

Commentary In Brief

On

THE BOOK OF LUKE

BY

REV. EARL F. PALMER

Union Church of Manila

Preface

This commentary represents the principal lecture comments made during the eleven month adult class study of Luke 1966-67 at the Union Church of Manila.

Introduction

The Gospel of Luke was written at about 63 - 65 AD by the beloved physician Luke. This is the one gospel written by a Gentile and slanted toward the non-Jewish world. Nowhere does Luke's name actually appear as the writer but as is true of the other gospels there is an autograph. (Note the "We" passages of Acts i.e. chp. 16: 11-24)

1: 1-4 This formal Hellenistic greeting distinctly sets off both of Luke's
On Orderly books. (See Acts 1:1-2) Luke records that he has decided to write
Account this "narrative" so that Theophilus will know the "truth". These
 two words are a clue to the basic nature of the N.T. gospels. They
are historical documents and yet with a difference: They are also documents of conviction, of faith. They record not only events but also dogmatic affirmation as well. Luke records that he has gathered his data from eyewitnesses; he hints that he has seen other documents, perhaps Mark, Matthew and a lost book scholars call "Q" source. Luke promises that this will be an "orderly" account which may refer to the fact that Mark does not include the birth narratives, nor a very detailed discussion of the teaching ministry of Christ.

1: 5-80 Luke presents a very detailed and sensitive account of the birth of
Prophetic John the Baptist. He is very deeply interested in John and records
Origins more about this strong figure than all of the other writers. Some
 scholars have suggested, and I think correctly, that one of the
sources for Luke could well have been members of John's group, perhaps some of his disciples. Following his line of reasoning it has been speculated that Luke obtained not only these birth narratives and information on John's origins but also the five poems (songs) that Luke records: The canticle of the Angel Gabriel 1:14-17; the canticle for Mary of the Angel Gabriel 1:32-35; the magnificent of the Virgin Mary 1:46-55; the benedictus of Zechariah 1:67-79; and the nunc diminitus of Simeon 2:29-35. It is also possible that parts or the whole of the birth narrative of Jesus may also come from the John the Baptist group, though there is reason to hold that Luke also could have received information directly from the Lord's mother. If these songs are in fact preserved by the group that surrounded John the Baptist then Luke has recorded for us some of the

official teaching of the great prophet, preserved as would be expected in memorable Rabbinic poems.

What did John the Baptist teach? The five poems in Luke's gospel give us an invaluable insight into the message and emphasis of this very powerful and important man. Jesus called him the greatest prophet who ever lived. I believe we can summarize the teaching in the five songs as follows:

(1) The message of judgement - Present in the songs and of course also in the recorded speeches of John the Baptist is the vigorous affirmation of the reality of judgement. God is evaluating and leveling all people. John quotes the Isaiah 40 passage that every mountain shall be made low and every valley shall be raised. This emphasis of the leveling of men by God is very deeply etched in the message of John. Notice the magnificat (Lk 1:51) "He has scattered the proud... put down the mighty... filled the hungry... the rich he has sent empty away." Also notice Simeon's song (Lk 2:34) "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many... "

I The message of the Virgin birth of Christ - Two of the songs, the canticle of Gabriel to Mary and the Magnificat both tell in joyous poetry of the miraculous birth of Jesus Christ. If we are correct in assigning these poems of Luke's gospel to the John the Baptist corpus of teaching then it means that the doctrine of the Virgin birth of Christ was taught by John and of course this poses a major crisis for those critics who hold that the doctrine of the Virgin birth is a relatively late doctrine, having developed later in the life of the church and then added to the Luke and Matthew accounts. No, Luke gets this doctrine from the John the Baptist group who have preserved these five songs along with other sayings of the great prophet.

II John's special role as the prophet who prepares the way for the Lord - Two of the songs have to do with John and they portray John as:

(a) A special, even odd sort of man (See Lk 1:15 - "he shall drink no wine...") which of course John was, even to the extent of adopting strange dress and living in the wilderness.

(b) As the one of secondary importance to the Lord - John never forgets his secondary role even though he was probably more famous than Jesus.

III The call to the people to repent of their sins - The Benedictus and Gabriel's songs both tell of John's task in "turning" the people toward God.

IV The word of hope - is found in all five of the poems. These songs combine the message of God's stern judgement with the good news that all is not lost; God will keep us and will come to our side. John's message is messianic; he is looking for the one who shall "reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

2: 1-20 Luke shows his interest in the historical context of the first century The Birth by his references to Caesar Augustus and Quirinius. He notes that this is the first enrollment when Quirinius was governor of Syria. Many fascinating studies have been made of Luke's precise statement and it appears that the most recent scholarship supports the date of Christ' birth at about 6 BC which means that Quirinius who had a formal term as Syrian governor 6 AD was, before that formal term, the acting governor or prime minister at about 6 BC. This means that the enrollment was for the purposes of increasing revenue in con-

nection with Rome's war with the Cicilian tribes in 6 BC. In the Jewish territories the people were enrolled by family groups which explains the journey to Bethlehem. Luke's account is tender and yet modest in writing style. He records the fact that only the "night shift" shepherds were invited to witness the event of the birth of the world's Redeemer.

2: 21-52 The parent of Jesus were simple, direct, believable people. They follow the traditions of Israel and offer their thanks to God in the great temple of Jerusalem for the birth of Jesus. It is interesting that the New Testament makes no reference to the childhood of Jesus apart from Luke's brief paragraph 2:41-52. This means that our Lord grew up in a normal atmosphere as any boy in Nazareth. Even the normal tensions between parents and son is evident in the singular boyhood experience that Luke chooses to record.

3: 1-20 Luke begins this section with a very precise and careful dating of the beginning of John's brief ministry at Jordan. The 15th year of the reign of Tiberius would be AD 25-26. Luke is fascinated with the life and work of John the Baptist and now gives attention to this great figure.

He characterizes John's ministry by (1) his phrase "preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins..." and (2) by the beautiful quotation from Isaiah 40:

"The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

John is a powerful figure and not easily defined. He is an urban man who has rejected the city and has gone to the jungles of Jordan near the Dead Sea. The people are eager to hear him even though his words are harsh and his accusation biting. There has been much speculation by scholars that John may have lived for some period of time with the Essene Sect which occupied settlements near the Dead Sea. This view is supported by: (1) John's unusual food and dress habits (2) his choice of Jordan for a center of his preaching (3) his use of the phrase "brood of vipers" which appears in some of the recently discovered Dead Sea scrolls.

In the quotations that Luke gives of John's preaching we see the following elements to his message:

- (1) The stern message of judgement - "axe is to the root"
- (2) The strong appeal to morality and just living - "...Rob no one by violence..."
- (3) The note of expectation for the Messiah - "...he who is mightier is coming..."
 - (a) The Messiah has a new baptism - "Holy Spirit with fire"
 - (b) He holds history in his hand - "his winnowing fork... his threshing floor"

Note Luke 3:18 - all of this preaching Luke calls the "good news". Judgement and grace has been united. John may have been influenced by the Essenes but he

comes out with remarkably different message than they do. He is an odd man but not simply odd; he has something new and exciting to say and the people come evidently in large numbers to hear him. This courageous prophet is finally silenced by the trivial tetrarch Herod because John dared to challenge even the immorality of the Palace.

3: 21-38 Jesus began his ministry in humility by acknowledging the prophetic The Baptism of Jesus ministry of his cousin John the Baptist. The baptism of Jesus is the first major event in the biblical narrative and all four gospels record it in various ways. (The reader will notice that when the same event is recorded by each gospel writer it is very rare when the speeches come through in identical wording. This variation is a mark of the authenticity of the accounts and shows the historian at least two things: (1) That the early church did not alter the accounts to eliminate such differences. This is of great importance for the interpreter. (2) That each biblical writer felt a freedom to record a speech in a slightly different form from the other writers where he possessed a different source of information.)

Luke records the genealogy of Jesus, tracing that ancestry through Joseph. He is probably aware that Matthew has offered a genealogy which traces our Lord's ancestry through the mother of Christ.

4: 1-13 Following the positive moment of honor in the baptism comes the negative The Temptation challenge to Christ by the Devil. This private experience of Christ greatly interests the New Testament writers and its theological significance is very marked.

(1) The event points up the reality of a massive counterforce which stands over against the purpose and person of Christ. Jesus at the beginning of his ministry faces this moral evil which the New Testament calls "the Devil" and stands his ground during three temptations. One way of viewing Christ's whole ministry is to realize that our Lord battled the harsh reality of evil from the beginning here in the rugged mountains of Jordan to the dark hour of Good Friday where all that is evil seemed to win out. Therefore in one sense the temptation narratives are of thematic importance. They tell us that the N.T. takes the existence of evil very seriously.

(2) The nature of the temptations are important. In two of the temptations Christ is tempted to make use of his authority to browbeat and compel men to obey him, either by providing bread from stones or spectacular jumps from the temple roof. The one temptation blatantly asks Christ to acknowledge the supposed reign of evil and thereby in that cynical act to win the obedience of all of the kingdom of the earth. In this case as with the other two Jesus is flattered by the Devil and our Lord's messianic claim upon and kingship over all of life is acknowledged but in each case Jesus is tempted to short-cut his necessary journey through life, through the way of our journey, through the valley of our fears and our death. But Jesus rejects the short cut and instead decides to be a genuine man; he decides upon concreteness, a real existence in our behalf and we discover from Luke's narrative that the way of the short cut is evil. Jesus decides to go the whole way and with this narrative the theological context of the book is established.

4: 14-30 Luke now records another event of considerable significance. Jesus No Favors for Nazareth decides to begin his verbal ministry in the northern provinces of Palestine and in fact in his own town of Nazareth. He takes the scroll during the Sabbath and reads the text from Isaiah 61:1-2 and

announces the fulfillment of these Messianic sentences. At first the people are pleased by this incredible announcement until Jesus breaks the long standing and deeply engrained principle of "special favors for those with special connections". These people of our Lord's hometown expect and insist upon special favors from Christ. They have heard of miracles one in Capernaum and now they feel that they have a right to expect their share of miracles because of the special connection that they possess. Jesus ignores this traditional value system and the price he must pay for his defiance of their cultural more is the instant and total wrath of his childhood associates; but Christ is too great a match for infuriated, confused men and he eludes them. He makes the comment that a prophet is unable to be decisive with the people who feel that they have a special hold over him. The prophet must not be possessed by any tie if he is to be really helpful to people. But if they control him by either cultural or family ties then he is of no help. Therefore Jesus leaves Nazareth a little town that because of its cultural captivity would miss knowing the man who had far more to give than the trivial favors they wanted.

4: 31-39 Jesus has spoken at Nazareth and admitted verbally to his mission. Now Words and Events he acts in concrete instances in a way that confirms his mission. Jesus cannot be understood as simply a teacher to whom we listen. He is also a man of action, of acts, of works who does things that are experienced.

4: 40-41 A new element is now inserted into the ministry of Jesus Christ and it The Secret has been called by scholars the "Messianic Secret". Jesus was willing at Nazareth to admit his divine nature but now begins his effort to keep that fact a guarded secret. The very title Jesus uses to identify himself "Son of Man" is an example of the messianic secret.

Luke 4: 42-44 Jesus describes his ministry to the people as the announcement of Kingdom of God the "good news of the Kingdom of God." God's kingly reign over life is good news and with these words Jesus explains the purpose of His coming.

Luke 5: 1-11 The call of the disciples of Christ is recorded in various ways in Jesus Wins His Men the four gospels and with considerable detail. Luke however underplays the calling of the twelve and gives to the reader this very moving account of the fishing incident. The disciples have heard Jesus speak and they have seen Him heal the sick but in each case these words and kind acts of Christ do not make a permanent mark upon the disciples. Jesus is very wise in his encounter with men and he decides to go with them to the place that they know best, fishing. It is there that a great haul of fish is caught and following that event Peter is convinced of the authority of his Master; nothing else has made the mark upon these men that can compare to Christ at their side as a better fisher than they are. And so they follow him.

5: 12-26 Luke now gives two more healing incidents and again repeats the Jesus at Work "secret" emphasis (verse 14). The event of the four friends who bring the paralyzed man is different from previous miracles in that Jesus consciously and deliberately enters the moral realm of the human crises with the words: "Man your sins are forgiven..." This passage introduces for the first time the attitude of the Pharisee party toward Jesus. They question Jesus at a very basic level which gives a clue to the depth of this group. At this point, let us consider the socio-political-religious groups or parties of the first century.

Sadducees - This party is made up of the aristocracy of Jerusalem and to this party belongs the key instruments of religious power. They control the high

priesthood of the temple and the Sanhedren. This group disagrees sharply with the Pharisee party over certain kingdom doctrines and particularly the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead which the Sadducees do not believe. Jesus only slightly interests the Sadducees and the N.T. reader does not meet them until the very end of our Lord's ministry. When they do encounter Jesus their questions like the quality of their lives are trivial and cynical. (See Luke 20: 27-33)

Pharisees - This group which developed as did the Sadducees during the inter-testamental period are more substantial and ideologically significant. They take Jesus of Nazareth very seriously and even during his ministry in Galilee, some 90 miles from Jerusalem, they are at hand to question his acts and try to understand his ministry. These men are Jewish purists who are deeply concerned to keep the tradition of the law in force. They resent the compromises of the Sadducees and Herodians and also the excesses of the Zealots and Essenes. They stand in the conservative center with an unfortunate fascination for the legal details and technicalities of the law, especially Sabbath observance which has become to them the symbol of God's will.

Herodians - This title is used to describe the group of opportunists who have chosen to surround Herod's family and be a part of its many complicated intrigues.

Zealots - This title describes the terrorist element organized secretly to liberate the holy land from the Roman rule. They are only mentioned briefly in the N.T. and Jesus is far too mild to please them.

Essenes - This idiosyncratic group of mystics has chosen at least 100 years earlier to withdraw from ordinary life and they live in settlements near the Dead Sea. John the Baptist would appeal to them with his highly peculiar manner but Jesus was too normal and personal to please the mystic mentality. This is still true.

5: 27-39 Jesus is impossible to trap. He will not fit into any of the previously
New Wine mentioned parties and whatever category seems to apply one moment must be discarded the next. He calls as a disciple a traitor to Israel, Levi the tax collector, as he had earlier called a Zealot named Simon. There is a majestic sort of independence about Jesus as he refuses to belong to either nationalists or legalists or mystics. When he is confronted with his fact about his character he replies with the image of 'new wine and the old wine skins.'

5: 33- Reading the gospel records gives us the distinct impression that Jesus
6: 1-11 deliberately and consciously challenged the 1st century observance
Jesus and of Sabbath rest, the 5th commandment. Here is an example of what can
the Sabbath happen when law is specialized by an acute case of legalism. The Sabbath law was given by God to remind man of his worth and of the importance of creation as the gift of God. It is an example of God's concern for human dignity and may be called a preservation law. But through the years just prior to the 1st century this commandment had become technically complicated beyond any but the most expert lawyer's ability to figure. Such a large number of items and questions were covered by the precise definition of what was in fact "work" and what was "rest" that the meaning of this good commandment in favor of man was altogether submerged in the legal prescriptions.

Jesus taunts this state of affairs in two ways- both of which lose friends for him among the men who felt that they were the guardians of the 5th commandment. He defends the disciples grain eating with a reference to David who broke food laws but as the king he had the right. "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath." Here

is David's king and the law does find their true meaning in what the Son of Man does in and through them. The next paragraph gives an unforgettable event to show what our Lord meant.

On a Sabbath Jesus posed a critical question which settled once and for all the true meaning of Sabbath. "Is it lawful to do good or harm, to save life or destroy it?" And before anyone could answer Jesus broke the technical definition of Sabbath rest in order to grant to that day its holy meaning. Jesus does not destroy the law but He fulfills its profound purpose and when this newness breaks in upon the practices of tradition we can appreciate the Lord's parable of new wine in old skins. The newness is too much for the leaders of the old patterns; they prefer the old; there is too much power in the new, therefore the last sentence in this section is understandable: "They were filled with fury..."

6: 12-16 Luke at this point names the twelve apostles in distinction with the The Twelve larger group which he calls disciples. The twelve are an interesting group. All but one as far as we can tell come from the North and only one (Judas) from the city of Jerusalem. There are three sets of brothers in the apostolic band which would appear dangerous from a leadership point of view. There is a nationalistic terrorist (Simon the Zealot) and a tax collector (Matthew) which should pose problems for the group. Christ was able to unite them.

6: 17-49 It is obvious that Luke's narration of the sermon on the mount is somewhat different than Matthew's account of the same event which may mean Luke's Sermon on the Mount (1) two different events are recorded (2) the event is remembered differently by the two authors (3) both writers were collecting examples of Christ's Galilean teaching and naturally the two collections differ in content.

Luke's account tends to be more earthy and basic than Matthew's as well as being briefer. Note:

Matthew "Blessed are the poor in spirit..."

Luke "Blessed are you poor..."

Matthew "Blessed are ye who hunger and thirst for righteousness..."

Luke "Blessed are you that hunger now..."

Matthew's account includes the spiritual words "spirit" and "for righteousness" whereas Luke is more universal by simply using the words "hunger" and "poor". Luke hears of the beatitudes in a very primitive form but it seems to me that Luke's account has more power in that "poor" by itself has more total impact than its more limited parallel in Matthew's "poor in spirit." I may not know what it means to be poor in spirit but to be poor, absolutely poor is profoundly communicative and includes all kinds of poorness. Jesus searches out the hearts of his disciples and says to them when you are poor and hungry I am able to fill your lives. Luke's account begins with four Blesseds and four curses which are followed by separate teachings of Christ, each presented in an unforgettable way, and each paragraph is concluded with a thesis sentence. Jesus is a fascinating teacher and never leaves any important point stranded as an academic statement. Each vital matter is sealed with an image, parable or illustration. To sum up this chapter we notice several important themes:

(1) God reigns in the universe therefore He rewards and He judges - We, as men, are denied that prerogative.

(2) The message of integrity is affirmed. We must be honest ourselves since the universe is honest (moral) too - a fig tree will produce figs.

(3) The call to discipleship Jesus calls upon his disciples to build their lives upon his promises.

7: 1-17 Luke gives to the reader two instances of Christ's intervention in the natural order in favor of men. In the case of the centurion there is very great faith expressed toward Jesus but in the case of the widow from Nain the act of Christ is not even requested by the mourners. The same critical question must be addressed to these narratives of the miracles of Christ as was made of the account of the Virgin birth. Did these miracles actually happen? Are they signs given by Christ which means that they did in fact occur or are they signs given by the early church which means they may or may not have actually happened. The interpreter must hold to either of these positions or perhaps a third "I am not sure either way" position. If the Christ event of God's radical intervention in human history is genuinely radical then I personally feel that it is foolish for we who read these accounts in the 20th century to attempt to diminish the radical edges of the Christ event. According to the gospel accounts Jesus did take hold of human suffering in a concrete, definite, earthy way and that he in the healing of their bodies. The New Testament does not present these events as church signs to dramatize Christ's supposed power but as Christ's signs which speak for themselves. These healings show us that Christ viewed men as a whole, body and soul, and that the whole of us is meaningful. Because Jesus healed human sickness the Christian church made the discovery that sickness was not invincible nor did it have divine sanction. In this discovery was born the healing sciences, sickness had been demythologized by Jesus Christ when he healed the centurion's servant.

7: 18-23 John is in Herod's jail. His own personal future is clouded, and the cause for which he had given his life is in jeopardy. The greatest disappointment to him is that Christ whom he had baptized at Jordan the Baptist has not done or been what John had dreamed for. He expected the old order to be swept away with the new covenant in full power and reign. But for many months his Messiah Jesus Christ was teaching insignificant country people in the far north. Jesus has avoided Judea and there has been no shaking of the old order that John can see.

He wonders now about Christ and begins to doubt his Messiah of whom he had once been so certain. This is the context from which come the messengers of John to Jesus. The answer they receive is the curious mixture of word and work. Jesus does things and speaks to them the words of John's favorite prophet, Isaiah. John is assured and he dies knowing that the Messiah has come, grappling with the old order in a sovereign way which has taken not only John but all men by surprise.

7: 24-35 Jesus asks the crowds around him what they thought of John the Baptist. Truth Needs No Defense Did you like his peculiarity? Or to hear his words (reeds in wind)? Jesus mocks the variability of men who dislike John because of his severity and dislike in Christ because of his normalcy. Jesus concludes the encounter with the fascinating truism that truth (wisdom) will prove itself by what it produces.

7: 36-50 This odd event is impressive because of what it shows of Christ's The Emotional Woman poise in the face of excessiveness and secondly of his kindness and sensitivity toward all kinds of human need: Both the desperate-ness of the woman and the tense rigidity of the Pharisee.

8: 1-56 This chapter contains a collection of memorable events which are typical of Christ's teaching ministry in Galilee. This chapter includes The Words

and Work of Jesus the parable of the soils. In a brief paragraph 19-21 Jesus rejects any concept of a special place of privilege for his own mother and brothers. The Galilee storm event is recorded 22-25 with an interesting difference in Luke's account and the Matthew account of the same event. In Matthew Jesus rebukes the disciples first before the storm. In Luke and Mark the Lord silences the storm before he challenges the disciples.

9: 1-17 The only miracle that Jesus did which is recorded in all four gospels
The 5,000 is the feeding of the 5,000 and this narrative forms the central climax of the Galilean ministry. In this event people who had before only watched the acts of Christ in favor of others now themselves experienced his power even over the everyday experience of living. This is the last major event for the people of the north. From now on Jesus sets his face toward Jerusalem.

9: 18-27 Scholars are agreed that the center of each gospel narrative revolves
Turning Point around the confession of Peter at Caesarea Philippi. Jesus accepts Peter's Messianic claim for his teacher but he continues to insist upon the messianic secret and charges the disciples to tell no one. Jesus then calls his disciples to follow him whatever the cost.

9: 28-36 The second part of this central turning point in Christ's ministry
Transfiguration is the transfiguration which only three disciples see. This vision is very impressive to the disciples but Jesus continues to insist upon the secret being kept.

9: 37-62 The Lord's ministry as recorded in this section takes on a sharp cut-
Hard ting edge. He rebukes his disciples and sets aside most of their
Sayings advice; he seems careless regarding those who want to follow him and in effect sends them away.

10: 1-37 In this chapter is the account of the 70 disciples sent out to ex-
The Good Samaritan perience their first opportunity as prophets among the people. Luke here records the fact that Jesus was consciously training his men. In this chapter a lawyer encounters the Lord. Jesus uses the word "neighbor" without his attempt to define or precisely place the word. But of course, a lawyer spends his whole time in proper definition of terms and therefore raises the question "and who in your opinion is my neighbor?" The lawyer has created probably the most serious intellectual crises that Christ has yet faced. Christ replies with a story that was to become one of his most treasured parables. Two incredible truths have emerged from this story: (1) Jesus ended the game of words and placed the burden of responsibility upon anyone who faces crises. Anyone in need deserves a neighbor and anyone nearby cannot escape being that neighbor. (2) The parable settles the worth of men as the gift of the story teller and therefore the ethical impact of this brief story is inescapable. (3) He challenges the nomadic principle of obligations and we must challenge many such principles in our time.

10: 38-42 This is Luke's first indication that Jesus is indeed away from the
At north. Mary and Martha lived in Bethany which is a few miles east
Bethany of Jerusalem. Jesus will spend many evenings here from this point on in his ministry. It is interesting that following immediately upon the Samaritan parable is an event where Jesus refuses to rebuke Mary for her possible lack of ethical concern for her sister Martha. Jesus will not be trapped by any formula or expectation. Martha was certain that the clear-cut issue of fairness would bolster her charge against Mary but Jesus upset her accusation and put the question to her.

11: 1-13 Most Rabbis would by this stage in their training program have taught

The Our Father Prayer many prayers to their disciples. In fact there would be a prayer for every conceivable occasion. The Dead sea scrolls contain mostly a liturgy of prayers which the essence would memorize for every event in life. John the Baptist had given his men the beautiful poems that Luke records in chapters 1 and 2. But Jesus has not given prayers to his men. It is understandable that they therefore ask for a prayer. What they hear is astounding both for its sheer simplicity and realism and also for its use of the word "father" to address Almighty God. Notice that in the magnificat of Mary and the Benedictus of Zechariah God is not addressed as Father but is addressed in the third person. Jesus' prayer honors God yet with the familiar human term "father" and opens the believer to God for help in the daily challenge of life. And on this note it ends. It was later that the closing ascription "for thine is the kingdom..." was added. After teaching his men this disarming and simple prayer Jesus tells them a story about asking. If you ask for what you need a father will not cheat you with a cynical reply. Jesus urges his men to honestly open themselves to Our Father with the needs and possibilities of our lives, and he promises that we will not be disappointed.

11: 14-26 Beelzebub Jesus is at one point accused of being in contact with evil forces in achieving the works that he does. Christ decides to answer the charge with a humorous reply "if such is the case then the devil's kingdom is in civil war."

11: 27-34 Growing' Pressure In 27-28 a woman sentimentally praises the mother of Jesus and once again the Lord diverts attention from his mother. Christ agrees to give a sign to his hearers and the sign contains the three day riddle within it (see John 2: 13-22). He says that Jonah is the sign and the immediate point of the image is that Jonah was a sign of hope and judgement mixed together for Nineveh. All Old Testament prophets mix together the judgement and the hope. In this section Jesus presses his Pharisees friends very intensely and the lawyers are also included in his rebuke because of their hypocrisy and their deceitful handling of the law.

12: 1-13: 35 Sayings In these chapters Luke gathers numerous and random sayings of the Lord, each of which give an insight into the way Christ related to the crowds around him. The section ends with an important reference to the growing fame of Jesus. Herod has noted his presence and when informed of the palace intrigues Jesus calls Herod a fox and repeats the riddle of three days. Several of the sayings in this section are included in Matthew's famous Sermon on the Mount collection in Matt. 5,6,7.

14: 1-35 The Narrowing Road In each parable or encounter of this chapter the reader can feel the build-up of tension and dual meaning. Each event is painful in one way or another to those listeners who represent the religious establishment, who have interests to protect, who have received honors. To these the accounts in chapter 14 are disconcerting and troubling because they have the prophetic impact of leveling the rich and honored ones to the same position as the outcasts. Even the dispossessed may feel uneasy in chapter 14 as Christ makes the call to discipleship hard and demanding. If the poor wanted simply to inherit the riches of the land and enter in the bounty now enjoyed by the prosperous they were not comforted by Christ who calls those who would follow him to give up everything and to realistically evaluate the cost before deciding to be a disciple.

15: 1-32 The Greatest Parable At this point in his book Luke gives to us three parables that go together and build toward the climax of the third parable. This third parable has been called the greatest short story ever told and certainly within its brief narrative Jesus has brought together more

completely than in any other place the whole of the gospel. Jesus has entrusted to this brief story the purpose and goal of his redemptive ministry in our behalf. (In 1965 I preached a series of sermons which attempted to theologially interpret this parable. They have been mimeographed and are available.)

Luke 16: 1-18 Jesus always makes use of the element of surprise in his teaching and in this parable he even invokes his main point in the Unjust Parable problematic context of injustice and dishonesty. Obviously Jesus does not advocate dishonesty but his point comes through with great force that a steward must have his full wits under complete mastery so that he does not waste that which has been entrusted to him. The conclusion of the Parable is difficult to interpret because Jesus evokes cynicism to deliberately challenge his listeners. Luke catches this cynicism but the text is somewhat clouded which may mean that we do not have a really smooth reading of the original text. Nevertheless the main central points are clear.

Luke 16: 19-31 This important parable seeks to Lazarus the Beggar make the major point that men have been receiving God's message in the prophets through the ages and the reason for man's failure to act is not in ignorance of the truth but in lack of desire to do the truth. Therefore men will read more than messages from heaven, they will read new and more powerful motivation.

Luke 17: 1-35 This is a random collection of sayings which come near the close of The Kingdom is in the Midst of you Christ ministry and all possess a kind of immediacy that is electrifying. The disciples want great faith and Jesus tells them that only tiny "mustard seed" faith is needed which points up the vast adequacy of Christ himself. He is more important than our faith. Even small faith in Christ is great. The disciples want the kingdom and he tells them it is here. The kingly reign of Christ is the kingdom of God.

18:1 - 19:27 Jesus keeps the pressure building in these narratives as they intensify their demands upon the disciples. Yet in the midst of these Jericho hard sayings Jesus receives little children with complete openness and warmth. Throughout this section we see the universal appeal of Jesus Christ and his interest in rejected people, whether it is a blind beggar or Zacchaeus the wealthy businessman.

Luke 19:28-40 In this narrative the immense popularity that had been building up Palm Sunday around the enigmatic Jesus of Nazareth now culminates in the Messianic cry of the crowds as he enters the city. At this point Jesus breaks the pattern which up to this moment he had insisted, namely the messianic secret. When the Pharisees challenge the adulation of the people the Lord replies, "If they are silent then the rocks will praise me." This is the closest Jesus ever comes to admitting his messiahship before the religious elite.

Luke 19: 41-48 These sentences are very brief and heavy. Jesus takes upon himself He Wept for the City the role of the prophet and predicts the terrible fall of Jerusalem. Both Isaiah and Jeremiah had wept for the earlier fall of Judah and now the root of Jessi himself cries for the "City of Peace." Jesus is now in the open; whereas before he spoke in the country now he is at the temple itself.

Luke 20: 1-8 From this point on in the narrative Luke notes that the questions Hard Questions directed to Christ come from the "Chief Priests, scribes, and elders." Throughout the earlier part of our Lord's ministry he has been mainly challenged and quizzed by the Pharisee party. They, of all the various

political-religious groups of 1st century Palestine, were interested enough in Jesus to question him at every turn. They journeyed to the country side to find and watch him. The other groups are far less interested for various reasons: The Sadducee party are basically less committed to their own or any for that matter any set of convictions so that for them Jesus is of very little interest until he actually comes to Jerusalem, scares out the money changers, receives a hero's welcome. Then he poses a problem and they decide to close in. Whereas the Pharisees ask serious and concerned questions the Sadducees (they control the high priestly offices) are more cynical and superficial. In this paragraph we see the Sadducee group in clear relief. They approach Christ with a sensible question but evidently Jesus decides to force these cautious, manipulative religious leaders to take an open stand before the people on the question of John the Baptist. In effect Jesus is saying "you take a position on this very important matter and then I'll take a position on the equally important issue you have raised." There is something very deep in this encounter. If we are not willing to become visible and take a risk with what we believe then we seldom find any new or exciting truth from God. The man who wants to remain safely hidden from view rarely makes any worthwhile discoveries.

20: 9-26 Jesus now tells a very powerful and direct parable that makes its mark Dangerous Parable against those that would attempt to control the religious establishment for their own purposes and in so doing plot against God's plan for his vineyard. In this setting Jesus indirectly breaks his messianic silence and asserts his own centrality both in being foundation in the positive sense and the one who rightly judges what is false.

The Sadducee Party catch the challenge in Jesus' words and now seek to find a way to embarrass the teacher. To achieve this end they send questioners with the very difficult question regarding taxation. The question is designed to force Christ into either humble submission to Rome or a play for popular support which any anti-Roman statement would grant, but of course at the price of having publicly denounced Rome, and this indiscretion would finish his ministry in Jerusalem. The question is not serious because they do not intend to do anything with the answer. Their only goal is to embarrass the Rabbi from Nazareth. The reply is brief and absolutely unforgettable. Jesus sweeps through the pretense of the moment and grants in a phrase a whole theology of the responsibility of men to the nation and to God. He forces the listeners to grapple with the question and to decide in each situation what is Caesar's coin and what is the responsibility to the face on our coins realizing that a far greater face is beyond the one stamped in copper.

20: 27-47 Continuing his bold engagement of the religious aristocracy Jesus faces Inviting Trouble still more of their frivolous questions and this time mocks them before the people with his humorous comment that the people should beware of those who wear long robes, say long prayers and then devour the very livelihood of widows.

21: 1-28 These prophecies about Jerusalem's impending fall and the temple's He Foretells the Fall of Jerusalem destruction are to make a deep imprint upon all those who hear his words and in fact while Jesus is suffering on the cross the crowd will remind him of these very words about the temple. Jesus made many allusions to the temple of Jerusalem (See John 2:13-22) and in so doing he has touched a sensitive nerve of Jewish religion. In 70 AD these words were to come to pass.

21: 29-38 This whole chapter is very much like the prophetic writing. (See JeRe-
The Almond miah 1:11-12) The first leaves of spring are signs of hope. Jesus

Branch assures his disciples that though heaven and earth should be destroyed
his words will stand even that test.

22: 1-6 Luke makes it clear that the religious leaders have made their choice
Judas regarding Jesus and now need to find a means that can circumvent the very
great popularity that Jesus has established with the people. Judas
becomes that means. This is a very difficult passage to interpret.

Luke interprets the whole act of Judas with the brief statement "Satan entered into Judas..." The word "satan" is used by the N.T. writers to refer to the existence in the world of real, moral, evil. It is this that enters into the twisted motivations of the disciple Judas. When this unfortunate man sees what his deed has done he then realizes the tragedy and tries to reverse the grim wheel of murder and conspiracy that he himself aided but his second choice is too late and in this is the full tragedy of this act. Some scholars have suggested that Judas may have been a Zealot and that his fanaticism had confused him and turned his respect for Christ to deep disappointment because Jesus would not take the terrorist way of the Zealot cause. On Palm Sunday Judas saw the power that lay within Christ's grasp and still the master refused to utilize that possibility. Therefore it may have been the high point of Palm Sunday itself which settled Judas' mind that his time with Christ had been utterly wasted.

22: 7-38 On the Thursday evening of holy week Jesus gathers his disciples together
The Last Supper for the traditional pre-passover supper that a Rabbi would have with his
men just prior to the national celebration of the passover. It was a tradition to break the unleavened bread and eat the bitter herbs to memorialize the hard days of Egyptian bondage. Then the roasted lamb and wine would celebrate the victory of God in bringing his people out of Egypt. Jesus takes hold of this ceremonial event and grants to it a still deeper meaning. Breaking the bread and sharing the cup of wine he tells the disciples that he shall be the lamb that is broken in behalf of all men. This broken bread is given to the stunned band of disciples who have no understanding of what is really taking place. Following Easter however they will understand the symbols that Jesus so simply and quietly gave to his church on that lonely Thursday evening and this supper would become the central symbol of Christendom.

22: 39-46 "While the disciples slept Jesus settled the issue of our salvation"
The Garden Pascal. The garden of Gethsemane which was midway between Jerusalem and Bethany is a favored place for the disciples and it is here that Jesus faces up to the shattering price of actually facing the fury of man's hostility.

22: 47-53 Each gospel records this event with a different emphasis and in each
Arrest case the dialogue is different which is a fascinating attestation to the essential trustworthiness of the N.T. records. Emergency events are more spontaneously recorded and therefore the variations make sense. Only Luke notes that the Lord took time to heal the slave's ear who had been foolishly struck as a result of Peter's one moment of dashing bravery.

22: 54-62 John's gospel interjects at this point in the narrative some very
Peter's Fall interesting information. He points up that Jesus was taken first to Annas before being taken to Caiaphas (John 18: 12-24) John also tells of his own part in getting Peter into the inner court yard. Everything and everyone is collapsing and in such a moment it is not hard to understand Peter's failure. The shepherd is snared and his sheep are in panic.

22: 63- All of the gospel records are needed to place together the rapid
23: 25 movement of events that joined together to arrange for the legal
The Trial capital punishment of Jesus Christ.

(1) First the Lord is taken to the house of Annas where he is beaten and accused of impudence and blasphemy.

(2) Then he is taken to Caiaphas' house where the Sanhedrin is quickly assembled to hear the charges of blasphemy and threats against the temple that are made against Jesus. This body votes overwhelmingly but not unanimously to request capital punishment.

(3) He is taken very early in the morning Friday to the Antonious Fortress where Pilate is staying for the Holiday. Since the religious leaders will not enter the house so that they will not be defiled for the passover Pilate speaks privately with Jesus.

(4) He sends Jesus to Herod's place since Jesus is a Galilean and therefore a subject of Herod. Herod also is in Jerusalem for the passover but Herod will have nothing to do with the charges against Jesus. His men mock Christ with the robe of royalty and the crown of thorns.

(5) Herod returns Jesus to Pilate who then seeks a means of releasing him but he finds that not even the humiliation and torture of his soldiers has satisfied the opponents of Jesus. The Romans were harsh in the punishment that they administered but they were serious in their determination to preserve order throughout the provinces of the empire and this meant that relatively impartial justice had become a significant mark of Roman rule. They inflexibly rejected mob violence and the chaos of local terrorism. Therefore only Pilate could order the deadly punishment that the Sanhedrin requested. He is at the beginning determined not to bow to their demand until they wisely press Pilate at the point he feels weakest - namely his shaky relationship with the Caesar of the Roman Empire itself. When he is accused of disloyalty there then it is that he condemns his silent prisoner to the terrible death of Roman crucifixion. The cross is more than an instrument of death, it is the slow agonizing destruction of the whole of man, his body, emotions, sanity so that in death he is denied dignity in this last defeat. It is this death that Jesus Christ faces in man's behalf; six hours impaled between heaven and earth.

23: 26-56 Each of the four gospels record this event in a distinctive manner.
The End Luke is particularly impressed by the foreigners, the outcasts, and the women during these final moments in our Lord's life. He notes Simon the African who carries the cross for Christ. He alone notes the words of Christ to the women who mourn for him on the way to the cross. He alone records the Lord's word of salvation to the repentant thief; he records the tribute to Jesus that comes from the centurion. He carefully tells of the burial preparations that are hastily made for Jesus just as the sabbath begins.

24: 1-11 From the four gospels one fact is clear and that is that women were
The First the ones to discover that the body of Jesus was not in the grave on
Day Easter morning. Luke also presses the point that at first no one is prepared to believe that a victory over death has taken place. Luke like the other writers portrays the victory of Christ over death as an actual, historical event, as concrete in its reality as was the suffering of Good Friday.

24: 13-53 Luke alone records the "road to Emmaus" event where Christ makes
The himself known to his followers in the routine experiences of
Implications life, eating and conversing. The fact is that genuine victory

has been won over death, over sin, over man's failures, over man's hatreds and Luke concludes his gospel with the victory ringing in our ears but with many questions still unanswered regarding the full implications of this radical intervention of holy love and power given to mere man. Luke's own second book - The Acts and the rest of the N.T. will spell out the exciting chain reaction that breaks forth from the life and death, the words and the marks the sacrifice, and victory of Jesus Christ.