The phrase could mean “to himself” (silently, “in his heart,” W. Arndt, *Luke*, 378), but it is better to read it as “with reference to himself” (cf. BAGD πρὸς, III 5 a, and Mk 12:12; Lk 20:19) or “by himself” (= παρά τινι or παρά τινα; cf. BDF § 239 [1], [2]). The word order of the Byzantine uncials suggests “took a stand by himself,” while that of P⁷⁵ et al. suggests “prayed with respect to himself.” (CC p. 677)

I am not like – Arrogant pride. Aug: “He had no mind to pray to God, but to laud himself” (NPNF 1 6:455). (TLSB)

His prayer is specific in that he thanks God that he is not like all the rest (οἱ λοιποὶ)—something that Luke already hinted at when he said this parable was spoken to those who despised others (18:9; τοὺς λοιπούς). He distinguishes himself from three types of people: seizing, unrighteous, and adulterers. The seizing (ἄρπαγες; RSV “extortioners”) are greedy, grasping, rapacious. The Pharisees accuse others of what they themselves are most guilty, for Jesus uses a word from the same family to describe them as “full of rapaciousness and wickedness” (11:39; ἀρπαγῆς καὶ πονηρίας). It is even more ironic that this Pharisee claims not to be like the “unrighteous” (ἄδικοι), for the parable will conclude with the tax collector being “justified” or “declared righteous” (δεδικαιωμένος, from the same word family; 18:14), instead of the Pharisee. As Luke said in the introduction (18:9), some people are convinced that they are righteous, but they do not understand what that means. There is no evidence in the gospel that Pharisees are guilty of adultery, but in view of the OT use of adultery as a metaphor for apostasy from the true God and idolatry, the Pharisees are adulterers. (CC p. 683)

Finally the Pharisee thanks God that he is not like this tax collector, who is placed in the same category as extortioners, unrighteous, and adulterers. The Pharisee looks across the temple to see a well-known tax collector and uses him as the opposite extreme of piety. But the Pharisee is not through. He gives evidence for his piety: he fasts twice a week and pays tithes not only on his income but also on what he buys with that income. In first-century Israel, these clearly are works above and beyond what was expected of the pious faithful. (CC p. 683)

R. Stein, *Luke*, 450, n. 281, points out that this prayer is not a caricature of the Pharisees, since a strikingly similar kind of prayer occurs in the prayer of a Pharisee in the Talmud, *Berakot* 28b:

I give thanks to Thee, O Lord my God, that Thou hast set my portion with those who sit in the Beth ha-Midrash ... and ... not ... with those who sit in [street] corners.” Also in *Sukka* 45b one rabbi boasted: “I am able to exempt the whole world from judgment from the day that I was born until now, and were Eliezer, my son, to be with me [we could exempt it] from the day of creation of the world to the present time, and were Jotham the son of Uzziah with us, [we could exempt it] from the creation of the world to its final end.” The same rabbi went on to boast: “I have seen the sons of heaven and they are but few. If there be a thousand, I and my son are among them; if a hundred, I and my son are among them; and if only two, they are I and my son.” (CC p. 683)

There should be no doubt to the hearers that this Pharisee has chosen an alternative means of salvation based on works—a way that is diametrically opposed to the kingdom that Jesus preaches and brings in his own person. (CC p. 683)

this tax collector – Expresses disdain. The tax collector is placed in the same category as the other sinners in the verse because of his hated occupation. “He who prays for grace in this way does not rely upon God’s mercy and treats Christ with disrespect” (Ap V 211). (TLSB)

18:12 *fast twice a week*. Fasting was not commanded in the Mosaic law except for the fast on the Day of Atonement. However, the Pharisees also fasted on Mondays and Thursdays (see 5:33; Mt 6:16; 9:14; Mk 2:18; Ac 27:9). (CSB)

Not demanded by the OT. (TLSB)

νηστεύω δις τοῦ σαββάτου— Jews fasted on Monday and Thursday. According to Didache 8:1, Christians were to fast on Wednesday and “the day of preparation”—Friday—to distinguish

themselves from the “hypocrites.” They may have chosen Wednesday because in Holy Week this was the day the plot against Jesus was hatched (Spy Wednesday), and of course Friday was the day he was betrayed and crucified. (CC pp. 677-678)

give tithes of all I get. As a typical first-century Pharisee, he tithed all that he acquired, not merely what he earned. (CSB)

In first-century Israel, these clearly are works above and beyond what was expected of the pious faithful. (R. Stein, *Luke*, 450, n. 281, points out that this prayer is not a caricature of the Pharisees, since a strikingly similar kind of prayer occurs in the prayer of a Pharisee in the Talmud, *Berakot* 28b: I give thanks to Thee, O Lord my God, that Thou hast set my portion with those who sit in the Beth ha-Midrash ... and ... not ... with those who sit in [street] corners.” Also in *Sukka* 45b one rabbi boasted: “I am able to exempt the whole world from judgment from the day that I was born until now, and were Eliezer, my son, to be with me [we could exempt it] from the day of creation of the world to the present time, and were Jotham the son of Uzziah with us, [we could exempt it] from the creation of the world to its final end.” The same rabbi went on to boast: “I have seen the sons of heaven and they are but few. If there be a thousand, I and my son are among them; if a hundred, I and my son are among them; and if only two, they are I and my son.”) There should be no doubt to the hearers that this Pharisee has chosen an alternative means of salvation based on works—a way that is diametrically opposed to the kingdom that Jesus preaches and brings in his own person. (CC)

18:13 *the tax collector* – ὁ δὲ τελώνης— (CC P. 678)

would not even lift up his eyes – He does not even raise his eyes to the heavens (which is typical of Jews at prayer). (CC)

Knowing his inadequacy before God, he seeks a God who saves rather than condemns. (TLSB)

beat his breast – ἔτυπεν τὸ στῆθος αὐτοῦ—The durative imperfect, “he kept beating his chest,” suggests the continuous state of repentance of the tax collector. (CC p. 678)

be merciful to me. The verb used here means “to be propitiated.” The tax collector does not plead his good works but the mercy of God in forgiving his sin. (CSB)

ἰλάσθητι—This is an example of a permissive passive and suggests the translation “let yourself be disposed to grace.” (CC p. 678)

The contrast between the Pharisee and the tax collector is marked. The Pharisee presented himself in a position to be seen by everyone; the tax collector stands at a distance to be seen by no one because he is conscious of his sin. His recognition of his sin creates two actions of humility: he does not even raise his eyes to the heavens (which is typical of Jews at prayer), and he beats his chest as a sign of his unworthiness. The only other occurrence of this expression in the gospels and in all of Greek literature occurs in Luke’s gospel at the cross: the multitudes returned home after Jesus’ death “beating their chests” (23:48), an act of contrition because they knew they had conspired to kill God’s suffering, righteous Messiah. The tax collector’s conscience, his self-knowledge, allows him to say only one thing: “O God, be propitiated [ἰλάσθητι] toward me, the sinner” (18:13). The normal Greek expression for “be merciful to me” (RSV) is not used here, though it is used later on in this chapter when the blind man begs Jesus for mercy (18:38–39; ἐλέησόν με). The verb ἰλάσκομαι is used in the NT only at Heb 2:17 (“to expiate” sins) and here: “be propitiated,” passive with God as the subject. (CC pp. 684-685)

Cf. BAGD, 1–2; BDF, § 101. K. Bailey, *Through Peasant Eyes*, 154, notes that the noun is used in Rom 3:25; Heb 9:5; 1 Jn 2:2; 4:10, where “it clearly refers to the atonement sacrifice. Expiation and propitiation as English words must be combined with cleansing and reconciliation to give the meaning of the Hebrew *kaffar*, which lies behind the Greek *hilaskomai*. The tax collector is not offering a generalized prayer for God’s mercy. He specifically yearns for the benefits of an atonement” (that God be propitiated by the sacrifice). (CC p. 684)

In view of the probable context of this prayer (the time of the atonement sacrifice), it makes sense to see this tax collector reflecting the faith of the remnant and yearning for the Messiah to come to his temple to make the final atoning sacrifice for the people’s sins. And so he comes before God’s presence during the incense offering and begs God to “be propitiated toward me, *the* sinner.” He sees himself not just as a sinner among many, but as *the* guilty one, the embodiment of the classification. In comparing himself to others, he does not claim to be better; rather he knows and confesses that he is worst of all (as does St. Paul in 1 Tim 1:15–16). (CC pp. 683–684)

18:14 justified. God reckoned him to be righteous, i.e., his sins were forgiven and he was credited with righteousness—not his own (v. 9) but that which comes from God. (CSB)

To be declared righteous and therefore acceptable to God. (TLSB)

δεδικαιωμένος—This perfect passive is theological: “this man went down to his home having been declared righteous” *by God*. (CC p. 678)

The frame of the parable is sealed when the tax collector, who has come up to the temple in order to pray (A—18:10), returns to his home “having been declared righteous” (δεδικαιωμένος). Jesus used this word to describe how the people and the tax collectors “acknowledged God as just” by submitting to John’s baptism (7:29), but here it has its more common sense in which God declares someone righteous. This forensic sense is common in St. Paul’s epistles. When considered in combination with ἰλάσθητι, “be propitiated,” these words suggest that the sacrifice (atonement) is the basis for the declaration of the status of righteousness before God (justification).

R. Stein, *Luke*, 451, says: “Thus justification must involve a standing before God, for it is instantaneous. Like the Pauline teaching, it involves forgiveness (cf. 8:13 and Rom 4:6–8); but it also bestows a standing, i.e., a declared righteousness. This parable reveals that the Pauline teaching on justification is not an anomaly but is also found in Luke and is ultimately rooted in Jesus’ teaching.” (CC p. 684)

The irony here, of course, is that the one who goes down to his home “justified” is the tax collector and not the Pharisee. Again, it boils down to a simple matter of whom one trusts for salvation: either in oneself, as does the Pharisee, who exalts himself as the means of his own redemption because he trusts in himself that he is righteous (18:9; τοὺς πεποιθότας ἐφ’ ἑαυτοῖς ὅτι εἰσὶν δίκαιοι), or in God and the atoning sacrifice he has provided (as does the tax collector). (CC p. 684)

exalts...humbled – Only the humble would pray for and receive God’s forgiveness (Pr 15:33; 16:18). (TLSB)

ταπεινωθήσεται ... ὑψωθήσεται—They are both theological passives: “will be humbled” *by God* and “will be exalted” *by God*. This saying occurs also at 14:11 in almost identical form. (CC p. 678)

The *prayers* of the Pharisee and the tax collector reflect the spiritual condition of each: pride versus humility. The principle of radical reversal, which Jesus has already enunciated at 14:11, applies: “Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted” (18:14).

C. Talbert, *Reading Luke*, 170–71, notes this about the reversal theme in Luke:

The story fits into the general theme of status reversal in the third gospel. The New Age will overturn the values and structures of the present evil age. We meet this theme in the birth narratives (1:51–53) and the Sermon on the Plain (6:20–26). In the travel narrative (9:51–19:44) Jesus’ teaching anticipates this eschatological reversal even now in overturning the estimate of what is virtue and what is vice. Consider 10:29–37 (good Samaritan/bad priest and levite); 10:38–42 (good inactive Mary/bad active Martha); 11:37–41 (good unclean/bad clean); 12:13–34 (good poor/bad rich); 14:7–11 (good humble/bad exalted); 15:11–32 (good prodigal/bad elder brother); 16:19–31 (good Lazarus/bad rich man); 18:18–30 (good poor/bad rich). Into this thematic context 18:9–14 fits (good tax collector/bad Pharisee) as another example of Jesus’ reversal of values. (CC p. 685)

The ultimate Great Reversal, as every catechumen knows, happens with Jesus himself, who humbled himself to the point of death, even death on a cross (Phil 2:8) and was therefore highly exalted. As Jesus will say in Jerusalem in the parable of the workers in the vineyard (his final parable to the people): “The stone that the builders rejected, this has become the head of the corner” (Lk 20:17). (CC p. 685)

18:9–14 The Pharisee excludes himself from God’s gift of righteousness, while the penitent tax collector embraces it. Today, beware of the complacency of measuring your goodness against others. Measure yourself against God’s standards—then repent. God is ready to justify the worst of sinners by His generous grace in Christ. • God, be merciful to me, a sinner. Amen. (TLSB)

The Little Children and Jesus

15 Now they were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them. And when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. 16 But Jesus called them to him, saying, “Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. 17 Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.”

The movement from the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector to this pericope about children and entering the kingdom is natural; they both have the same theme. The tax collector is a true disciple of Jesus in his humility and acknowledgement that God makes atonement for sin. Before God, he is as helpless as an infant. Precisely “infants and little children” have access through Jesus to the kingdom of God. “When the Son of Man comes, will he even find the faith on the earth?” (18:8). Yes! He will find the faith, but in the most unlikely places: in tax collectors and infants! (CC p. 687)

18:15 even – καί—“Even” emphasizes that *even infants* are brought to Jesus. (CC p. 686)

infants – Very youngest children, unable to make independent decisions. (TLSB)

τὰ βρέφη—This word occurs six times in Luke-Acts and only twice in the rest of the NT. It means “baby, infant,” either in the womb or after birth. Unborn babies, therefore, are deemed to be fully human persons. (CC p. 686)

touch – For blessing. “We bring the child in the conviction and hope that it believes, and we pray that God may grant it faith [Luke 17:2; Ephesians 2:8]. But we do not baptize it for that reason, but solely because of God’s command. Why? Because we know that God does not lie [Titus 1:2]. I and my neighbor and, in short, all people, may err and deceive. But God’s Word cannot err” (LC IV 57). (TLSB)

ἅπτηται—The crowds seek to touch Jesus in Lk 6:19. A hemorrhaging woman touches the tassel of Jesus’ garment and is healed in 8:44–47. Jesus uses touch to heal a leper in 5:13, to raise the widow’s son at Nain in 7:14, and to heal the ear of the high priest’s servant in 22:51. Clearly for Luke, to touch Jesus or be touched by him brings one into contact with God’s power to restore and bring the new creation. (CC p. 686)

were bringing...rebuked – Likely, they regarded babies as unworthy of the Lord’s attention. (TLSB)

προσέφερον ... ἐπετίμων—It is unlikely that these two imperfects describe a customary or repeated scene, as the disciples would have learned soon enough the Lord’s wishes. προσέφερον, rather, is conative (“they tried to”), and ἐπετίμων is most likely progressive: “kept rebuking”—until Jesus stopped them. (CC p. 686)

ἐπετίμων—This a rare occurrence of the disciples rebuking someone. The hearer knows that Jesus shows his power to release creation from its bondage by rebuking demons (4:35, 41; 9:42), fevers (4:39), and the wind in a storm on the Sea of Galilee (8:24). He has also rebuked his disciples so they would not speak about the messianic passion secret (9:21) and for wanting to cast fire on a Samaritan village for rejecting Jesus (9:55). Jesus does command his disciples to rebuke those who sin against them, and if they repent, to forgive them (17:3). That kind of rebuke is Law in the service of the Gospel. But here the disciples are using the Law to exclude people from the blessings of the Gospel—a misuse of the keys of the kingdom. In the next verse (18:16) Jesus will instruct them in the proper use of the keys. (The other two occurrences of the verb in Luke are in 19:39 and 23:40.) (CC p. 686)

As Jesus draws closer and closer to Jerusalem, some persons (presumably the parents) try to bring little children to Jesus.

J. Jeremias, *Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries*, trans. D. Cairns (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962) 49, suggests that the practice of bringing little children to rabbis or scribes for a blessing took place on the annual Day of Atonement during the evening before the sacrifice was made and the blood poured on the altar in the Holy of Holies and on the people. This observation may not be definitive for dating this passage on the 10th of Tishri, but it does suggest important theological ramifications for the infants being brought to Jesus as he approaches Jerusalem. It would also provide a connection to the previous passage, which has the Pharisee and the tax collector offering prayer in the temple, perhaps during the atonement sacrifice. Jesus alone is able to accomplish what the atonement sacrifices anticipated: release from bondage and the blessing of God. (CC pp. 687-688)

Luke emphasizes in 18:15 that these are infants or babies, who would not be able to choose or decide to believe in Jesus' miracles and teaching. They must be *brought* into his presence. The desire to have Jesus touch them reflects the conviction that his fleshly presence conveys gifts of grace—blessings. The disciples view this as an infringement or as inappropriate. By rebuking those trying to bring the infants (as Jesus rebuked demons and fevers and winds), the disciples act as if they know what they are doing in responding to hostile intrusions upon Jesus' ministry (see textual note on “rebuke” in 18:15). But in fact they show once again, by their rebuke, that they completely misunderstand the nature of the kingdom. (CC pp. 687-688)

This is not the first time the disciples have been instructed about the place of children in the kingdom. Following Jesus' second passion prediction at the very end of his Galilean ministry (9:43b–45), a discussion arose among the disciples as to who was the greatest. Jesus' responded to them by using a child as an illustration of who is great: “Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me; for the one being least among all you, this one is great” (9:46–48). To be least in the kingdom is to be great—another logion from Jesus' teaching on reversal. But the parallel continues, for immediately following this illustration of children, the disciples undertook to *prevent* someone from casting out demons in the name of Jesus, and Jesus cautioned them that “whoever is not against you is for you” (9:50). The words of Luke 9 echo in Luke 18. At the end of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem, the disciples have not progressed beyond their confusion at the end of Jesus' Galilean ministry. (CC p. 688)

18:16 *them* – αὐτά—The antecedent for the first αὐτά is the infants (τὰ βρέφη). (CC p. 686)

let – ἄφετε—This aorist imperative, “release,” shows that it is part of Jesus' program to release those in bondage. Elsewhere the verb often means “to forgive,” e.g., twice in 11:4. The sense of “allow, let, permit” for ἀφίημι (BAGD, 4) surely grows out of “let go” (BAGD, 1). The “infinitive as complement of a verb” with meanings such as “allow, permit, hinder,” etc. “borders closely on the infinitive of purpose and result” (BDF § 392). (CC pp. 686-687)

The disciples attempt to prevent those who would bring infants, but the disciples fail. Jesus overcomes their ignorance with his simple summons (προσεκαλέσατο) for the infants. He speaks a command that serves as an absolution: “Release [ἄφετε] the little children to come to me” (18:16). He tells the disciples to release the children so that they may share in the kingdom and the new creation that come through his flesh—his flesh that he will give for the life of the world (cf. Jn 6:51). He is the baby conceived and born as the King of the kingdom (Lk 1:32–33), and to physically touch him or be touched by him is to partake of the blessings of that kingdom. (See the textual note on “touch” in Lk 18:15.) The disciples have yet to comprehend just how the kingdom comes through Jesus' flesh and how all are welcome to come to Jesus. (CC p. 686)

little children – τὰ παιδιά—Jesus switches to “little children” from “infants” (τὰ βρέφη) in 18:15 (cf. Mt 19:14; Mk 10:13). The word here can mean “very young child, infant” or “child.” Little children” includes both infants and children. (CC p. 687)

do not hinder – ἢ κωλύετε αὐτά—“Stop preventing them” accents Jesus' command of release that reverses their behavior of rebuking those who bring the infants. The present imperative with μή “forbids the continuance of the action, most frequently when it is already in progress; in this case a demand to desist from the action.” The disciples had tried to prevent someone from casting out demons in Jesus' name (Lk 9:49), but Jesus told them not to prevent such people, for they may be fellow disciples (9:50). The harshest words Jesus has for the lawyers is the accusation that they took away the key of knowledge, not entering the kingdom themselves

and preventing others from entering (11:52). Positively, this word is used in connection with entering the kingdom through Baptism in Acts in these rhetorical questions: “What prevents me from being baptized?” (8:36) and “Is anyone able to prevent water from [being used] to baptize these people?” (10:47). (CC p. 687)

kingdom of God – The kingdom of God comes to all who humbly trust the Lord, no matter what their age or status (1Co 1:27–29). *belongs*. Just as an infant may inherit the parents’ blessings and property, so any person may receive the inheritance of God’s kingdom—salvation. Grace, faith, and everlasting life are gifts of God. (TLSB)

Having announced release, Jesus tells the disciples not to prevent the infants and little children from coming to him. To prevent the children from coming to Jesus is to keep from them what is there *for them*. To *such as these* (τοιούτων) belongs the kingdom of God. By their simplicity, humility, and utter inability to come to Jesus, infants and young children demonstrate the characteristics and posture of those who enter into the kingdom. The kingdom comes to those who are the least among humanity and who have nothing to offer God. Salvation is by his initiative and by his gift. Children are the best examples of the humility Jesus speaks of at the end of the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector: “Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted” (18:14). (CC pp. 688-689)

In typical Lukan fashion, the central point is reiterated, here introduced with “Truly I say to you ...” (18:17a). Luke records this ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν of Jesus only six times, all in critical locations. Jesus’ pronouncement here is momentous: to receive the kingdom of God *by faith*, one must be as a child: humble, helpless. In trying to prevent little children from being touched by Jesus, the disciples were preventing them from entering the kingdom. If the disciples were to continue to turn away children, they would show that they do not understand the nature of the kingdom, and so they themselves would not enter into it! Note Luke’s chiasmic structure: preventing children from coming to Jesus (18:15) and not entering the kingdom (18:17) frame Jesus’ exhortations that to enter the kingdom one must be like a child (18:16). Childlike humility and faith, given by God, are the means by which he brings people into his kingdom. (CC p. 689)

Jesus’ final woe to the lawyers also re-echos here: “Woe to you lawyers, because you took away the key of knowledge; you yourselves did not enter in [εἰσήλθατε], and those entering in [εἰσερχομένους] you prevented [ἐκωλύσατε]” (11:52). The reverberations are both verbal and conceptual. By preventing the little children from coming to Jesus, *who is the key of knowledge*, the disciples are acting like Pharisees.

D. Moessner, *Lord of the Banquet*, 203, notes:

The disciples are perilously close to fulfilling Jesus’ direst warning against leading “little ones” astray (17:2)! And they are now guilty of the charge leveled against the Pharisees-scribes at table in 11:52: *they have become like the Pharisees!* For in their rebuke of the parents in v. 15, they imitate the Pharisee of 18:9–14, who exalts himself, and copy those among them who “treat others with snubbing” (18:9). (CC p. 689)

Instead of seeing childlike humility as essential for entrance into the kingdom (as exhibited by the tax collector in the previous parable), they choose to imitate the Pharisee’s arrogance by preventing infants and little children from entering into the presence of the kingdom in Jesus. (CC p. 689)

Would a first-century catechumen apply this passage to infant Baptism? Surely early Christians too must have asked whether or not infants could enter into the kingdom without mature intellectual comprehension. The worst charge that could be leveled against a disciple is that he prevented someone from entering the kingdom (cf. 11:52). Is it just a coincidence that Luke uses the word here for preventing someone from entering the kingdom twice more in Acts in connection with Baptism? The Ethiopian eunuch asks what prevents him from being baptized (8:36; τί κωλύει με βαπτισθῆναι), and Peter asks what is to prevent Cornelius and his household from being baptized (10:47; κωλῶσαί τις τοῦ μὴ βαπτισθῆναι τούτους). Neither the Ethiopian eunuch nor Cornelius' household is Jewish. Like tax collectors, sinners, and infants, they seem to be the least likely to “qualify” for entrance into the kingdom. “Stop preventing them” (18:16) also implies the mandate “Do not prevent infants or Gentiles from receiving the gifts of the King through Holy Baptism.” (CC pp. 689-690)

18:17 *like a little child*. With total dependence, full trust, frank openness and complete sincerity (see Mt 18:3; 19:14; Mk 10:15; cf. 1Pe 2:2). (CSB)

Children have to trust and receive the care of others, and only in the same way does the kingdom of God come to us. (TLSB)

shall not enter it – οὐ μὴ εἰσέλθῃ εἰς αὐτήν—Jesus will speak of the rich man's inability to enter into the kingdom of God (εἰσελθεῖν) in the next pericope. This is another similarity to Jesus' woe to the lawyers because they prevent people from entering into the kingdom (Lk 11:52; οὐκ εἰσήλθατε καὶ τοὺς εἰσερχομένους ἐκωλύσατε). Jesus has also told the disciples to “struggle to enter in [εἰσελθεῖν] through the narrow door, because many, I say to you, will seek to enter in [εἰσελθεῖν] and they will not be able” (13:24), an image that he later uses to refer to entering into the eschatological banquet (14:23). (CC p. 687)

18:15–17 Jesus includes children in His kingdom and teaches that we must be like them to enter the kingdom. No one has a greater claim to the kingdom than a newly baptized infant, whom Jesus welcomes with loving arms—that is grace. • Give us grace to receive Your kingdom, O Lord, as babies welcome and trust their parents' loving arms. Amen. (TLSB)

The Rich Ruler

18 And a ruler asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” **19** And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. **20** You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother.’” **21** And he said, “All these I have kept from my youth.” **22** When Jesus heard this, he said to him, “One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” **23** But when he heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich. **24** Jesus, seeing that he had become sad, said, “How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! **25** For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.” **26** Those who heard it said, “Then who can be saved?” **27** But he said, “What is impossible with man is possible with God.” **28** And Peter said, “See, we have left our homes and followed you.” **29** And he said to them, “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, **30** who will not receive many times more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life.”

The discussion Jesus has with the rich ruler continues the theme of discipleship that began with the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector, a discourse that was prompted by Jesus' question: "When the Son of Man comes, will he even find the faith on the earth?" (18:8). In the parable, Jesus places before the hearer *for the final time* the two categories that have occurred throughout his teaching: the Pharisee who justifies himself and the tax collector who humbles himself before the God who provides atonement (18:9–14). Immediately following this parable, Jesus gives another example of the kind of people who enter the kingdom: infants and little children (18:15–17). Unless one has faith like a child, it is impossible to enter the kingdom of God. Now in the discussion between the rich ruler and Jesus, Jesus gives an example of the *wrong kind of faith*, for the ruler is a prime example of the Pharisee—or anyone else—who is rich and trusts in himself. The pericope fits well into the wider context of Lukan themes: entry into the kingdom/gaining eternal life (10:25; cf. 12:15) and the proper attitude of the disciples toward riches (cf. 6:24; 8:14; 11:41; 12:13–34; 16:1–31). (CC p. 693)

18:18-30 The rich ruler, a powerful and capable man, stands in contrast to the helpless infants of vv 15–17. (TLSB)

18:18 ruler – Perhaps a leader in the synagogue. (TLSB)

ἄρχων—On rulers, see the excursus "The Opponents of Jesus in Luke." Rulers were leaders among the Pharisees, usually scribes. The word is shorthand for those who represented the Pharisees on the Sanhedrin. See comments at 24:20. (CC p. 691)

It is a "certain ruler" who questions Jesus about how he shall inherit eternal life. In Luke's gospel "the rulers" (ἄρχοντες) are Pharisaic scribes who represented the Pharisees on the Sanhedrin. This ruler, then, represents *at the highest level* the Pharisaic opposition to Jesus. The rich ruler embraces the two great failures of the Pharisees: he is a hypocrite, because he believes that he has fully kept the Law (18:21), and he is obsessed with his possessions (18:23). In the extended discourse of 12:1–13:21, hypocrisy and the misuse of possessions are two major stumbling blocks for the Pharisees as they strive to enter the kingdom. Following the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (18:9–14), Jesus first offered another example of the humility also exhibited by the tax collector: the children who were brought to Jesus (18:15–17). Now, in the rich ruler, he offers another example of the arrogance that characterized the Pharisees. (CC pp. 694-695)

teacher – διδάσκαλε—See comments at 2:46 and particularly at 7:40, where it is first used by Jesus' opponents. The two other times in Luke that Jesus is addressed as "teacher" by a lawyer, before the parable of the Good Samaritan (10:25) and in Jesus' woes against Pharisees and lawyers (11:45), are, like this question, spoken by skeptics who do not respond positively to Jesus. (CC p. 691)

The ruler shows his hostility toward Jesus by addressing him with the neutral, noncommittal title "teacher," a title for Jesus that is mostly used by his opponents. The issue is eternal life, as the frame of passage indicates (A—18:18; A'—18:30), but the same idea is expressed at the center of the passage as "entering the kingdom of God" (E—18:24; E'—18:25), so that both the outermost frame and the center of the chiasm focus on the same idea. From the start, the hearer knows that the ruler's perspective on inheriting eternal life is a matter of his works: "By doing what" (τί ποιήσας) stands at the beginning of the ruler's question and reveals his perspective on how one inherits eternal life. (CC p. 695)

eternal life. Eternal life is a gracious gift inherited, not earned. (TLSB)

ζωὴν αἰώνιον κληρονομήσω—A similar question is asked of Jesus by a lawyer at the beginning of the parable of the Good Samaritan (10:25). Eternal life frames this passage (18:18 and 18:30). (CC p. 691)

18:19 *no one is good except God* – Jesus points to a perfect goodness—His own—which the ruler does not yet understand. (TLSB)

οὐδεὶς ἀγαθὸς εἰ μὴ εἷς ὁ θεός—This statement echoes the OT creed of Israel’s one unique God, Deut 6:4. The goodness of God, in contrast to and despite the sin of people, is confessed in many psalms. This same Greek word, ἀγαθός, is used of God in the LXX at Pss 53:8; 72:1; 117:1–4, 29; 134:3. Cf. also LXX Pss 24:8; 33:9; 105:1; 135:1, where χρηστός is used. (CC p. 692)

Jesus’ response to the ruler begins by questioning the ruler’s description of Jesus as “good.” Jesus implies that the ruler has a simplistic, anthropocentric view of what constitutes goodness. Jesus takes a theocentric view and asks, “Why do you say I am good? No one is good except one: God” (B—18:19). Hidden in this saying is a “veiled epiphany” of the divinity of Jesus. “If you call me ‘good,’ ” he says, “do you not confess that I am God?” By focusing on the *goodness of God* (and the presence of God and his kingdom in Jesus) instead of on what *the ruler must do*, Jesus completely shifts the debate about commandments, behavior, and entering the kingdom to accent God’s perspective. He tells the ruler “you know the commandments” to redirect him to God’s revealed Torah for life. But the ruler remains focused on his accomplishments (18:21) and fails to understand that the kingdom is God’s good gift in the good Teacher, Jesus (18:29—B’). (CC p. 695)

The goodness of God, the presence of the kingdom in Jesus, the significance of the commandments, and the relationship of behavior to entering the kingdom all bind together B (18:19–20) and B’ (18:29). (CC p. 695)

18:20 *know the commandments* – τὰς ἐντολὰς οἶδας—See comments at 10:26, where a similar statement leads to the parable of the Good Samaritan. The response here from the rich ruler, however, is different than that of the lawyer. (CC p. 692)

Jesus’ selection of commandments and the order in which he places them raise a challenging question. Why does Jesus choose to focus on these commandments, and why does he cite them in this sequence? Several observations about Jesus’ choices can be made. First, the commandments are all from the second table of the Decalog, which is concerned with love toward neighbor. This differs from the similar passage in 10:25–37, where the lawyer asks Jesus the same question: “Having done what shall I inherit eternal life?” (10:25). But the discussion there revolves around both tables of the Law, loving God (commandments 1–3) and loving one’s neighbor (commandments 4–10). Perhaps, Jesus here quotes only from the second table of the Law because that is the nature of the question put to him by the rich ruler, “By doing what shall I . . .?” (cf. Jn 3:12). Loving God is too abstract and “heavenly” (Jn 3:12), so concrete examples of love for neighbor will help demonstrate whether or not this ruler has earthly love that results from God’s love, which gives eternal life. (CC pp. 695-696)

Perhaps also there is a catechetical purpose behind Jesus’ selection and order. This purpose may be seen from the chiasmic order of the commandments, arranged by Kenneth Bailey:

Do not commit adultery.	(loyalty to family)
Do not murder.	(physical destruction of another)

Do not steal. (respect for property)
Do not bear false witness. (verbal destruction of another)
Honor your father and mother. (loyalty to family)

K. Bailey, *Through Peasant Eyes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 159. Note that this order in Luke is different from that given in Matthew (19:18–19) and Mark (10:19). In none of the synoptic gospels does the order conform entirely to that of the OT. (CC p. 696)

The outside frame in this structure reflects the most important community within Israel—the family—with wife (placed at the beginning of the inclusio) taking precedence over father and mother (placed at the end). On the next level in the frame are two commandments that deal with the physical destruction of another (“do not murder”) and verbal destruction of another (“do not bear false witness”). The Pharisees will break both of them *in their relationship with Jesus*: they will bear false witness against him in his trials (e.g., Lk 23:2–5), and this will lead to his death (23:35–46; cf. 19:47). In the middle of the commandments is respect for property (“do not steal”), the issue before Jesus and the rich man, and a concern that has dominated Jesus’ discussion with the Pharisees and disciples. Family and property are two of the things that one must be willing to leave behind to follow Jesus (cf. 18:22, 28), and thus Jesus’ arrangement of the second table of the Law highlights these two things. (CC p. 696)

The Commandments give more guidance and demand more perfection than the man realizes. (TLSB)

18:21 *I have kept* – Not surprisingly, the ruler’s response to Jesus’ recital of the commandments is to claim that he has kept them from his youth. He falls into the first pitfall that Jesus has warned the Pharisees and disciples to avoid: “Beware for yourselves of the leaven, which is *hypocrisy*, of the Pharisees” (12:1). This man believed that he had kept the commandments perfectly and continually. Most in Israel would realize that to make such a claim for themselves would be preposterous, even blasphemous. (CC pp. 696-697)

According to his standard. (TLSB)

18:22 *one thing you lack* – Nonetheless, Jesus does not attack the ruler on that point. Behavior *per se* is simply not the issue. Even granting his claim, the man *still* lacks one thing (ἔτι ἔν σοι λείπει). The hearer is reminded of a similar statement by Jesus to Mary and Martha (10:42). “The one thing that Mary has and Martha lacks is an appropriate expression of loyalty to the person of Jesus.” And so Jesus brings the discussion again to the good God who is giving the kingdom in Jesus. Our Lord calls the rich ruler to recognize the one thing needful for inheriting eternal life: “Everything you have sell [πώλησον] and distribute [διάδος] to the poor, and you will have treasure in the heavens, and come, follow [ἀκολούθει] me” (C—18:22). The final imperative to follow Jesus is a gracious call, a call to discipleship, which is a call to the catechumenate, since a disciple is a learner who believes and follows the teaching of his Master (see comments at 6:20–49). But the first step toward discipleship is for the rich ruler to give up everything he has and give it to the poor. A similar expression occurs in Jesus’ exhortation to the disciples in his extended discourse on hypocrisy and the proper use of possessions: “Sell your possessions and give alms [πωλήσατε τὰ ὑπάρχοντα ὑμῶν καὶ δότε ἐλεημοσύνην]; make for yourselves purses that do not wear out, unfailing treasure in the heavens [θησαυρὸν ἀνέκλειπτον ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς],

where thief does not come near nor moth destroy; for where your treasure [θησαυρός] is, there also your heart will be” (12:33–34).

R. Tannehill, *Narrative Unity I*, 120–21, notes the reasons for evangelical poverty: “(1) The poor need what others have. ... (2) Possessions are a false, temporary treasure which lures people away from the true ‘treasure in heaven.’ ... (3) Disciples must devote themselves to following Jesus.” (CC p. 697)

The treasure in heaven is Christ,

R. Stein, *Luke*, 458, notes that here “ ‘treasure in heaven’ is a synonym for eternal life (18:18, 30) and entering God’s kingdom (18:24–25).” Eternal life is life forever in the presence of Christ, who is the King of the kingdom. (CC p. 697)

so if one gives up everything for the sake of the kingdom, then one gains *the treasure* of heaven: Jesus Christ. The challenge to the ruler (C—18:22) is balanced by the confession of Peter for all disciples (C’—18:28). (CC p. 697)

poor – Distributing to the poor (18:22; rather than giving alms [12:33]) provides here a contrast between two categories of people: the rich and the poor.

L. T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 277, notes a Great Reversal motif here: “Jesus invites him to a fundamental reversal of his own status. It is a conversion call even more radical than that addressed to the Pharisees, that they should invite the poor to their banquets (14:13). This is a call to discipleship, which demands giving up all one’s possessions (14:33).” (CC p. 697)

The poor are a focus of Jesus’ concern from his first words in Nazareth (4:18) and the first beatitude in the Sermon on the Plain (6:20). Zacchaeus will do what this rich ruler did not do: give to the poor (19:8). (Cf. also Lk 7:22; 14:13, 21; 16:20, 22; 21:3) The command to sell everything would require the rich ruler to sell the family estate, and so he would have to give Jesus higher priority than his love for his possessions and his family, the two things he just claimed he had kept faithfully according to the Law. Jesus is calling him to a loyalty that supersedes his earthly loyalties, even as they are attempts to follow the OT law. Since Jesus is the perfect fulfillment of the Law, he becomes head of a new family, and loyalty to him must take precedence over loyalty to the family and the family fortune. The rich ruler’s response to Jesus’ call is understandable: he is deeply sorrowful because he is exceedingly rich (D—18:23).

L. T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 275, translates: “When he had heard these words, he became extremely sorrowful, for he was extremely wealthy.” He explains his translation: “The translation deliberately supplies ‘extremely’ to the first adjective to capture its force and to balance the ‘extremely’ (*sphodra*) Luke applies to the wealth” (p. 278). (CC p. 698)

Although he is a hearer of the Word (18:23; ὁ δὲ ἀκούσας), that is he came to Jesus and heard Jesus’ instruction on how to inherit eternal life, he is incapable of taking the final step that would make him a disciple of Jesus. He is confronted (are not we all?) with what appears impossible, and he cannot yet believe that such things which are impossible with people are possible with God (D’—18:26–27). If John’s baptism of repentance was offered him, he would likely refuse. As seed was thrown among the thorns in the parable of the sower, “these are the ones who heard,

but while going through life's journey, they are choked by the anxieties and riches and pleasures of life and do not bear fruit to maturity" (8:14).

R. Stein, *Luke*, 458, notes: "Jesus' commandment reveals that the ruler was an idolater and loved his possessions more than God and his neighbor." K. Bailey, *Through Peasant Eyes*, 164, adds this: "Yet surely the ruler's deep grief is not just a result of his love for his wealth. More than this, he comes to the painful awareness that he cannot *earn* his way into God's graces" (emphasis Bailey). And finally, C. Talbert, *Reading Luke*, 172, with many others, sees a parallel to Jesus' teachings in Luke 16: "From this [Jesus' commands in 18:22] the ruler learned something about himself he did not formerly know. He learned he was an idolater. Though he attempted to worship God and mammon at the same time, when the test was put to him he saw that his wealth was really his god." (CC p. 698)

18:23 *when I heard these* – ὁ δὲ ἀκούσας—See comments at 5:1 and 6:20–49 (the Sermon on the Plain) on "hearer of the Word" as a technical term for a catechumen. (CC p. 692)

very sad – περίλυπος—This word for sorrow and grief at the loss of something great occurs only here (and in the disputed text of the next verse) in Luke's gospel and is rare in the rest of the NT (only at Mt 26:38; Mk 6:26; 14:34, none of which is a parallel to this incident). (CC p. 692)

Because he was unwilling to accept Jesus' great challenge. (TLSB)

18:24–25 The teaching about the camel sounds like exaggeration, but it is literally true that no one can overcome the obstacles to entering the kingdom of God. The comparison has a humorous quality. (TLSB)

18:24 *difficult* – δυσκόλως—Jesus portrays those with possessions as actually entering the kingdom, but the verb "enter" is modified by this adverb, "with difficulty." (CC p. 692)

rich – οἱ τὰ χρήματα ἔχοντες—Jesus refers here not only to the rich, but to anyone who has possessions. The reference to the rich man comes in the next verse. (Cf. J. Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, 890–91; L. T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 278.) (CC p. 692)

kingdom of God – εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ εἰσπορεύονται—L. T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 278, notes this difference between Luke and Matthew (19:23) and Mark (10:23): "Luke has the present tense rather than the future; the focus therefore is on the kingdom—the people of God—forming around the prophet Jesus, rather than on the future life." Cf. also J. Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, 890: "Luke uses a present verb in place of Mark's future for 'enter.' ... With the presence of Jesus, the possibility of entry into the kingdom of God now exists (cf. at v 17), but, for those with possessions, entry is extremely difficult." (CC p. 692)

18:25 *eye of the needle* – Over the centuries, many have attempted to explain away the ridiculous image of a camel going through the eye of a needle, but almost all modern commentators affirm that Jesus intends the hearer to take it literally.

One of the most common attempts to explain away this image is to suggest that the needle is a reference to a small city gate that was difficult for a camel to pass through. The other involves the word "camel," κάμηλος, which a few copyists changed to κάμιλος, "rope." See J. Fitzmyer, *Luke X–XXIV*, 1204–5; J. Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, 890–91; R. Stein, *Luke*, 458; I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 687; L. T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 278; and K.

Bailey, *Through Peasant Eyes*, 165–66, for a discussion of the various interpretations of this saying. (CC p. 699)

The point is precisely the impossibility of a camel going through the eye of a needle. Inheriting eternal life/entering the kingdom is just as impossible. Either of these would take a miracle. Jesus is telling the rich man and all hearers of the Word that the kingdom is inaccessible for human beings without the miraculous intervention of God (cf. 18:26–27). (CC p. 699)

There appears to be a turning point in the narrative after Jesus' harsh words at the center about the difficulty of entering the kingdom. Although there is no mention of the rich man departing, as there is in Matthew (19:22) and Mark (10:22), he does seem to drop out of the picture. Another group of catechumens or listeners (οἱ ἀκούσαντες) arises to ask another question: "Then who is able to be saved?" (D'—Lk 18:26). For a first-century Jew, this is a legitimate question, for as we have seen, Luke calls the Pharisees "lovers of money" because they thought that material wealth was a sign of God's favor and approval (see comments at 16:14). "If a rich person—whose wealth was understood as a sign of God's blessing and who could offer more alms and sacrifices due to this wealth—can scarcely be saved, how could others—who lacked this sign of God's blessing and who could not be as generous in their alms and sacrifices—be saved?" This comprehensive question is much better than the ruler's (18:18), and it is prompted by his sad response. (CC p. 699)

18:26 *those who heard* – οἱ ἀκούσαντες—This is another oblique reference to catechumens and is the plural of the singular phrase in 18:23. See comments at 3:1–20 and 6:20–49. (CC p. 692)

then who can be saved – καὶ τίς δύναται σωθῆναι—This is a distant echo of the statement at 13:23: "Lord, are those who are being saved [σῳζόμενοι] few?" I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 687–88, notes that " 'To be saved' is the same as 'to enter the kingdom' (cf. 13:23f.)." It is also a reiteration of the question that began this section on discipleship in 18:8: "When the Son of Man comes, will he even find the faith on the earth?" (CC p. 692)

Because wealth and status were seen as signs of God's favor, the disciples wondered what hope there was for the poor. (TLSB)

18:27 *impossible for men...possible with God* – τὰ ἀδύνατα παρὰ ἀνθρώποις δυνατὰ παρὰ τῷ θεῷ ἐστίν—Here is an echo of what the angel told Mary at the annunciation of the birth of Jesus (1:37). (CC p. 692)

Jesus answers the question by telling the people that salvation comes from God alone; it is pure gift. For even though love for any material possessions can prevent one from entering the kingdom, anything is possible with God, as Jesus will soon show with Zacchaeus (19:1–10). Clearly these catechumens know that with God it is possible for a camel to enter through the eye of a needle, because God is the author of all miraculous happenings, including the salvation of a rich man. The desperate sorrow of the rich man (D—18:23) can only be reversed by Jesus, who is God, with whom all things are possible (D'—18:27). (CC pp. 699-700)

18:28 *Peter* – ὁ Πέτρος—Peter again assumes a position as spokesman for the Twelve. See comments at 5:1–11. (CC p. 692)

have left our homes – τὰ ἴδια—This is translated "what is ours" in order to include both family and possessions. R. Stein, *Luke*, 459, notes: " 'Left all' is literally *left our own things*. This

can refer to their families (18:29; cf. 14:26) or everything they had (18:22). Probably both are meant (cf. Acts 21:6).” (CC p. 693)

At this point in the narrative, Peter speaks and corroborates that in Jesus, God does indeed work the miracle of making disciples: “Behold, we, having left what is ours, followed [ἠκολουθήσαμεν] you” (C’—18:28). This is an echo of the disciples’ response to Jesus’ call by the Sea of Galilee, “having left all things, they followed [ἠκολούθησαν] him” (5:11). The hearer is transported back to the beginning of the Galilean ministry and the prophetic and apostolic foundation of the church. (CC p. 700)

Jesus the Prophet is the cornerstone of the church. He began to build the church with his first sermon in Nazareth (4:16–30). He then called Peter as the first among the Twelve (5:1–11); Levi-Matthew, who would become the first among the gospel writers (5:27–39); and the Twelve as reconstituted Israel. Peter here lays claim to being a true disciple, a hearer of the Word who has responded in faith. Such a disciple is characterized by an evangelical poverty that frees one to follow Jesus wherever he goes, fulfilling Jesus’ earlier command to sell everything, distribute to the poor, and follow him (C—18:22). Peter’s statement that the disciples have left “what is ours” (τὰ ἴδια; 18:28) renounces both possessions and family. It is impossible to know whether Peter fully understands what he is saying, but he does reiterate what Jesus has said about discipleship. The great irony, however, is that when Peter is called on to follow Jesus after his arrest, Luke records that “Peter was following [ἠκολούθει] at a distance” (22:54), and then Peter denied Jesus three times (22:55–62). To remain a disciple is ever a miracle. (CC p. 700)

Peter is anxious to know that their sacrifice has been adequate. (TLSB)

18:29–30 Degree of their sacrifice, though great by our standards, does not compare to the greatness of heavenly blessings. (TLSB)

18:29 *sake of the kingdom of God* – ἔνεκεν τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ—This is the fifth occurrence of “kingdom of God” in the last two pericopes (cf. 18:16, 17, 24, 25). Matthew has “for my name’s sake” (19:29) and Mark “for my sake and for the Gospel” (10:29). Luke accents “the kingdom of God” because of the context, but as many commentators have pointed out, the kingdom of God/heaven also occurs in the contexts of Matthew (19:12, 14, 23, 24) and Mark (10:14, 15, 23, 24, 25). (CC p. 693)

Peter’s question leads Jesus to summarize the great themes of his teaching thus far: to be a disciple one must be willing to give up property and family. Jesus has often shown that he has come to overturn the OT kinship laws and to create a new family of which he is the head (e.g., 8:19–21; 9:57–62; 12:52–53; 14:26–27). Thus, Jesus’ call *here* for leaving “house or wife or brother or parents or children on account of the kingdom of God” (B’—18:29) must be heard in the context of Jesus’ previous teaching that membership in the kingdom does not come through one’s bloodlines (the concern of so many OT kinship laws), but through Jesus and his call to an evangelical poverty that includes leaving house *and* home to follow him. Peter is contrasted to the rich ruler who, as we have noted, epitomizes the Pharisees.

D. Moessner, *Lord of the Banquet*, 167, notes similar parallels:

Thus when Peter exclaims that they had left their homes to follow Jesus, he is asserting that they have met the requirements of the journeying-guest mission as so strongly laid out by Jesus, the Son of Man, in 9:57–62. Though this bold claim of Peter does not portray the disciples, and especially not the apostles, in a good light, yet it still marks

them as distinct from the “ruler.” For this ruler mimics the excuses of the invited guests of 14:15–24; he cannot leave his home (18:28; 14:20) because of his many possessions (18:23–25; 14:18–19). This is to say, he epitomizes the rich Pharisee (14:1–24), who invites only rich guests and like-minded neighbors, and the Pharisees (16:14–15) whose love for money excludes them from entering the Kingdom in their midst. Here in 18:18–30 Luke presents a real-life fulfillment of what Jesus has already depicted and predicted (cf., e.g., 16:19–31). (CC pp. 700-701)

By introducing this statement with the unusual preface “Truly I say to you,” Jesus points out to his hearers how important this saying is. Its great importance contrasts with its great difficulty for them, especially because of their understanding of loyalty to family. K. Bailey articulates the hardness of this saying:

It is nearly impossible to communicate what all of this means in our Middle Eastern context. The two unassailable loyalties that any Middle Easterner is almost required to consider more important than life itself are *family* and the *village home*. When Jesus puts both of these in *one* list, and then demands a loyalty that supersedes them both, he is requiring that which is truly impossible to the Middle Easterner, given the pressures of his culture. The ten commandments he can manage [to affirm, if not follow], but this is too much. Only with God are such things possible. (CC p. 701)

Jesus’ radical call comes with his promise of present and future blessings. The narrative returns full circle from the rich ruler’s question about inheriting eternal life. Jesus answers that eternal life is God’s ultimate gift for those who follow his gracious but radical call to be his catechumens. Here is one of Jesus’ clearest statements of inaugurated eschatology: there are many gifts *now* in this world, and in the coming age is the gift of eternal life. For a disciple who has ears to hear Jesus’ words, the gift in this present age is the presence of Jesus, whose teaching and miracles signal the inauguration of the new era of salvation during which the Good News is preached to the poor. For the baptized disciples, or catechumens, the gift *now* is the presence of the Word made flesh in the sacramental gifts where they receive a foretaste of eternal life. For the disciple following Jesus and the catechumen in the church, the great gift—both now and not yet—is to be incorporated into a new family, the body of Christ, the church where Jesus dwells. For now “the kingdom of God is among you” (17:21), while Jesus himself is the “treasure in the heavens” (18:22) that yet awaits. (CC p. 701)

18:30 *the age to come*. The present age of sin and misery and the future age to be inaugurated by the return of the Messiah. (CSB)

ἐν τῷ καιρῷ τούτῳ—Jesus has already said in his discourse on hypocrisy and possessions that the “critical time” is this present time that has broken into the world through his ministry (see comments at Lk 12:56 and 19:44). “This present time” (cf. “this crucial time” in 12:56) contrasts with “the coming age” (ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι τῷ ἐρχομένῳ). (CC p. 693)

receive many times more. Cf 1Co 3:14. Believers opened their homes and hearts to one another as members of the family of faith. (TLSB)

18:18–30 Wealth, works, and personal sacrifice cannot save. However, any sacrifice made for God’s kingdom is amply compensated in this life and in the life to come. Heaven is our inheritance by our loving Father’s grace alone. Yet, in generosity, He will also reward us as we care for one another here. • The blessings You give, generous Father, are impossibly out of our

reach. Lift us up by the grace of Your Son, our Savior, that we may receive all You have prepared for us. Amen. (TLSB)

Jesus Foretells His Death a Third Time

31 And taking the twelve, he said to them, “See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. 32 For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. 33 And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise.” 34 But they understood none of these things. This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said.

As Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem draws to a close, he predicts his passion and resurrection one more time. Near the end of Luke’s narrative in each of the two major locales of Jesus’ ministry is a passion prediction: the Galilean ministry (9:22, 44–45) and the journey narrative (18:31–34).

J. Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, 894, accents this by suggesting that the journey narrative ends here with the third passion prediction because Jesus will enter Jericho to heal the blind man in the next passage. Others consider the journey narrative to extend to Palm Sunday when Jesus actually sets foot in the holy city. (CC p. 703)

By structuring his passion predictions in this way, Luke separates them by nine chapters, but he also provides the hearer with an affirmation of the passion and resurrection immediately before Jesus enters into Jerusalem for the Great Week.

R. Stein, *Luke*, 460, n. 297, notes Mark’s different but careful structure of the passion predictions: “Mark’s three-part pattern includes (1) a passion prediction (8:31–32a; 9:30–32; 10:32–34), (2) followed by misunderstanding (8:32b–33; 9:33–34; 10:35–41), (3) followed by teachings on discipleship (8:34–9:1; 9:35–37; 10:42–45).” (CC p. 703)

But it is not as if the hearer has not heard repeated references to Jesus’ passion (e.g., 12:49–50; 13:31–35; 17:25), in addition to frequent allusions to his journey to Jerusalem and his inevitable destiny there (9:51; 13:22; 17:11). What Luke has accomplished is to place the passion mystery at critical points in the narrative in such a way as to focus the hearers’ attention on the whole purpose of Jesus’ life, and therefore, the purpose of Luke’s gospel. (CC p. 703)

As in the other synoptic gospels, this third prediction is addressed to the Twelve. The secret of Jesus’ passion is for the Twelve alone until after the resurrection. The crowds are not privy to the three predictions of Jesus’ destiny in Jerusalem. Luke heightens the messianic *passion* secret (as compared to Mark’s messianic secret). The passion is the stumbling block to the faith of the Twelve that will only be reversed by the resurrection, after which the passion will be the main article of faith in Jesus. Jesus alerts his disciples to the significance of his final prediction with “behold” (ἰδοῦ) and the added information that “we are going up to Jerusalem” (18:31). The effect is to combine a travel notice (cf. 13:22; 17:11; 19:28) with a passion prediction, as Jesus did at the beginning of the journey narrative (9:51). Luke is the only synoptic evangelist to include the phrase “there will be accomplished [τελεσθήσεται] all the things that have been written through the prophets about the Son of Man.” Luke has used τελέω, “to complete, fulfill,” for fulfillment at 2:39; 12:50; and it will also occur in Jesus’ final citation of Scripture at 22:37, where he quotes Is 53:12 (cf. also Acts 13:29). Luke also uses τελειώω, “to bring to completion, accomplish, fulfill,” with a similar meaning at Lk 2:43 and 13:32. As Jesus draws near to

Jerusalem, the sense of imminent fulfillment is heightened and the climax anticipated. (CC pp. 703-704)

D. Moessner, *Lord of the Banquet*, 168, notes this on the sense of fulfillment in Jerusalem: “By his going up to Jerusalem, Jesus’ journey ... ‘will be consummated’; the idea of a culmination links up not only with the express notices of Jesus’ goal (9:51, 53; 13:22, 31–33, 34–35; 17:11; cf. 9:22, 31, 44) but also with passages of the divine necessity of Jesus’ or the Son of Man’s coming (9:57–58, 61–62; 10:1; 11:29–32; 12:35–38, 39–40, 41–48, 49–53, 57–59; 15:1ff.; 16:30–31). *Jesus’ mandate is about to be fulfilled*” (emphasis Moessner). (CC p. 704)

18:31 *everything that is written by the prophets*. Sometimes referred to as the third prediction of Jesus’ death, though the total number is more than three. The first distinct prediction is in 9:22 and the second in 9:43–45. The Messiah’s death had been predicted and/or prefigured centuries before (e.g., Ps 22; Isa 53; Zec 13:7; see Lk 24:27; Mt 26:24, 31, 54). (CSB)

πάντα τὰ γεγραμμένα—In the Emmaus story, Luke will use the neuter plural for the passion and resurrection facts. Here in the third passion prediction, he anticipates that technical expression by speaking about “all the things that have been written” in the OT about the Messiah’s passion and resurrection. J. Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, 895, notes: “ ‘All things’ points to the way in which Luke thinks not just of the passion but of a program of events leading on to the glorification of Jesus beyond resurrection (cf. 24:26; 9:31, 51).” (CC p. 702)

There is a unique Lukan touch to this third passion prediction, which has great significance for the gospel. Only Luke adds here “all the things that have been written [πάντα τὰ γεγραμμένα] through the prophets” (18:31). This shows his interest in demonstrating that the passion and resurrection were *in fulfillment of the Scriptures*. That Jesus’ death and resurrection are the fulfillment of the Scriptures will be a significant part of the development of the kerygma in Luke 24, particularly as Jesus chastises the Emmaus disciples for not believing the Scriptures (24:25) and then opens up for them all the Scriptures concerning how the Christ must suffer and then enter into glory (24:26–27). In his final commission to the disciples, Jesus also opens their minds to understand the Scriptures and then shows how the Scriptures have been fulfilled with respect to his passion, death, and resurrection (24:44–49). Preaching on God’s plan of salvation in Jesus—in fulfillment of the Scriptures—will be central to the preaching of the Gospel by the apostles in Acts. (Acts 2:14–42; 3:11–26; 4:5–12; 5:27–32; 7:1–8:1; 10:34–48; 13:13–43; 22:1–30) In the passion narrative, the psalms will figure prominently as Luke highlights that Jesus is the suffering righteous Messiah whom the Father has sent and whom the Father will vindicate by raising him from the dead *in fulfillment of the Scriptures* (see the excursus “The OT Witness to Christ”). (CC p. 705)

Son of Man. τῷ υἱῷ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου—Word order suggests this dative phrase to be more closely associated with “all the things that have been written” (πάντα τὰ γεγραμμένα) not “will be accomplished” (τελεσθήσεται). (Cf. R. Stein, *Luke*, 461; I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 690, for support of this position. J. Fitzmyer, *Luke X–XXIV*, 1209, takes the opposite position and translates “and there all that was written by the prophets will see fulfillment for the Son of Man.”) On “the Son of Man,” see comments at 5:24. (CC p. 702)

will be accomplished – τελεσθήσεται—This is a theological passive: “there will be accomplished” *by God*. It occurs first in the Greek text, emphasizing the significance of fulfillment in this final passion prediction. (CC p. 702)

Lit, “ended.” The prophecies were not completed until their fulfillment in Christ. (TLSB)

18:32 *delivered over to the Gentiles...mocked...shamefully treated...spit on* – παραδοθήσεται/ἐμπαυχθήσεται/ὕβρισθήσεται/ἐμπυσθήσεται—These four future passive verbs describe what will be done to Jesus. (CC p. 702)

Not only by Judas and the high priest, but also by the plan of God (22:22). (TLSB)

παραδοθήσεται—See comments at 9:44. (CC p. 702)

to the Gentiles – Jesus speaks of his betrayal or deliverance (παραδοθήσεται) to the Gentiles (18:32). As in the second passion prediction, the passive voice is again used for Christ’s “passive obedience.” “Gentiles” suggests the involvement of Pilate and the Roman authorities. This is a direct reference to the trials of Jesus and the charges that will be evaluated by Pilate in connection with Jesus’ arrest. (Only Luke records two trials before Pilate.) The relationship between Pilate, Herod, and the Jewish religious leaders will be significant in determining the charges against Jesus. Following this general reference to the passion is an expanded description of the passion and death (as in Mark but not in Matthew): “*And he will be mocked and mistreated and spit on, and after scourging, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise*” (18:32–33). The repeated use of καί, “and,” gives this list an almost liturgical rhythm, a recitation of each brutal detail in the litany of Jesus’ suffering. The observant hearer will note the curious fact that Luke 22–23 does not record two of these details: “spit on” and “scourging.” Their fulfillment may be gleaned from the other gospels. (CC pp. 704-705)

ὕβρισθήσεται—D. Moessner, *Lord of the Banquet*, 168, notes: “Only Luke speaks of Jesus’ ‘shameful treatment’ (v 32) which may echo the suffering of the ‘righteous’ in the OT.” (CC p. 702)

18:33 *flogging...kill* – μαστιγώσαντες ἀποκτενοῦσιν—The aorist participle “conceives of the action denoted by it ... as a simple fact” (E. Burton, *Moods and Tenses*, § 132). The sense of the context indicates that the *time* of it is antecedent to the (future) main verb. (CC p. 703)

he will rise. When Jesus predicts His sufferings, He also affirms the resurrection. This was not understood (v 34) until after the event (24:6–11). (TLSB)

18:34 *they did not understand* – καὶ αὐτοὶ οὐδὲν τούτων συνῆκαν—A similar expression is used of Mary and Joseph at 2:50 when they did not understand their twelve-year-old son’s explanation that he must be “among the things of my Father” (2:49). (CC p. 703)

was hidden – ἦν τὸ ῥῆμα τοῦτο κεκρυμμένον ἀπ’ αὐτῶν—This is a theological passive: “this word was hidden from them” by God. This explains why they didn’t “understand any of these things.” Contrast 24:26–27, 31, where the eyes of two disciples are opened to Jesus and the Scriptures. (CC p. 703)

Had they been alert to messianic prophecies (e.g., Is 53; Ps 22), the course of Jesus’ mission might have seemed obvious. In the next event, vv 35–43, they still did not grasp the nature of God’s kingdom. (TLSB)

did not know what he was talking about – οὐκ ἐγίνωσκον τὰ λεγόμενα—The imperfect suggests that their lack of knowledge concerning “the things that were spoken” was ongoing. (CC p. 703)

Finally, Luke expands this report of the disciples' reaction and so reinforces the hearer's repeated frustration at the disciples' inability to grasp what is happening to Jesus. Luke is the only synoptic evangelist to include the reaction of the disciples to this third passion prediction: "And they did not understand any of these things, and this word [τὸ ῥῆμα τοῦτο] was hidden from them, and they did not know the things that were spoken" (18:34).

Cf. D. Moessner, *Lord of the Banquet*, 168. R. Tannehill, *Narrative Unity I*, 227, notes: "The theme of ignorance will reappear in the speeches in Acts, where Peter and Paul will declare that the people of Jerusalem acted in ignorance in asking for Jesus' death (Acts 3:17; 13:27). *They were ignorant of the meaning of the Scriptures and of the plan of God*" (emphasis added). R. Stein, *Luke*, 461, attempts to explain why the disciples failed to comprehend the passion: "Some suggestions are (1) the idea of a suffering Messiah was too difficult for them to accept; (2) they were not able to see how such a death as Jesus spoke of would fulfill the OT; (3) they did not understand why the Messiah had to die; or (4) God had chosen to veil his truth from them." (CC p. 705)

The reaction here is almost exactly the same as the reaction of the disciples at his second passion prediction in Galilee (9:45), for it too contains a three-part response. The first phrase simply states that they did not understand. The second part includes both τὸ ῥῆμα, "the word" (the same expression for the passion as in the Galilean prediction), and the theological passive implying God's active role in hiding the significance of the passion from them. The major difference lies in the third part. Instead of speaking of fear (9:45), this pericope tells of a lack of knowledge of "the things that were spoken" (Luke uses the neuter plural "things" for the passion facts). The verb "to know" or "grasp the meaning," γινώσκω, is one of the evangelist's synonyms for faith, as in the prologue: "that you *come to recognize* [ἐπίγνωϛ] completely the reliability concerning the words by which you have been catechized" (1:4). When someone in the gospel finally understands the passion facts, their eyes are opened and they know Jesus (24:31). In the moment of recognition by the Emmaus disciples, the theological passive is used to indicate that their eyes were opened by God. (CC pp. 705-706)

Therefore, all three passion predictions include the idea of God *concealing* and the disciples' *inability* to comprehend the plan of salvation. In their misunderstanding, the disciples reject Jesus and fulfill the second phase of Luke's prophet Christology: that the Messiah will be rejected by his own people (see the excursus "Luke's Prophet Christology"). Misunderstanding and rejection are major themes in Luke 24; thus, this third and final passion prediction prepares the hearer for Luke 24, where the disciples will finally understand the plan of salvation when the risen Christ opens the Scriptures to them and explains his death and resurrection *in fulfillment of the Scriptures*. In Acts, they will be the leaders of the church. (CC p. 706)

They supposed that the Messiah would be a great temporal prince, and reign forever. Their wishes for this, and their expectations of it, were so strong that they did not believe or apprehend the meaning of what He had said. (CB)

The themes of the resurrection as the vindication of the crucifixion and the fulfillment of the Scriptures as the accomplishment of the divine plan are developed in Luke's gospel in anticipation of their climax in Luke 24. In that final chapter of the gospel, the stage is set for Acts and the acceptance of Christianity by both Jews and Gentiles. Luke 24 is the final affirmation that "all the things that have been written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning [Jesus]" (24:44) have been fulfilled and that Jesus has completed the journey of the prophet, who after suffering, is vindicated by God. Therefore, in this passion and resurrection

prediction, Jesus reveals this, but God keeps it hidden from the disciples until after it is actually accomplished. (CC p. 706)

18:31–34 As in ch 9, Jesus explains the culmination of His ministry in suffering, death, and resurrection. Today, do not settle for a glorious vision of Jesus that does not include the cross. God has fulfilled His glorious promises of prophecy in His Son. Jesus retains His scars (24:40) as pledges of His love for you. • Let not sin shield our eyes, O Father, from the truth of Jesus, who bore the cross to be our Savior. Amen. (TLSB)

Jesus Heals a Blind Beggar

35 As he drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. **36** And hearing a crowd going by, he inquired what this meant. **37** They told him, “Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.” **38** And he cried out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” **39** And those who were in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” **40** And Jesus stopped and commanded him to be brought to him. And when he came near, he asked him, **41** **“What do you want me to do for you?”** He said, “Lord, let me recover my sight.” **42** And Jesus said to him, **“Recover your sight; your faith has made you well.”** **43** And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.

18:35–43 Last miracle before Jesus enters Jerusalem. Significantly, it is an account that is colored with expressions about the Messiah. As in 18:1–8, persistence in prayer is answered. (TLSB)

18:35 *near Jericho.* ἐν τῷ ἐγγίξειν—On ἐγγίζω and its eschatological connotations. See A. A. Just Jr., *The Ongoing Feast*, 60–63, for a development of the eschatological character of Luke’s use of this word from the perspective of its use in the Emmaus story. (CC p. 707)

For the first time since Luke’s last travel notice (17:11), we are given specific geographical information about Jesus’ location. A clear shift in the narrative occurs with the evangelist’s report that Jesus draws near (ἐγγίξειν) to Jericho (18:35), which the hearer knows is very close to Jerusalem (10:30). This is a place along the way of pilgrimage to Jerusalem for Passover. Jesus will make his way from here to Bethphage and Bethany (19:28), then he will enter Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives on Palm Sunday. (CC p. 709)

Jericho is the scene of three climactic events: the healing of the blind man, in fulfillment of Lk 4:18 and Isaiah 61 (Lk 18:35–43); his stay in the home of Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector (19:1–10), where Jesus declares, “Today salvation [σωτηρία] happened to this house” (19:9); and the parable of the minas, which shows what a true king looks like and who that king might be (19:11–28). The significance of these events is heightened by Luke’s introductory statement to the parable of the minas: Jesus “said a parable because he was near [ἐγγύς] Jerusalem and they thought that immediately the kingdom of God was about to appear” (19:11). This parable probably was told in Jericho. Thus the Jericho narrative contains three pointed pericopes just before Jesus’ entrance into Jerusalem. (CC p. 709)

a blind man. Bartimaeus (Mk 10:46). Matthew reports that two blind men were healed. Probably since one was the spokesman and more outstanding, Mark and Luke did not record the presence of the other. (CSB)

Blindness at that time precluded regular work, so he depended on others’ generosity. (TLSB)

τυφλός τις—Luke began the previous passage with “a certain ruler” (18:18; τις ... ἄρχων), establishing a parallel between these two passages, but the blind man contrasts with the ruler. The contrast is real. In Mark the blind man is called “Bartimaeus, son of Timaeus” (10:46). Even though Luke is fond of identifying the participants in the gospel, for some reason he does not do so here. (CC p. 707)

With the shift in locale to Jericho, Luke provides a careful framework for this miracle. Not only does the place stand out, so also do the participants in the story. Jesus is not mentioned by name until later (18:37) but is referred to here as simply drawing near to Jericho.

Luke has Jesus healing the blind man as he *enters* the city, followed by the scene with Zacchaeus, which takes place *in* Jericho. Zacchaeus appears only in Luke’s gospel. For a discussion of the harmonizing of Luke with Matthew and Mark, see I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 692–93; J. Nolland, *Luke 18:35–24:53*, 898–99; J. Fitzmyer, *Luke X–XXIV*, 1211–12. W. Arndt, *Luke*, 386–87, and I. Ylvisacker, *The Gospels* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1932) 532, consider the discrepancy of entering/leaving Jericho as more significant than the number of blind men healed. The latter is a matter of choosing whether to report both or not. The former can be resolved by reference to the space between “old Jericho” and Herod’s new Jericho, i.e., while leaving the one and approaching the other. (CC p. 710)

The person who stands out is the blind man. He sits “by the road.” Luke uses ὁδός, “road, way,” in connection with catechesis—the teaching of the Christian faith (see commentary on 1:76–79). (See also Lk 3:4–5; 7:27; 8:5, 12; 14:23; 20:21; 24:32, 35) Here, this is the road to Jerusalem on which pilgrims travel for Passover. Not only is it an ideal place to beg, but it also situates the man in a place to hear of Jesus. Somehow he has heard about this Jesus of Nazareth, even though he might not have been in the presence of Jesus previously. This blind man is one of the poor, a man of faith ready to be enlightened and called to follow Jesus “in the way” (cf. 9:3, 57; 10:4; 12:58). He is quite different from the rich ruler in the previous pericope. He fits into the category of “tax collector” in the earlier parable (18:9–14). The rich man was very sad that he was unable to follow Jesus and be his disciple; the blind man will follow him, praising God. (CC p. 710)

This blind man reminds the hearer of Jesus’ programmatic sermon in Nazareth. There, in fulfillment of Isaiah 61 and 58, Jesus tells the other Nazarenes that part of his messianic program is “to preach ... to the blind recovery of sight” (4:18; κηρύξαι ... τυφλοῖς ἀνάβλεψιν). This is part of his mission of mercy. John the Baptist and his followers needed clarification about Jesus’ mission when they came and asked him, “Are you the Coming One or should we wait for another?” (7:19–20). Jesus responded by pointing to his acts of mercy. Jesus “healed many from diseases and scourges and evil spirits, *and to many blind [τυφλοῖς] he granted to see*” (7:21). Having demonstrated that his ministry is one of mercy, Jesus tells them, “Go, tell John the things you see and hear,” and then he draws on Isaiah once again: “*Blind are seeing again, lame are walking around, lepers are being cleansed, and deaf are hearing, dead are being raised, poor have proclaimed to them the Good News*” (7:22). (Is 29:18; 35:5–6; 42:7, 16–19; 43:8; 61:1) Jesus makes no distinction between physical and spiritual healing: for him they amount to the same thing. The question raised at Nazareth is definitively answered at Jericho: Jesus is present to heal both physically and spiritually. (CC pp. 710–711)

by the roadside – παρὰ τὴν ὁδόν—On the catechetical nature of ὁδός, see comments at the Benedictus, 1:67–80. (CC p. 707)

begging – ἐπατιῶν—The blind man’s begging places him in the categories of “outcast” like tax collectors and sinners (E.g., Lk 5:27–32; 7:22, 29, 36–50; 10:30–37; 14:13, 21; 15:1–2; 18:9–14; 19:1–10) and of “helpless” like the babies in 18:15–17. The unjust steward was too ashamed to beg (16:3), whereas Lazarus had no choice (16:20–21). As a helpless outcast and a blind man, he is a suitable recipient of Jesus’ ministry according to the programmatic sermon at Nazareth (4:18). (CC p. 707)

18:36 *heard a crowd going by* – ἀκούσας δὲ ὄχλου διαπορευομένου—This passing remark by the evangelist may signal to the hearer that the Passover is near, for, as J. Fitzmyer puts it, this sounds “like a group of pilgrims making their way toward Jerusalem” (*Luke X–XXIV*, 1215). (CC p. 707)

From the noise, he knows there is a crowd, but not why. (TLSB)

inquired – ἐπυνθάνετο—The imperfect of this middle deponent gives a picture of repeated inquiries. (CC p. 707)

what this meant – τί εἶη τοῦτο—Leaving out ἄν (with & A B and others) makes this an oblique optative in an indirect question, corresponding to the indicative or subjunctive of direct discourse (BDF § 386 [1]). (With ἄν the indirect discourse would correspond to the potential optative of the direct question.) Thus, the implied direct question here is “τί ἐστὶν τοῦτο;” “What is this?” English calls for an adjustment to a form of the appropriate *time* in relationship to the main verb, hence, “was.” (CC p. 708)

18:37 *Jesus of Nazareth* – Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζωραῖος—This form of “Nazarene,” transliterated “Nazoraean” (BAGD) is found only here in Luke but occurs frequently in Matthew, John, and Acts. (Acts 2:22; 3:6; 4:10; 6:14; 22:8; 24:5; 26:9) A similarly spelled adjective, common in Mark and used two times by Luke (4:34; 24:19) is Ναζαρηνός, which clearly means “one from Nazareth.” It is more difficult to make a philological connection between the term here, Ναζωραῖος, and “Nazareth” (BAGD). While Matthew (2:23) associates Ναζωραῖος with Nazareth, this distinctive term likely has other biblical associations too. See commentary below. (CC p. 708)

From the start, the blind man demonstrates that he is a man of faith. Although his physical eyes are shut, he has been opened to the healing presence of Jesus, whom he pursues with persistence. There must have been something unusual in the rustle of the pilgrim throng traveling to Jerusalem for Passover that prompted his inquiry (18:36). When he hears the title “Jesus the Nazoraean,” he becomes so agitated that he will not abide by the rebuke of those accompanying Jesus. It is the title “Nazoraean” that prompts the blind man’s persistent cries for mercy, for it is more than a simple notice of where Jesus is from. (CC p. 711)

First, this title designates Jesus as the miracle-working prophet from Nazareth. Though the blind man’s physical eyes see nothing, his eyes of faith perceive the presence of the Creator come to bring miraculous healing to his creation.

The hearer will note that this is the last of only six miracles during Luke’s long journey narrative, and it is the fourth healing miracle in a row (10:17–20; 11:14–23; 13:10–17; 14:1–6; 17:11–19; 18:35–43). (CC p. 711)

The title “Jesus the Nazoraean” also directs the hearer to go back and consider Jesus’ roots in the gospel.

This will be part of the methodology of Luke 24, when the women are to remember Jesus' words in Galilee (24:6), *the Emmaus disciples recall Jesus' miracle working with the title "Jesus of Nazareth"* (24:19), and Jesus' final commission to the disciples reminds them about the words he spoke "while I was still with you" (24:44). (CC p. 711)

But this title would communicate something more to the first-century Jewish hearer. Jesus is called a "Nazarene" (Ναζαρηνέ) at 4:34 and 24:19 (and often in Mark), but the spelling here (Ναζωραῖος) is reminiscent of the OT נָצַחַ, the "branch" from the root of Jesse in Is 11:1: "There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a *branch* shall grow out of his roots." (CC p. 711)

Mt 2:23 uses the same Greek form as Lk 18:37 and refers to OT prophecy of a "Nazoraean," probably meaning Is 11:1 too. Jer 23:5; 33:15 are quite similar; they promise a righteous נִצְמָץ, "sprout, shoot," from the line of David. Cf. also Is 53:2. נָצַחַ occurs also in Is 14:19; 60:21; Dan 11:7. נִצְמָץ has a messianic sense also in Is 4:2; 61:11; Zech 3:8; 6:12; cf. Ezek 16:7; Ps 65:11 (ET 65:10). (CC p. 711)

It is upon this Branch that the Spirit of the Lord will rest (Is 11:2),

Is 11:2 reads as follows: "And the Spirit of Yahweh shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of Yahweh." (CC p. 711)

the same Spirit referred to in Is 61:1, which Jesus quoted in his first sermon in Nazareth. This Branch from the root of Jesse is none other than the "Son of David," the blind man's title for Jesus in the next two verses. (Cf. Is 7:13; 9:7; 16:5; 22:22; 55:3) This title, Ναζωραῖος, alerted the blind man to—and confirmed his faith in—Jesus, the Spirit-endowed healer, the Branch, the Son of David, the Messiah. "Nazoraean" also recalls that in Jesus' first sermon, *delivered at Nazareth*, he promised *to restore sight to the blind*, thus proclaiming himself the Christ. (CC p. 711)

Jesus is described by His hometown, which cannot explain who He truly is. (TL5B)

18:38–39 *Son of David*. A Messianic title (see Mt 22:41–45; Mk 12:35; Jn 7:42; see also 2Sa 7:12–13; Ps 89:3–4; Am 9:11; Mt 12:23; 21:15–16).

The blind man confesses his faith by crying out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me" (Lk 18:38). He preserves the name "Jesus" but changes "the Nazoraean" to "Son of David" in his confession. The hearer knows that Jesus' Davidic ancestry has already been clearly established in the infancy narrative (1:32, 69; 2:4, 11) and the genealogy (3:31). This title will become a source of controversy during his Jerusalem teaching (20:41–44), for which this passage is a preparation. What the blind beggar "sees" by faith without physically seeing is that Jesus is the royal messianic figure promised in the OT, about to enter the holy city of his destiny as God's final, eschatological prophet. He also knows that this royal Messiah is merciful, and so he cries out to him accordingly: ἐλέησόν με, "have mercy on me" (18:38). The hearer heard the same appeal in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (16:24) and from the lepers (17:13). (CC p. 712)

18:38 *have mercy on me* – ἐλέησόν με—See comments at 1:50. One expression of mercy is the giving of alms, used twice in Luke (see comments at 11:41 and 12:33), but the blind man will ask for even greater mercy. (CC p. 708)

Note that the beggar does not at this point ask for *healing*, but for *mercy*. This cry for mercy may have been understood by some of Jesus' followers as a cry for alms, for after all, he was a beggar, and one expression of mercy is the giving of alms. The word for "alms" (ἐλεημοσύνη) comes from the same family as "mercy" (ἔλεος) and is used twice in Luke by Jesus in instructions about discipleship (see comments at 11:41 and 12:33). When "those preceding"

D. Moessner, *Lord of the Banquet*, 204, notes:

But this beggar must persist against the hindering of "those who were leading the way" ("rebuke," v. 39; cf. 18:15b). Who are meant by this designation—the Twelve, some of the disciples, or perhaps even some Pharisees (cf. "rebuke," 19:39)? Luke does not specifically identify this group. But the presence of this hindering here should come as no surprise. We have seen the disciples hinder children after being warned against an attitude of superiority and privilege (18:9–17). Jesus must now stop and "command" the blind man to be brought to him (v. 40). (CC p. 712)

Jesus rebuke the blind man, it is another example that those who should know and understand Jesus fail to understand his mission, whereas a blind beggar on the side of the road knows he is the Son of David and has come to bring God's mercy. The character of the blind man's faith is expressed by his second cry "all the more": "Son of David, have mercy on me" (18:39). Because this is repeated, the hearer understands that the merciful miracles of Galilee reveal the essence of who Jesus is: the Creator who will show the ultimate mercy by dying on a cross in Jerusalem, so that, by his grace, he may restore and re-create fallen humanity. (CC p. 712)

18:39 *rebuked*. As with the children in v 15, the blind man was considered unworthy of Christ's attention. People likely viewed his condition as evidence of sin (cf Jn 9:2). (TLSB)

cried out all the more – ἔκραζεν—The imperfect suggests repeated action. He wouldn't stop crying out. (CC p. 708)

18:40 Thus far the narrative has only referred to Jesus' presence. Now he becomes an active participant. He pauses in his journey and commands the blind beggar to be brought to him. This, in and of itself, indicates that Jesus has heard his confession of faith. Luke subtly alerts us to impending salvation by using the eschatological "drew near" (ἐγγίσαντος) as the blind man approaches Jesus for healing (18:40). Jesus asks the blind man a question, "What for you do you want I should do?" (18:41). This seems odd, since Jesus and everyone else know what he needs. But Jesus gives him the opportunity to confess his faith before the journeying pilgrims. He has already voiced his faith, but now he adds a third title and a request for sight: "Lord, in order that I see again" (ἀναβλέψω; 18:41). (CC pp. 712-713)

commanded...brought – ἐκέλευσεν αὐτὸν ἀχθῆναι πρὸς αὐτόν—Jesus commanded that "he" (αὐτόν—the blind man) be brought "to him" (πρὸς αὐτόν—to Jesus). (CC p. 708)

came near – ἐγγίσαντος δὲ αὐτοῦ—The antecedent of αὐτοῦ in this genitive absolute is probably the blind beggar, not Jesus, but it is impossible to be certain. (CC p. 708)

18:41 *want me to do for you* – τί σοι θέλεις ποιήσω... —The clumsy English preserves the word order in the Greek, emphasizing "for you" by placing it forward and the action of Jesus by placing it at the end. σοι is a dative of advantage, indicating that Jesus recognizes that this man wants Jesus to do something for him. (CC p. 708)

Lord. Ambiguous title; it could mean no more than “Sir,” but it is also used in the LXX to translate God’s name. The wording provokes the reader to consider who Jesus is. (TLSB)

let me recover my sight – ἵνα ἀναβλέψω—This ἵνα clause is dependent on ποιήσω, not just a supplied θέλω. The blind man wants Jesus to act *in order that* he might receive his sight. ἀναβλέπω is used three times in this passage. The noun from this verb is used in Jesus’ programmatic Nazareth sermon, where, quoting Is 61:1, he announces that he has come “to preach ... to the blind recovery of sight” (κηρύξαι ... τυφλοῖς ἀνάβλεψιν [Lk 4:18]). See also 7:22. (CC p. 708)

The irony here is that he has already received his “sight,” for he confesses Jesus as “Son of David” and “Lord.” “Opened eyes” are a significant Lukan metaphor for an eschatological understanding of the work of Jesus. But now, in Jesus’ last recorded miracle before entering the holy city of Jerusalem, he gives a blind man *physical* sight. The imperative “see again” (ἀνάβλεψον; 18:42) is Jesus’ absolution upon the blind man (see commentary on 5:23). His eyes are now open in more ways than one. And Jesus adds to his declaration of mercy, “your faith has saved you.” What Jesus acknowledges here is the man’s faith in who Jesus is and the man’s persistent desire to stand in the presence of Jesus, who brings a new creation. Salvation is a Lukan theme (see comments at 1:47) that is also prominent in the very next passage, where Jesus will say to Zacchaeus, “Today salvation happened to this house, since also he is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came in order to seek and to save the lost” (19:9–10). Salvation comes through Jesus, and the benefits of that salvation flow from his merciful presence among fallen creatures who are blind to the new creation unless he opens their eyes. (CC p. 713)

18:42 *your faith* – ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε—“Your faith has saved you” emphasizes that opened eyes enable both physical and *spiritual* sight. This man has received eternal salvation. (CC p. 708)

18:43 *followed him* – ἠκολούθει—See comments at 5:11 and in the previous pericope at 18:22. The imperfect tense here suggests continuous action, i.e., he became a disciple who continued to follow Jesus to Jerusalem. (CC p. 708)

Characteristic verb of discipleship. (TLSB)

people...saw...praised God – πᾶς ὁ λαός—This is the first and only time that λαός is used during Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem in Luke. The word occurs thirty-six times in Luke but is absent after 9:13 until 18:43. Yet it is common in the infancy narrative, the Galilean ministry, and Jesus’ Jerusalem ministry and has a climactic use at 24:19. See comments at 1:10. J. Fitzmyer, *Luke X–XXIV*, 1217, offers an insightful comment: “*Laos* is the Septuagintal word for God’s people, and the frequency with which Luke uses it from now to the end of his Gospel is striking (it will appear nineteen times), and it is often used in contrast to the leaders of Jerusalem (esp. from 19:47–48 on).” (CC pp. 708-709)

The Lukan conclusion shows how a confrontation with the presence of Jesus brings the radical Great Reversal for the blind man: immediately he receives his sight.

R. Stein, *Luke*, 465 is eloquent on the Great Reversal theme:

A final Lukan emphasis in the account involves the great reversal. The “first,” as represented by the Pharisee (Luke 18:9–14) and the young ruler (18:18–30), did not receive spiritual healing. They had been blinded by their riches (18:24) and self-righteousness (18:11–12). Yet the “last,” as represented by the tax collectors (18:9–14;

19:1–10) and the blind man (and for Luke’s readers, the Gentiles), entered the kingdom. The irony of ironies is that the blind now see and the unrighteous become righteous, whereas the seeing have become blind and the righteous have become unrighteous because, boasting of their own self-righteousness, they will not accept the only real righteousness, “the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith” (Phil 3:9). This great reversal will be the theme of the next account as well. (CC 713)

But the evangelist shows that something else is happening by providing a conjunctive καί, “and”: the blind man also becomes a disciple, following Jesus and glorifying God. This is the typical response throughout Luke of those who have experienced the salvific presence of Jesus. The receiver of the gift worships the Giver of the gift.

C. Talbert, *Reading Luke*, 175–76, says: “The human response to the healing and conversion is vertical, that is, praise to God (cf. 7:36–50). The meeting of a physical need led to a spiritual conversion and produced an outpouring of praise. Here is one paradigm of conversion then and now.” (CC p. 714)

The blind man worships God because he has been visited by God’s presence in the flesh of Jesus the Nazoraean, the Son of David, his Lord. And to show the impact this miracle has on the Passover pilgrims, Luke tells us that “the people,” i.e., God’s faithful, also give praise to God. They too worship God for fulfilling his promise through Isaiah “to preach ... to the blind recovery of sight” (4:18). (CC pp. 713-714)

18:35–43 A blind beggar overcomes the crowd and cries for sight. Today, persist in prayer and in faith. Jesus, great David’s greater Son, brings health and salvation to all who believe. • Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me! Let me see You clearly and confess You truly. Amen. (TLSB)