LUKE 18

Luke 18:1–8. Parable of the Widow and Unjust Judge

The following is adapted from S. Kent Brown, The Testimony of Luke *(Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2015), 813–816.*

The parable of the unjust judge and the Savior's intriguing words of application lead us into a wide valley of doctrinal illumination whose landscape is varied and rich. None is so striking as Jesus's mention of God's elect at Luke 18:7, not only coaxing into view the end-time but also one of the important aspects of the Atonement: the suffering of Jesus that leads to His glory as the Elect One. We take up this topic first.

Among the Gospel writers, Luke alone repeats the fragrant language of one chosen or elected as it ties to the Savior (Greek *eklektos* and its associated verb). In the first instance, on the Mount of Transfiguration, the voice of the Father declares: "This is my beloved [chosen] Son: hear him" (Luke 9:35). Of course, the Father's act of choosing the Son goes back to a time before people were on earth.[1] In a second instance, the term appears in the mouth of Jesus's detractors as He hangs on the cross: "Let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God" (23:35). The fact that Luke quotes this ridiculing comment underlines the notion that not only God but also Jesus's enemies acknowledge His election, the latter unknowingly. Moreover, this last passage links the election of Jesus explicitly and vividly to the cross where He suffers. It is this suffering that brings Him to His glory, the final proof of His election, the final demonstration of His absolute and resolute obedience no matter the opinions of others, and the final proof that the Father was right to choose Him so long before. Jesus asked the obvious question to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus: "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?"[2]

The Savior's insightful and unexpected words of application lead us further into the valley, introducing to our view the end of days and His Second Coming, complete with the sudden appearance of the Son of

Man, God's vengeance on the enemies of His elect, and the need for constant prayer because of persisting troubles, troubles so dire that even the faith of the faithful might fail (Luke 18:7–8). To be sure, only the last of these elements, the need for intense prayer, wends its way through the parable that Jesus recites here, leading some scholars to reject Jesus's words of application as originally coming from Him. But this view misses the point that all Jesus's expressed concerns appear elsewhere in His teachings.

Accordingly, the valley looks familiar. Why? Because the last half of the prior chapter offers a tour of similar theological terrain—the sudden appearance of the Son of Man "as the lightning" (Luke 17:24), God's vengeance on those "of this generation" who reject the Son of Man, destroying them all (17:25, 27, 29), and the need to be alert against spiritual letdowns before "the days of the Son of man," as people did in the days of Noah and Lot (17:22, 26–30). In this light, the parable of the unjust judge forms the other side of the valley, opposite the side where we enter as Jesus responds to the question of the Pharisees about the coming of the kingdom of God, the one completing the other (17:20). For the moment, the topic of the end-time has run its course, awaiting Jesus's further words that He will speak to His Apostles on the Mount of Olives (21:6–36).

Traversing this broad landscape should not draw our attention away from the other lessons that Jesus's parable presents to us. The first, of course, has to do with Jesus's declaration about always praying and not growing weary (Luke 18:1). The enduring legacy of the widow's actions in the parable, though she is left virtually as she was after the judge's verdict, lonely and largely powerless, pushes out from her unflagging persistence. Like her, "men ought . . . not to faint" (18:1). By making a helpless, forgotten widow the hero of the story, Jesus conveys to all how relentlessly we should pursue divine aid through prayer.

In this connection, a second lesson arises. The verb forms of "to cry" (Greek *boaō* and *krazō*) characterize our deepest, most heart-felt prayers. We read God's touching, song-like language as He reaches out to the oppressed Hebrews when calling Moses: "I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry . . . behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me" (Exodus 3:7, 9). After Jesus and His three disciples descend from the Mount of Transfiguration, the father of an afflicted boy, in desperation, "cried out, saying, Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son" (Luke 9:38). Similarly, the blind man outside Jericho "cried, saying, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me" (18:38). To the pinnacle of such prayer, of course, rise Jesus's last utterances on the cross: "Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost" (Matthew 27:50). Yet "this is not an inarticulate death-cry but a final prayer to God,"[3] as witnessed by additional words in the Joseph Smith Translation: "Jesus when he had cried again with a loud voice, *saying, Father, it is finished, thy will is done*, yielded up the ghost" (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 27:54; emphasis added). In Luke's report of Jesus's final utterance, we also read the words of a prayer within His cry, that "when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46). Thus, Jesus closes His mortal ministry with a prayer of submission.

One of the most unusual applications of the parable of the unjust judge comes forward in modern scripture. In section 101 of the Doctrine and Covenants, a revelation received as persecutions gathered and raged against Church members in Missouri during 1833, the Savior uttered the now famous lines, "It is not right that any man should be in bondage one to another," and "For this purpose have I established the Constitution of this land" (Doctrine and Covenants 101:79, 80). What do these utterances mean for Church members caught in the gnarled situation in Missouri? The Lord turns to this parable and recites Luke 18:2–5 word for word from the King James text. Pairing the understanding that He announced when He first rehearsed the parable, "that men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18:1; Doctrine and Covenants 101:81), the Savior now shifts more light onto the judge while keeping at center stage the persistent pleadings of the widow. He holds that the beleaguered Saints, in seeking relief, are to "importune at the feet of the judge"; if that effort does not yield aid, "let them importune at the feet of the governor"; if that endeavor falls flat, "let them importune at the feet of the president"; and finally, if that undertaking fails, "then will the Lord arise and come forth out of his hiding place, and in his fury vex the nation" (Doctrine and Covenants 101:86–89), matching Jesus's earlier statement that God will "avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him" (Luke 18:7). As with the original application that ties the parable to the last days (18:7–8), so the Savior's warning in section 101 ties to the end-time and its associated judgment: "In his [the Lord's] time, [he] will cut off those wicked, unfaithful, and unjust stewards, and appoint them their portion among hypocrites, and unbelievers; even in outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth" (Doctrine and Covenants 101:90–91). In this modern adaptation of the parable, we witness the continuing association with events at the end of days.

Luke 18:9–14. The Pharisee and the Publican

The following is adapted from S. Kent Brown, The Testimony of Luke *(Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2015), 820–822.*

Perhaps oddly, this parable about two men of contrasting backgrounds leads a hearer to the Savior. How so? Because He effectively sits in judgment on the two men and their attitudes about how to approach God. It is He who renders judgment about "certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous"; it is He who through the telling of the story pronounces a verdict against those who "despised others"; it is He who declares the publican "justified" before God; and it is He who knows the one "that humbleth himself" (Luke 18:9, 14). By sitting as judge when rehearsing the parable, Jesus not only lifts up to view His current role as the judge of a person's attitudes and direction of life but also discloses His eventual office as judge of all, a function of the end-time that the earlier section of Luke's record happens to address (17:22–18:8).

As is His custom, the Savior seizes an illustration from the workaday world that ever surrounds Him and others and turns it on its head, creating a memorable story, yes, but in a more important sense,

drawing His hearers into a captivating world inhabited by the less fortunate, the despised and helpless, the weak and vulnerable. The widow in the prior parable is such a character (Luke 18:1–6), as is the hero of the story of the good Samaritan (10:25–37). Even though Pharisees are known for their spite of those who do not share their ideals about tithes and foods, by some accounts they enjoy a notable measure of respect within the larger Jewish community. Hence, in some circles, for Jesus to make a Pharisee into His antihero goes against a social and religious grain. But He does not do so simply to make a convenient point. He is aware of the Pharisees' social and religious attitudes, and He levels genuine criticisms against them when opportunity arises.[4]

For Jesus to make a publican into an exemplary hero, of course, will surprise most of His hearers. But Jesus comes to reach out to those who stand on the shorelines of the populace as well as those who stand in the middle of the streambed, as His raising of the widow's only son illustrates (Luke 7:11–17). Who better to demonstrate God's willingness to listen to the earnest prayers of His children than a publican who draws scorn and alienation at every turn? To be sure, as Jesus and His audience will know, this publican, like all publicans, is obliged to restore anything gained improperly, as Jesus's later encounter with Zacchaeus demonstrates (19:8). Even so, by framing the story as He does, Jesus invites to His side any and all who are genuinely humble, any and all who are in need of His mercy, because "the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (19:10).

Luke alone preserves this account. As in other reports, Luke locates Jesus's words in the realm of timelessness, not recording a time or place. But the story's emphasis on prayer surely ties back to the earlier parable of the unjust judge and the widow, perhaps showing why Luke places the narrative here. But its thicker, stronger link runs forward into the following stories that deal with a person's proper actions within the kingdom—that is, with discipleship. Hence, although the publican may yet have much to do to fulfill his desire to become a part of God's work on earth, his humble attitude when approaching God, in contrast to the pompousness of the Pharisee, is worthy of our emulation.

One element that might encourage us to see Jesus rehearsing this parable late in His ministry has to do with Jesus, through Luke's eyes in this case, spelling out the purpose of the parable before narrating it: "He spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others" (Luke 18:9). We meet this approach in an earlier verse: "He spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (18:1). Then, in a subsequent setting, we read that He speaks "a parable . . . because they [his audience] thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear" (19:11). Further, in a meaningful reversal, we see later a crowd's response at the end of Jesus's recounting of the parable of the wicked husbandmen. In presenting this story, Jesus does not hide His main point by speaking in parables so "that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand" (8:10). Instead, He makes His point so clear that almost in unison, the crowd "said, God forbid" (20:16). What do we make of Jesus's three efforts to announce the purpose of His parable and, in a fourth, to take the varnish off another parable so that hearers grasp His point immediately? One answer is that at the end of

His ministry, Jesus grows blunter and becomes entirely clear about His purposes. He knows that time is running out, and He is reaching out to His audience in a strong, sharp effort to bring them to a decision about Himself. If this reading is at all correct, then the statement of purpose in 18:9, declaring the parable "unto certain which trusted in themselves," may fit the last days of Jesus's life and thus locate the parable of the Pharisee and publican around where Luke sets it down in his report.

Luke 18:15–17. Blessing Little Children

The following is adapted from S. Kent Brown, The Testimony of Luke *(Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2015), 824–825.*

For the second time in Luke's Gospel, the Savior places children onto center stage (Luke 9:47–48). Their presence in both the earlier account and in this later story links to the theme of discipleship, a theme that runs through this section of the Gospel report because Jesus educates His disciples about the childlike virtues they must cultivate and possess as members of the kingdom of God. But soaring above this connecting theme rises the warmly inherent value of children in the Savior's mind, an aspect that is generally at home in His own Jewish culture. However, His animating attitude toward children is set off sharply by their occasional low valuation in the Greco-Roman world—infanticide is a well-known practice—and is certainly illustrated by the disciples' officious efforts to keep them away from Jesus.

This story about helpless infants, though not located in time or place, contrasts crisply with the following account that features a "certain ruler" (Luke 18:18), a person of importance and means. In his life, the ruler has become a person of influence, while the infants have yet to make their way in the world; he commands respect, but the small children are largely invisible except to family members; he is able to take care of himself, and the infants depend on their parents for nourishment; finally and most importantly, he is able to respond to Jesus's invitation, while the babies are too young and therefore are not accountable. The contrast lies between a fully able person whose life to this point illustrates his ability to make and follow through on decisions and powerless infants who are completely dependent on others.

In an entirely different vein, it is important to establish certain doctrinal tenets that fix the way that we value children. In all the following cases, the reference point is the Savior and His Atonement on behalf of children: "The blood of Christ atoneth for their [the children's] sins" (Mosiah 3:16); "little children are redeemed from the foundation of the world through mine Only Begotten" (Doctrine and Covenants 29:46); "little children are holy, being sanctified through the atonement of Jesus Christ" (Doctrine and Covenants 74:7); "little children are alive in Christ" (Moroni 8:12); "the children . . . are whole from the foundation of the world" (Moses 6:54). This brief selection of passages underscores the essential significance of children in the eyes of the Savior and His elevating efforts on their behalf, clarifying that they are innocent, even holy, before God and that they are saved into His presence.

Luke 18:18–25. The Rich Ruler

The following is adapted from S. Kent Brown, The Testimony of Luke *(Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2015), 830–832.*

Above all, the key expression from the Savior is "Come, follow me" (Luke 18:22). In a word, discipleship tied to Him is worth more than anything else—more than being a ruler or official; more than enjoying access to important people such as Jesus; more than worldly wealth; more even than a willingness to "sell all . . . and distribute unto the poor" (18:22). When taking a step toward Jesus by hearing Him and responding, we step onto the path that leads to a consecrated life. But instead of stepping forward, the man steps back, creating an everlasting cold space between himself and the Savior.

Meaningfully, as Matthew and Mark do, Luke tucks this story between one that deals with small, helpless children (Luke 18:15–17) and Jesus's extended statement on discipleship and its rewards (Luke 18:26–30). The contrasts with the prior report on the children appear to be intended—the ruler is not "as a little child" (18:17), complete with unspoiled innocence; in Luke's hands, the man carries an air of insincerity, which is a learned behavior that does not affect babies; the fellow has become fully invested in his properties, a feature of existence that infants cannot engage in; at this stage of life, the ruler is accountable for his choices, whereas little children are not.

Naturally, the wealthy ruler's acts of approaching and then withdrawing from Jesus, particularly in light of Jesus's demand that he shed all his property, lead us to confront the issue of riches once again, highlighting true riches, a "treasure in heaven" (Luke 18:22), which becomes "in the world to come life everlasting" (18:30). This theme of wealth and a person's response to it, prominent in Luke's Gospel, takes its place alongside Jesus's other important teachings because He returns to it again and again.[5] In this case, Jesus's startling saying about a camel passing through a needle's eye underscores the impossibility of a rich person entering the kingdom (Luke 18:25; Doctrine and Covenants 49:20). But this is by no means the final word, as we shall see in the next section (Luke 18:26–30). In a moment, Jesus will make the point that the "things which are impossible with men are possible with God" (18:27; see also that verse's Joseph Smith Translation).

Importantly, the meeting of Jesus and the ruler bundles together a series of three significant teachings in an orderly way. First, the man's question leads to the topic of God's goodness. Uttered by Jesus, the point that God alone is good is not to be discarded or minimized. That said, what does this mean for Jesus Himself? Measured against His pending task of completing his Father's will, Jesus remains distant from the goal and therefore will not adopt any measure of goodness that applies to God. But the day will come when He can finally claim the Father's attributes as His own.[6]

Second, the fellow's query brings Jesus to an assessment of how we deal with one another—that is, whether we keep the commandments that affect directly our relationships with other people: "Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother" (Luke

18:20). Jesus sticks strictly to commandments that are familiar to the ruler, not adding dimensions that will come into play only when the man shows a willingness to step onto a higher plane: "Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, Bless them that curse you" (6:27–28). To the fellow's everlasting credit, "these have I kept from my youth up" (18:21). Plainly, his relationships with friends and associates remain honorable and unsullied.

Jesus brings a third element into play: that of eternal values, of a "treasure in heaven" (Luke 18:22). For mortals, here lies our ultimate goal. One dimension of reaching this goal has to be our recognition of God's goodness to us, His interest in our lives and our challenges (18:19). Further, this goal becomes accessible to us when we keep God's commandments that He has given through Moses centuries before because they frame both our relationship to others and our relationship to God.[7] The Savior's response earlier to a similar question, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" still applies: "Thou hast answered right [about the commandments]: this do, and thou shalt live" eternally (10:25, 28).

Luke 18:26–30. On Discipleship and Rewards

The following is adapted from S. Kent Brown, The Testimony of Luke *(Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2015), 834–835.*

Perhaps surprisingly, the Savior's treatment of wealth brings Him to a profound statement on eternal families. This section, following Jesus's declaration about challenges that rich persons face when trying to reach the kingdom, begins with audience members asking, "Who then can be saved?" (Luke 18:26). The question seems to wrap around at least two important matters. First, at issue may be the question of whether Israelites, such as the ruler, are to be excluded from heaven, a topic that pokes its head up in a prior query, "Are there few that be saved?" (13:23). After all, the man is Jewish and therefore, seemingly, already enjoys a place above the heathens. Second, behind the question may also lurk the earlier self-assured sentiment from a guest at a dinner party, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God" (14:15). The belief expressed there seems to hold that the kingdom of God will winnow out those whom Jesus wants to include, "the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind," and those who cannot recompense others for kindnesses because they are not well off (14:13–14; see Doctrine and Covenants 58:11).

In Jesus's view, possessing wealth poses problems and, as He will later declare, equality will be the norm in His kingdom (Doctrine and Covenants 78:5–6; 82:17). As an important counterbalance, the following story of Jesus's interaction with the chief publican Zacchaeus will stand as an obvious proof that a person of wealth can receive salvation (Luke 19:1–10). Even so, we notice that Luke preserves a string of statements that underscore Jesus's unbending concern about what riches can do to a person: "Woe unto you that are rich!" (6:24); "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (12:15; also 9:25); "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (12:34); "Ye cannot serve God

and mammon" (16:13). This said, in His compassion Jesus lovingly offers an open doorway for those who possess wealth: "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God" (18:27). More precise than this, the Joseph Smith Translation presents exactly what the Savior expects: "He who forsaketh the things which are of this world, it is possible with God, that he should enter in [the kingdom of God]" (Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 18:27). This declaration runs like a breath of fresh air across a dark and forbidding landscape that reeks of riches.[8]

Jesus's final, radiant point is that families are eternally enhanced by discipleship. Those who follow Him, "which hear the word of God, and do it," become as "[his] mother and [his] brethren" (Luke 8:21). In this view, Jesus Himself is the binder and strengthener of family ties. Such ties, now enriched by common commitment to Him, stretch across "this present time" and into "the world to come," resulting in "life everlasting" (18:30). What is more, families united in this way escape becoming "a house divided" whose end is eternal desolation (11:17), effectively living as captives of "the unclean spirit" that can "return unto [its] house" any time it wants (11:24; see the comments on 11:14–28).

Luke 18:1–34. Jesus's Fourth Prediction of His Suffering

The following is adapted from S. Kent Brown, The Testimony of Luke *(Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2015), 839–841.*

Although most commentators count these verses as the Savior's third prediction of His suffering, it is actually the seventh forecast of eight.[9] Notably, and perhaps incredibly, the Twelve do not get the message. In the language of Luke 9:45, largely mirrored in 18:34, "They understood not this saying." Plainly, these men find it impossible to wrap their minds around the peril threatening Jesus. Even so, the Apostles are not to be criticized because "this saying was hid from them" (18:34). The effect, of course, is to make secure their later testimony of His Resurrection—they do not go into the last week of Jesus's life expecting His death, but it happens, devastating them; they do not really grasp that He will rise from the tomb, but it happens, filling them with unspeakable wonder and joy. Importantly, we do not find evidence that they conspire to make up a story about Jesus's return to life; their testimony of His Resurrection is genuine because it grows out of their experience with Him in coming days.

Unlike the other forecasts of Jesus's suffering, dying, and rising, except the last at Luke 22:22, this one draws hard on prophecy: "All things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished" (18:31). Jesus's fate in Jerusalem is not random; His redemptive task for which He is "anointed" is "delivered to [Him] of [His] Father"; His "baptism to be baptized with" is in place "before the foundation of the world"; his "sore" sufferings at the capital city wherein he will "be slain" are fully foreseen; His "anguish for the wickedness and the abominations of his people" are plainly planned.[10] Already in the synagogue service in Nazareth, Jesus quotes the forecasting words of a prophet, Isaiah, when

announcing the celestially driven agenda for Himself: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, . . . to preach the gospel to the poor; . . . to set at liberty them that are bruised" (Luke 4:18; Isaiah 61:1).

Another of Isaiah's prophecies seems to lie just below the surface of Jesus's words, anchored beneath Jesus's prediction of shameful treatment and pointing backward to the beginning of His journey to the holy city. In Isaiah 50, the prophet portrays the Suffering Servant as setting his "face like a flint" (Isaiah 50:7). The expression leads us immediately to think of Jesus setting "his face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51). From both passages we come away with a sense of firm resolve in seeing matters to their end, for Jesus knows that He goes to suffer "that he should be received up" (Luke 9:51). Moreover, in the Old Testament, Isaiah quotes the Suffering Servant as announcing, "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting" (Isaiah 50:6). Again, the "face" is framed inside the prophet's portrait. In this connection, although not expressly mentioned, Jesus's "face" lies implicitly yet graphically in His forecast of His own suffering: "He . . . shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on" (Luke 18:32). Hence, it seems that Isaiah's prophecies about the Suffering Servant not only experiencing shameful treatment but also resolutely meeting them head-on lie at the base of Jesus's forecast of the shameful treatment that awaits Him as it ties to His resolute action of going to Jerusalem to face his fate (Luke 9:51; 18:32).

In contrast to Matthew and Mark, who note briefly and vaguely that Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem when He utters His prediction (Matthew 20:17; Mark 10:32), Luke places Jesus's prophecy in a real place, just outside the gates of Jericho (Luke 18:35), the last town that He and His entourage of disciples will enter before ascending to the capital city. As with an earlier prediction, Luke has given Jesus's words about His suffering a concrete setting (see the comments on 9:43–45). The Savior's ominous forecast thus concludes and gives meaning to His journey that begins at 9:51: Jesus "steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem," where He will suffer and die. Now He stands, as it were, on the doorstep of the capital city, completing His long preaching tour at Jericho and positioning Himself to meet what lies ahead, for we shall soon see Him leading the band of pilgrims up the hill, forcing the pace and betraying no sign of hesitation or fear: "He went before, ascending up to Jerusalem" (19:28).

Jewish officials are missing in this foretelling. They play an important role, of course, in a prior prediction: "The Son of man must . . . be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain" (Luke 9:22). Why their omission here? After all, they appear prominently in the parallel forecasts preserved by Matthew and Mark: "The chief priests and . . . the scribes . . . shall condemn him to death" (Matthew 20:18; Mark 10:33). Because of the wide number of differences between the reports in Matthew and Mark on the one hand and in Luke on the other,[11] we cannot simply assign the missing Jewish authorities to some imagined predilection of Luke. He certainly knows and repeats the role that Jewish authorities will play in Jesus's difficulties from the earlier prediction (Luke 9:22). As a further divergence, neither Matthew nor Mark seems to be aware of Luke's point about the inability of the Twelve to grasp the meaning of Jesus's forecast; only Luke preserves this passage (18:34). In this light, it seems more reasonable that

Luke or his source notes only the Gentiles and does not draw from Mark's passage at this point in his narrative, a narrative that, in an additional variation, does not include the story about the sons of Zebedee that appears in Matthew and Mark following Jesus's prophecy about His suffering and death (Matthew 20:20–28; Mark 10:35–45). Overall, the differences are too striking to see a common source for the three Gospels at this point.

Luke 18:35–43. Healing the Blind Man outside Jericho

The following is adapted from S. Kent Brown, The Testimony of Luke *(Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2015), 846–848.*

We now witness the fulfillment of one of the pillars of the Savior's announced agenda when He stepped onto His public ministry: the "recovering of sight to the blind" (Luke 4:18). To be sure, a person's blindness may be spiritual and therefore, with divine aid, recovery of sight really consists in acquiring a proper spiritual perception. But the literal sense of Jesus's declaration stands front and center—that He has come to give sight to the blind (see Mosiah 3:5). Luke writes about Jesus healing "many that were blind," though he does not rehearse the stories (Luke 7:21–23). Matthew, of course, writes about Jesus healing two blind men in the city of Capernaum (Matthew 9:27–31), and Mark reports that Jesus gives sight to a blind man in Bethsaida (Mark 8:22–26). Luke may know these stories without repeating them, though we cannot be certain. In any event, Luke chooses to feature Jesus's merciful action for the blind man who sightlessly patrols the road outside Jericho, the road that links to Galilee and to Perea, the territory on the east bank of the Jordan River.

The theme of discipleship continues to push itself forward. What appears to be a happy story about a forgotten blind man begging loudly for Jesus to give him the unimaginable gift of sight turns out to be a proof of Jesus's words that among those who accept invitations to His kingdom will stand "the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind" (Luke 14:21). For after receiving his sight, the man "followed him, glorifying God," with the sense that he persists in following Jesus (18:43). Mark adds the phrase "followed Jesus *in the way*," clearly implying that the blind man joins Jesus's followers on the trek up to Jerusalem (Mark 10:52; emphasis added). As a continuing theme, discipleship will reappear as a major element in the following report on the tax collector Zacchaeus.

The account of the blind man's healing also forms a conclusion of sorts for the journey section that begins at Luke 9:51. In one sense, Jesus's journey from Galilee to Jerusalem involves one last stop in Jericho, the town that Jesus and His entourage are approaching. Luke identifies this town alone throughout the whole itinerary, drawing attention to it just as he does to Jerusalem at the journey's beginning (9:51). Moreover, even when Jesus finally enters the capital city, Luke records that He goes into the temple area, saying nothing about Jerusalem (19:45, 47; 20:1). As a further touch, this incident forms the last recorded

interaction between Jesus and those of lower social status, although the throngs in the temple certainly include unidentified poor and suffering people (21:1–4).

As a final note, the relationship of Luke's record of the miracle to the records of the other Synoptists, Matthew and Mark, bears reviewing. When placed side by side, the differences between the three accounts jump out at a reader much more brightly than the similarities. For example, according to Mark and Matthew, Jesus is on his way out of Jericho when He meets the blind man rather than entering the town (Matthew 20:29; Mark 10:46). In an unusual twist, Matthew holds that Jesus heals two blind men, not one (Matthew 20:30). Mark reports part of a conversation between bystanders and the blind man as well as the fact that the blind man sets aside "his garment," then "rose, and came to Jesus" without any apparent assistance (Mark 10:49–50). Another difference arises in Matthew's narrative when he writes that "Jesus had compassion . . . and touched" the eyes of the blind, aspects missing in Luke (Matthew 20:34). A final divergence, found in Mark, consists in Jesus's additional words to the blind man, "Go thy way," inviting him to go to family and friends even though he instead follows Jesus "in the way" (Mark 10:52). Although these differences do not completely discourage a view that Luke takes his story from one or both of the other Gospels, the fact that the report of the sons of Zebedee seeking special places in the kingdom stands before the healing of the blind at Jericho in the narratives of Matthew and Mark but not in Luke suggests the strong possibility that Luke does not depend fully or even partially on either of them for his story of the blind man (Matthew 20:20–28; Mark 10:35–45).

Notes

1 Moses 4:1–2; Abraham 3:27–28; also 1 Peter 2:6.

2 Luke 24:26; also 17:25; 24:46.

3 Walter Grundmann, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, 9 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–1974), 3:901.

4 Luke 7:40–47; 11:37–44; 14:1–14; 17:20–21.

5 For example, see Luke 8:14; 12:13–21, 31–34; 14:7–14; 15:8–10, 11–32; 16:1–9, 10–12, 19–31; 19:1–10.

6 See 3 Nephi 11:14; 12:48; 15:9.

7 Luke 18:20; Exodus 20:3–17; Deuteronomy 5:7–21.

8 See my comments on Luke 16:1–12 and 19:1–10.

9 Luke 5:35; 9:22, 44–45; 12:50; 13:32–33; 17:24–25; 22:22.

10 Luke 4:18; 9:22; 10:22; 12:50; Mosiah 3:7; Doctrine and Covenants 19:15; Moses 5:57; 7:47.

11 Luke 18:31–33; Matthew 20:17–19; Mark 10:32–34.

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