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LUKE'S GOOD NEWS TO THE POOR

Ambiguities and Challenges

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The gospel of Luke has been called a "gospel of the poor." It contains more references to the poor than the other gospels and gives particular importance to concern for the poor. The inaugural preaching of Jesus in the synagogue at Nazareth in Lk. 4:16–30 introduces the ministry of Jesus as a fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah (Lk. 4:18–19; cf. Is. 61:1–2; 58:6). Jesus is the one anointed and sent by God to proclaim good news to the poor (εὐαγγελίσασθαι πτωχοῖς). This characterization of the ministry of Jesus is echoed in Lk. 7:22 (par Mt. 11:5) which gives Jesus' reply to the question of the messengers of John the Baptist: "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the good news proclaimed to them (εὐαγγελίσασθαι πτωχοῖς)." These two texts highlight the poor as the recipients of Jesus' proclamation. This article focuses on the phrase εὐαγγελίσασθαι πτωχοῖς and argues that the summary of Jesus' ministry as "good news to the poor" is the key to interpreting Luke's texts on wealth and poverty, possessions, and renunciation of possessions. The first part of this article deals with Luke's use of εὐαγγελίζω and the second part with the meaning of πτωχός and the challenges of Luke's teaching on poverty and wealth.

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"Proclaiming the Good News" in Luke-Acts[1]

The noun εὐαγγέλιον (gospel) does not appear in the gospel of Luke but is used twice in Acts (15:7; 20:24).[2] It is the verb εὐαγγελίζω which is characteristic of Luke's vocabulary (Lk. 10; Acts 15). A survey of the use of this word in Luke-Acts helps us to see its significance for Luke.[3]

In Luke's gospel, the verb appears four times as part of the narrative setting or summary (3:18; 8:1; 9:6; 20:1) and six times in direct speech (1:19; 2:10; 4:18, 43; 7:22; 16:16).[4] The verb εὐαγγελίζω is used in the

[1]This article assumes the narrative unity of Luke and Acts. For a recent discussion on this issue, see P. Walters, *The Assumed Authorial Unity of Luke and Acts*, SNTS MS 145 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); M. Bird, "The Unity of Luke-Acts in Recent Discussion," *JSNT* 29/4 (2007): 424–448; P. Spencer, "The Unity of Luke-Acts: A Four-Bolted Hermeneutical Hinge," *CBR* 5/3 (2007): 341–366.

[2]It is used 4x in Matthew and 8x in Mark (1:1, 14, 15; 8:35; 10:29; 13:10; 14:9; 16:15). On several occasions, Luke changes the Markan formulation (Mk. 1:14; cf. Lk. 4:14–15; Mk. 10:29; cf. Lk. 18:29) or omits the word (Mk. 8:35; cf. Lk. 9:23) or the verse altogether (Mk. 13:10; cf. Lk. 21:13–14; Mk. 14:9; cf. Lk. 7:47). In Acts, the word εὐαγγέλιον appears on the lips of Peter and Paul. Peter speaks of "the word of the gospel," ὸ λόγος τοῦ εὐαγγελίου (15:7), while Paul talks of the "gospel of God's grace," τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς χάριτος τοῦ θεοῦ (20:24).

[3]The Two-source hypothesis is assumed in this study. Luke's redaction is clear in Lk. 4:43; 9:6; 20:1 where Luke added the verb into the Markan texts. The same may be said of Lk. 3:18. Lk. 7:22 and 16:16 have parallels in Matthew but the word εὐαγγελίζειν is not used in Mt. 11:12–13. Lk. 1:19; 2:10; 4:18; 8:1 come from Luke.

[4]Viewed in its wider context, the texts where the word occurs are found in each major section of the gospel except in the Passion and Resurrection narratives.

Luke	εὐαγγελίζω
1:1–4	
1:5–2:52	1:19; 2:10
3:1–4:13	3:18

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narrative texts to summarize the activity of Jesus (8:1; 20:1), John the Baptist (3:18), and the Twelve (9:6). Based on the immediate context of Lk. 3:18, John the Baptist's proclamation is about the coming of the Messiah (cf. 3:15–17). Lk. 9:6, on the other hand, shows that the Twelve act on the instruction of Jesus (9:2). They proclaim the good news and cure diseases. Jesus is thus the reference of the proclamation both of John the Baptist and the Twelve.

In Acts, the word is used three times in direct speech with Peter (in the address to Cornelius and his household [10:36]), Paul (in the speech in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia [13:32]), and Barnabas (along with Paul, at the speech in Lystra [14:15]) as the speakers. Acts 10:36 speaks of Jesus Christ as the one who proclaims the gospel of peace and states that its origin is God. In Acts 13:32, Paul proclaims the good news of the resurrection as the fulfillment of God's promise to Israel. In Acts 14:15, the good news of Barnabas and Paul is that the people turn to the living God. In these three instances, we find three groups of addressees of the proclamation of the Good News: the Jews, the God-fearers, and the Gentiles. As a summary or part of the narration, the word is used to summarize the activity of Peter and the apostles (5:42), the disciples who were scattered because of persecution (8:4), Philip (8:12, 25, 35, 40), converts from Cyprus and Cyrene (11:20), and Paul (13:32–33; 17:18) with Barnabas (14:7, 15, 21; 15:35) and with Timothy (16:10). The disciples proclaim the words of Jesus (8:25; 15:35) along with the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ (8:12; 28:31). Their proclamation includes the good news of Jesus' resurrection as the fulfillment of God's promises.

4:14–9:50	4:18; 4:43; cf. Mk. 1:38; 7:22 par Mt. 11:5; 8:1; 9:6; diff Mk. 6:12
9:51–19:28	16:16
19:29–21:38	20:1
22:1–23:56	
24:1–53	

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From this brief survey, we can see that the use of εὐαγγελίζω in specific places of Luke-Acts is deliberate and serves to connect the mission of Jesus and that of his disciples and to convey the origin and progress of Christian proclamation.

"Good News" in Luke

As noted above, there are six instances of εὐαγγελίζω in direct speech in the gospel of Luke. In four of these, Jesus is the speaker who proclaims himself, his mission, and the kingdom of God (4:18, 43; 7:22; 16:16). The other two occurrences are found in the infancy narrative, where the angel is the one who proclaims the good news (1:19; 2:10). A brief examination of these texts reveals something of Luke's understanding of good news.

1. Lk. 4:18–19

Lk. 4:18–19 is part of the dramatic episode (4:16–30) which Luke composed to introduce the ministry of Jesus.[5] In this scene, Jesus reads aloud from the book of the prophet Isaiah. Luke depicts Jesus proclaiming his identity and mission using the words of Isaiah the prophet. Luke thus illustrates how Jesus begins his ministry by announcing the Good News and shows the effective force of this proclamation through Jesus' own commentary: "Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing" (4:21). Luke uses the Isaiah text to give the reader an insight into the mission of Jesus: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord." In this quotation from Isaiah 61:1–2, the second part of 61:2 is omitted and a text from Is. 58:6, "to let the

[5]Lk. 4:16–30 appears to be a free composition of Luke based on Mk. 1:14–15, 6:1–6, and Q (Lk. 7:22 par Mt. 11:4–5). See M. A. Co, "Reading the Isaiah Quotation in Luke 4:18–19 Intertextually," in *Announcing a Year of Favor of the Lord*, Proceedings of the First Annual Convention of CBAP (July 28–30, 2000), 33–45.

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oppressed go free," is inserted before Is. 61:2a. In Lk. 4:19, the verb κηρύξαι is used instead of καλέσαι.[6] These changes affect the structure of the text.

4:18a	The Spirit of the Lord is upon me	4:18a	Πνεῦμα κυρίου ἐπ' ἐμε
b	because he has anointed me	b	οὗ εἵνεκεν ἔχρισέν με
c	to bring glad tidings to the poor	c	εὐαγγελίσασθαι πτωχοῖς,
d	He has sent me	d	ἀπέσταλκέν με,
eα	to proclaim liberty to captives	eα	κηρύξαι αἰχμαλώτοις ἄφεσιν
eβ	and recovery of sight to the blind	eβ	καὶ τυφλοῖς ἀνάβλεψιν,
f	to let the oppressed go free	f	ἀποστεῖλαι τεθραυσμένους ἐν ἀφέσει,
4:19	and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.	4:19	κηρύξαι ἐνιαυτὸν κυρίου δεκτόν.

The text may be divided into three main statements:

A. 4:18a "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me"—introduction and main affirmation

B. 4:18bc "He has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor"

C. 4:18d–19 "He has sent me to proclaim liberty … a year acceptable to the Lord"

Lk. 4:18a is the introductory and main idea that governs the whole text. The verse calls to mind the previous texts that mention Jesus' relationship to God and the Holy Spirit. Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit (1:35). The Angel Gabriel whom God

[6]See Co, "Reading," 36.

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sent to Mary (1:26ff) revealed to her the child's identity and mission (1:30–33, 35). Jesus "will be called the Son of the Most High," "holy," the "Son of God." "The Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there will be no end" (1:32b–33). His birth was announced to the shepherds by the angel who also proclaimed his messianic identity: "to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (2:11). Simeon called the child "salvation from God … a light for revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of the people of Israel" (2:30–32). Through the notices of growth (2:39–40, 52) which describe Jesus' progress in strength, wisdom, and grace before God and people, Luke conveys that God has always been with Jesus. In Lk. 2:41–51, Luke illustrates Jesus' wisdom, understanding, and consciousness of the Father (2:46–49). While he is praying after his baptism, Jesus receives the Spirit and the revelation of his identity as God's beloved Son (3:21–22). Luke then describes Jesus returning from the Jordan as "full of the Spirit" and led by the Spirit in the wilderness (4:1). After his experience in the desert, overcoming all temptations, Jesus returns in the power of the Spirit into Galilee (4:14). Lk. 4:16–30 is a high point in the narrative development of the revelation of Jesus' identity and mission.

The first words of Jesus are addressed to his parents and talk about the Father (2:49). Luke describes Jesus as praying after his baptism but allows the reader to hear only the voice of the Father and not Jesus' words (3:21–22). In the story of Jesus' temptation in the desert, Jesus confronts the devil with words from the Scriptures (Lk. 4:4; cf. Dt. 8:3; 4:8; cf. Dt. 6:13; 4:12; cf. Dt. 6:16). Here again in Lk. 4:18ff, Luke depicts Jesus reading aloud the words of Scripture. It is the declaration of the fulfillment of the Scriptures that comes from Jesus' own utterance (4:21). This is consistent with Luke's characterization of Jesus in the Emmaus story where Jesus interprets "in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (24:27). Jesus is the one who opens the Scriptures to the disciples and explains to them how these are fulfilled in him (24:32, 44–47).

Lk. 4:18b–19 contains a parallelism: 4:18bc and 4:18d–19. Lk. 4:18bc is governed by the main verb ἔχρισέν while 4:18d–19 by

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ἀπέσταλκέν. Following the main verb in 4:18b is the infinitive in 4:18c, εὐαγγελίσασθαι. Lk. 4:18d–19 has the same structure. The main verb is followed by three infinitive phrases: κηρύξαι αἰχμαλώτοις ἄφεσιν καὶ τυφλοῖς ἀνάβλεψιν (4:18e), ἀποστεῖλαι τεθραυσμένους ἐν ἀφέσει (4:18f), and κηρύξαι ἐνιαυτὸν κυρίου δεκτόν (4:19). Ἔχρισέν με and ἀπέσταλκέν με are parallel. The series of infinitive phrases in 4:18e–19 parallel εὐαγγελίσασθαι πτωχοῖς. With the repetition of κηρύξαι and ἄφεσις, a double inclusion and concentric structure are formed. The first one has the two κηρύξαι phrases framing ἀποστεῖλαι τεθραυσμένους ἐν ἀφέσει which is the verse taken from Isa. 58:6 and inserted into this quotation. Highlighted in this structure is the freeing or liberation of the oppressed.

a **κηρύξαι** αἰχμαλώτοις **ἄφεσιν** καὶ τυφλοῖς ἀνάβλεψιν,

b ἀποστεῖλαι τεθραυσμένους ἐν **ἀφέσει**

a' **κηρύξαι** ἐνιαυτὸν κυρίου δεκτόν

The second concentric structure consists of the framing of τυφλοῖς ἀνάβλεψιν by two phrases with the word ἄφεσις. In this structure, the recovery of sight is given importance. It would appear that κηρύξαι ἐνιαυτὸν κυρίου δεκτόν is to be seen also as a parallel to εὐαγγελίσασθαι πτωχοῖς and as encapsulating the proclamation in 4:18e–f.

From the parallelism and structure of the text, we can infer the following: a) Lk. 4:18e–19 elaborates the meaning of εὐαγγελίσασθαι πτωχοῖς; b) the anointing (4:18b) and the sending (4:18e) overlap in meaning which is related to Jesus' identity and authority (cf. Lk. 20:1–8); c) Lk. 4:19 incorporates the ideas in 4:18e–f; d) the meaning of "poor" (πτωχοί) is clarified by "captives" (αἰχμάλωτοί), "blind" (τυφλοί), and "oppressed" (τεθραυσμενοί); e) the good news is about release, freedom, liberation, and forgiveness, somehow evocative of the jubilee year.[7]

[7]See S. Ringe, *The Jubilee Proclamation in the Ministry and Teaching of Jesus: A Tradition-Critical Study in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts*, Ph.D. diss. (New York: Union Theological Seminary, 1981), 61–69, quoted in R. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation* Vol. 1: *The Gospel According to Luke*

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2. Lk. 7:22 (par Mt. 11:5)

The Isaiah prophecy is fulfilled in the person and effective proclamation of Jesus (Lk. 4:18–19, 21). The fulfillment of this prophecy in the ministry of Jesus is affirmed in Lk. 7:22. The context of this verse (Lk. 7:18–23) deals with the question of John the Baptist about Jesus' identity. He sends his disciples to ask Jesus, "Are you the one who is to come or shall we look for another?" (7:20). In Luke's version of the story (compare Mt. 11:2–6), the question is repeated (7:19–20) and the actions of Jesus are described as happening then and there (7:21). Luke makes John's disciples actual witnesses of Jesus' activity. "At that time he cured many of their diseases, sufferings and evil spirits; he also granted sight to many who were blind" (7:21). Jesus tells them, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the good news proclaimed to them" (τυφλοὶ ἀναβλέπουσιν, χωλοὶ περιπατοῦσιν, λεπροὶ καθαρίζονται καὶ κωφοὶ ἀκούουσιν, νεκροὶ ἐγείρονται, πτωχοὶ εὐαγγελίζονται [7:22]). The beginning and end of the enumeration recall τυφλοῖς ἀνάβλεψιν (4:18e) and εὐαγγελίσασθαι πτωχοῖς (4:18c).[8]

The enumeration in Lk. 7:22 consists of two parts joined by καὶ, with each part having a series of three: the blind, the lame, and the lepers in the first part and the deaf, the dead, and the poor in the second.[9] The verse echoes Isa. 29:18–19 ("the deaf shall hear … eyes of the blind shall see … the poor rejoice"), 35:5–6 ("the eyes of the blind will be opened and the ears of the deaf be cleared, then will the

(Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 62–68; C. R. Bruno, "'Jesus our Jubilee' … But How? The OT Background and Lukan Fulfilment of the Ethics of Jubilee," *JETSS* 53/1 (2010): 81–101; E. Sri, "Release from Debt of Sin: Jesus' Jubilee Mission in the Gospel of Luke," *Nova et Vetera* 9/1 (2011): 183–194.

[8]In the parable of the great banquet, the list includes the poor, the maimed, the blind, and the lame (14:21; cf. 14:13).

[9]Compare with the structure of Mt. 11:5: τυφλοὶ ἀναβλέπουσιν καὶ χωλοὶ περιπατοῦσιν, λεπροὶ καθαρίζονται καὶ κωφοὶ ἀκούουσιν, καὶ νεκροὶ ἐγείρονται καὶ πτωχοὶ εὐαγγελίζονται.

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lame leap like a stag"), 26:19 ("your dead shall live"), and 61:1–2 ("glad tidings to the poor … recovery of sight to the blind"). In Isaiah, the common pairing is the blind and the deaf. It appears, based on the structure of the verse, that Luke extended the pair to include the lame, the lepers, the dead, and the poor. Luke's narrative from Lk. 4:14 to 7:21 includes stories of Jesus' ministry to these people. An illustration of Jesus' preaching to the poor within this section is found in Lk. 6:20ff. The last phrase "the poor have the good news preached to them" appears to be not just one of Jesus' activities but the summary of his ministry as well. The people who experienced healing and salvation from him are among the poor who receive and experience Jesus' proclamation of good news.

3. Lk. 4:43 (par Mk. 1:38)

After Lk. 4:16–30, Luke follows Mark's narrative closely in Lk. 4:31–44 (par Mk. 1:21–39)[10] then inserts an episode (5:1–11) before following Mark again in Lk. 5:12–6:11 (par Mk. 1:40–3:6). Lk. 4:43 is Luke's rendering of Mk. 1:38.

Mk. 1:38 Let us go to the nearby villages that I may preach there also. For this purpose have I come.	Lk. 4:43 To the other towns also I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God, because for this purpose I have been sent.
ἄγωμεν ἀλλαχοῦ εἰς τὰς ἐχομένας κωμοπόλεις, ἵνα καὶ ἐκεῖ κηρύξω εἰς τοῦτο γὰρ ἐξῆλθον.	καὶ ταῖς ἑτέραις πόλεσιν εὐαγγελίσασθαί με δεῖ τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ, ὅτι ἐπὶ τοῦτο ἀπεστάλην.

[10]Lk. 4:31–32 par Mk. 1:21–22; 4:33–37 par Mk. 1:23–28; 4:38–39 par Mk. 1:29–31; 4:40–41 par Mk. 1:32–34; 4:41–44 par Mk. 1:35–39.

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Luke changes Mark's κηρύξω to εὐαγγελίσασθαι here but uses the verb in the following verse (4:44 par Mk. 1:39).[11] Lk. 4:43 clarifies the content, purpose, and origin of Jesus' proclamation. The words εὐαγγελίσασθαι and ἀπεστάλην here echo Jesus' inaugural preaching in the synagogue at Nazareth (Lk. 4:18f).

4. Lk. 16:16 (par Mt. 11:12–13)

Lk. 16:16 is part of Jesus' words to the Pharisees in Lk. 16:14–31. The Pharisees are described in 16:14 as lovers of money who scoffed at Jesus. Jesus' reply consists of sayings (16:15–18) and a parable (16:19–31). Following his criticism of the Pharisees in 16:15, Jesus speaks of the kingdom of God in Lk. 16:16: "The law and the prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and every one enters it violently" (ὁ νόμος καὶ οἱ προφῆται μέχρι Ἰωάννου· ἀπὸ τότε ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ εὐαγγελίζεται καὶ πᾶς εἰς αὐτὴν βιάζεται). This text is significant because it clearly states that the good news is the kingdom of God. It mentions John who in 3:18 is said to be proclaiming the good news and reminds us of the connection between John and Jesus.

5. Lk. 1:19 and 2:10

Lk. 1:19 and 2:10 are the two instances of εὐαγγελίζω in the Infancy Narrative. Lk. 1:19 is the response of the angel Gabriel to Zechariah's question (1:18). It contains the verbs ἀποστέλλω and εὐαγγελίζω which are also found in Lk. 4:18–19 and 4:43. Common to these texts are the ideas of being sent, proclaiming the Good News, and God as the origin of sending and proclamation.

[11]Luke uses κηρύσσειν 9x in his gospel compared to Mark where it appears 14x. The word is found 9x in Matthew. Luke follows Mark's use in 3:3 par Mk. 1:4 and 8:39 par Mk. 5:20. In Lk. 9:1–6, par Mk. 6:6b–13, Luke changes κηρύσσω (Mk. 6:12) to εὐαγγελίζω in the parallel verse (Lk. 9:6) but uses it in 9:2 (add Mk. 6:7).

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Lk. 1:19	I am Gabriel who stand before God. I was sent to speak to you and to announce to you this good news.	ἐγώ εἰμι Γαβριὴλ ὁ παρεστηκὼς ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἀπεστάλην λαλῆσαι πρὸς σὲ καὶ εὐαγγελίσασθαί σοι ταῦτα

Lk. 2:10 is the introduction of the angel's proclamation to the shepherds (2:10–12) after the birth of Jesus (2:1–7).

Lk. 2:10	Do not be afraid: for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.	μὴ φοβεῖσθε, ἰδοὺ γὰρ εὐαγγελίζομαι ὑμῖν χαρὰν μεγάλην ἥτις ἔσται παντὶ τῷ λαῷ,

In Lk. 1:19 and 2:10, the angel is the one proclaiming the good news about the birth of a child. Zechariah is the recipient of the good news from the Angel Gabriel in 1:19; in 2:10, the angel addresses the shepherds. In Zechariah's case, the news is given before the event. The angelic proclamation here is a promise and a prophecy. The proclamation to the shepherds, on the other hand, happens after the event. The news of great joy is the birth of the Savior, Christ the Lord (2:11). As the angel announces to the shepherds the birth and identity of Jesus as Messiah, so in Lk. 4:18ff Jesus is the one who proclaims his identity and inaugurates his messianic mission.

Besides highlighting the significance of their birth, the texts also function in the interest of comparison and parallelism between John the Baptist and Jesus; also in the interest of Lukan parallelism is the use of the verb εὐαγγελίζειν for the activity of John the Baptist in Lk. 3:18.[12]

[12]The parallelism between Jesus and John the Baptist has been noted by R. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in Matthew and Luke* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1977); J. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke: Introduction, Translation and Notes*, 2 vols. (Garden City: Doubleday, 1981/1985). The parallelism between Jesus and John the Baptist is found as well in Lk. 7:31–35. Luke also draws a parallelism between Jesus and the disciples

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6. Lk. 20:1 (add Mk. 11:27)

The last occurrence of εὐαγγελίζειν is in Lk. 20:1 which describes the activity of Jesus in the temple. It is found in the setting of the episode that deals with the question of his authority (20:1–8, par Mk. 11:27–33). Jesus responds to the question of the chief priests, scribes, and the elders by asking about the origin of John's baptism (20:3–4). They cannot agree on how to answer Jesus, so they tell him they do not know (20:5–7). Jesus then replies, "Neither shall I tell you by what authority I do these things" (20:8). From the beginning of Luke's gospel, the reader knows that Jesus' authority comes from God.

Lk. 20:1–8 in a way recalls Lk. 7:8–23. Both texts deal with the question of Jesus' activity and identity; both mention John the Baptist. In Lk. 7:8ff, Jesus answers the messengers by positively making John's disciples witness his activities; in Lk. 20:1ff, on the other hand, the chief priests, scribes, and elders are left in the dark. Viewed in the light of Lk. 20:1–8 and 7:8–23, it is clear that Lk. 4:18ff and 2:10–11 convey not only Jesus' identity and mission but also his authority.

The final words of Jesus before his Ascension (24:44–49) announce the fulfillment of His messianic mission (24:46). He has fulfilled what has been written of the Messiah through his suffering, death, and resurrection, and opened the possibility of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. He thus entrusts his disciples with the mission to preach repentance for the forgiveness of sins in his name (24:47). This implies that part of the mission Jesus had accomplished is the formation of disciples to continue his mission and proclamation to all nations (24:48). But Jesus in this scene talks not only of fulfillment but also of promise. He instructs his disciples to remain in Jerusalem because he is sending the promise of the Father, the power from on high which is the Holy Spirit (24:49). The final words of Jesus in a way summarize his entire ministry. Not only do they refer to his passion, death, and resurrection, they also evoke the beginning of his ministry in Galilee

(see Lk. 5:17–26 [Jesus healing a paralytic], Acts 3:1–10 [Peter and John healing a lame man], Acts 14:8–13 [Paul and Barnabas healing a crippled man]). Lk. 9:6 also indicates that the Twelve act as Jesus does.

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(Lk. 4:14ff) where he announced his mission to proclaim release. At the end of the gospel, the release has come to refer to forgiveness of sins. Lk. 24:44–49 also looks back to the beginning of the gospel where the opening scene shows the Angel Gabriel announcing the good news to Zechariah. In his announcement, the angel brings hope and evokes expectation for the fulfillment of a promise. Towards the end of the gospel, after proclaiming the good news of fulfillment, Jesus gives a promise, evoking new hope and expectation for the coming of the Holy Spirit who will empower His disciples to continue proclaiming the good news he himself has begun.

It is in the Acts of the Apostles that the good news of the coming of the Holy Spirit is fulfilled. Acts shows how the disciples carry out the commission of the Risen Lord. Luke also uses the word εὐαγγελίζω in significant points of the narrative of Acts to remind the reader of the continuity of the mission of Jesus in the disciples' proclamation.

The Poor as Recipients of the Good News

Jesus' inaugural proclamation in the synagogue at Nazareth highlights his prophetic and evangelizing mission to the poor. Earlier, after looking at the surface level of the text, we inferred from the structure of Lk. 4:18–20 that the good news is about release, freedom, liberation, forgiveness, and that the poor are those mentioned in the same proclamation—the captives, the blind, the oppressed. What do they have in common? Being in need, afflicted, restricted in their movement, subjugated, and judicially disadvantaged—these are the people who are called poor (πτωχοί) in Lk. 4:18.

Πτωχός appears 10 times in Luke (4:18; 6:20; 7:22; 14:13, 21; 16:20, 22; 18:22; 19:8; 21:2, 3) but never in Acts.[13] Πτωχός means "destitute, beggar," one in need and in affliction. It denotes "complete

[13]πτωχός is found 4–5 times in Mark and 4–5 times in Matthew. In Luke, 5 instances of πτωχός are peculiar to him (4:18; 14:13; 16:20, 22; 19:8). The context of Lk. 14:21 is Lk. 14:15–24 (par Mt. 22:1–14) but 14:21 has no parallel in Matthew. The other occurrences of the word in Luke have parallels in the

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destitution which forces the poor to seek the help of others by begging."[14] The poor to whom the good news is to be proclaimed are the materially poor who are vulnerable, living in the margins of society, and have nothing, including those who are reduced to poverty by unjust means. Considering that this is what Jesus actually did, it is clear that Luke through the Isaiah quotation provides an interpretative summary of Jesus' ministry.

The Poor in Jesus' Ministry

Jesus mingled and had table fellowship with tax collectors and sinners. He defended those who were despised by the learned, the scribes, and the Pharisees. He healed the sick and touched lepers and made them whole; he pronounced the poor blessed and fed the hungry. He instructed his disciples to continue his mission. If Jesus actually ministered to the materially poor and disadvantaged, then πτωχοι, in Lk. 4:18, should be interpreted as the materially poor. Material poverty means not only lacking in material sufficiency but poverty in non-material terms as well. Although there could be sympathy for the poor, the destitute and the indigent are often despised and scoffed upon, considered vulnerable to exploitation, defenseless, lawless, and unworthy of trust. Jesus is good news to the poor. He proclaims that they belong to the kingdom of God. Even if people despise and exclude them, they are not excluded by God. In fact, they are the first beneficiaries of the kingdom. This is expressed in Lk. 6:20–23:

> Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you that hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh. Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, on account of the Son of man! Rejoice in that day, and leap for you, for behold your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.

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other synoptics: Lk. 18:22 par Mk. 10:21; Mt. 19:21; Lk. 21:3 par Mk. 12:42–43; Lk. 6:20 par Mt. 5:3; Lk. 7:22 par Mt. 11:5. In Lk. 21:2, Luke uses πενιχρά.

[14]"πτωχός" in TDNT, vol. 6, 886.

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For the poor, the afflicted, the needy, and the downtrodden who feel that God is far from them or that they are excluded from the kingdom of God, this is certainly good news. Jesus proclaims that God is on their side, that God offers them the kingdom and promises a reversal of their situation.

While Jesus' proclamation in Lk. 4:18–19 and 6:20–23 is a promise of salvation for the poor, he also warns the rich: "Woe to you that are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe to you that are full now, for you shall hunger. Woe to you that laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. Woe to you, when all men speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets" (6:24–26). This reversal of fortunes is hailed in the Magnificat as God's action on behalf of the lowly: "He has shown strength with his arm, he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts, he has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty" (Lk. 1:51–53).

The reversal is expressed similarly by Abraham in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (16:19–31): "Son, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish." Nothing is said about Lazarus being worthy, good, or righteous; he is simply poor and has a skin disease. The good news of the parable is that God balances the situation. Nothing is said about the rich man abusing Lazarus. He simply goes about his life, feasting sumptuously every day and being clothed in purple and fine linen. While Lazarus is aware of the rich man's life because he desires to be fed with what falls from the rich man's table, the rich man shows no awareness at all of Lazarus' existence. The dogs that lick Lazarus' sores seem to be better than the rich man for Lazarus exists for them. The startling contrast is that Lazarus in his poor condition is able to give a "feast" to the dogs but the rich man in all his riches offers no help or consolation to Lazarus. Thus, the parable is also a warning to the rich. There is a time of reckoning and the judgment on the rich will be based on their attitude and action toward the poor.

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Jesus' good news to the poor is his own life of total trust and confidence in God. He lives the life of the poor and dies the death of a wretched criminal—condemned, tortured, scorned, and despised. Not only his words and deeds but his very life and death manifest his solidarity with the poor. His resurrection, then, is the climax of the good news he proclaims. His resurrection validates his proclamation. To receive the good news is to live as he teaches; to proclaim the good news is to live the new life he offers by his resurrection.

Based, therefore, on the life and ministry of Jesus, the poor in Lk. 4:18 (cf. Is. 61:1) refers to the materially poor who lack not only material sufficiency but other goods as well which are needed to live with human dignity.

Luke's View of the Poor

Luke hands on to us the tradition about Jesus who shows concern for the poor in his life, words, and deeds. There is a gap of several years between the time of Jesus and the time of Luke's writing. The question is whether Luke means something else other than the materially poor in Lk. 4:18 (cf. Is. 61:1). We noted earlier that material poverty entails other forms or dimensions of poverty. The question here focuses on the basic meaning of poor in Lk. 4:18.

1. The Poor in Lk. 4:18 in the Light of Is. 61:1

Πτωχοῖς in Lk. 4:18 is the LXX translation of the Hebrew עֲנָוִים in Is. 61:1. עֲנָוִים is the plural form of עָנָו, a subsidiary form of עָנִי. עָנִי primarily denotes a relation rather than a situation of social distress. It comes from the stem ענה which indicates the situation of answering and readiness for this. Later it came to describe the position of inferiority in the face of the one who demands the answer. עָנִי is concretely the hearer, the dependent; eventually it also came to denote one who is wrongfully impoverished or dispossessed.[15] YHWH is the protector

[15]"πτωχός", 888.

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of the עֲנָיִים because they draw to him (Ps. 140:12; 40:17; 86:1; 109:22; 69:29; 74:19; 140:12). The word comes to have a religious significance—"humble," "pious" (Ps. 18:27 [ταπεινός].

Isaiah 61:1–2 belongs to the third part of the Book of Isaiah (chapters 56–66) which was written probably in the late sixth century B.C.E. The message of Third Isaiah is addressed to the people who returned from exile and were worried about their claim on the land. The city was still devastated and the people were unsure of their status as the holy community. The prophet announced the rebuilding of Zion by YHWH and encouraged Israel to commit itself anew to right worship and social justice.[16] It will be God's divine action. God will establish justice for Israel. Thus, Isa. 61:1ff is addressed to Israel as a whole. The characterization of Israel as the poor of YHWH is found in Second Isaiah (49:13; 51:21; 54:11). The proclamation continues in 61:3ff which speaks of the restoration of Israel. The time of favor for Israel's exiles is also an occasion of God's vengeance on their enemies (61:2, 5–6).

The poor in Isa. 61:1 might indeed refer to the whole of Israel; however, the context of Lk. 4:18ff shows that Luke widens the meaning of poor. The omission of the last part of Isa. 61:2, "a day of vindication by our God," and Jesus' references to Elijah and Elisha (Lk. 4:25–27) indicate that the proclamation goes beyond the vision of Jewish nationalism. In Jesus' proclamation, the Gentiles are included. This message is not received well by Jesus' hearers. The people's reaction change from amazement (4:22a) to questioning (4:22b) and then to fury (4:28) and violence (4:29).

It is said that by the time of Second and Third Isaiah עֲנָיִים has a religious significance. Thus, the meaning of poor in Isa. 61:1 is humble, lowly, and pious.[17] The text offers a promise of eschatological jubilee to the humble poor who are called to trust in God and await his actions

[16]R. Clifford & K. Anatolios, "Christian Salvation: Biblical and Theological Perspectives," *Theological Studies* 66/4 (2005): 744.

[17]"πτωχός," 892.

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of justice and liberation for the poor (Isa. 61:4ff; cf. Isa. 11:4). The good news of release (ἄφεσις) has to do with the release of moral-spiritual debt. This has to do with the forgiveness of sins.[18] The good news is the breaking of "bonds that enslave people to sin in all its various forms."[19] This does not deny that Jesus releases people from various concrete forms of physical, social, and economic oppressions. Forgiveness of sins is indeed a theme that runs through Luke-Acts and is related to the theme of salvation (Lk. 1:77). Towards the end of the gospel of Luke, Jesus is seen entrusting to the disciples the message of repentance for the forgiveness of sins in his name (24:47).

Jesus proclaimed the reign of God to his people and majority of his hearers were poor. In the first century Palestine of his day, there were only a few rich—the large landowners, Herod and the royal family and their functionaries, and some merchants. The poor consisted of day laborers, slaves, small landowners, tenants for large landowners, and all those who worked to earn their livelihood. Sometimes they were overburdened with taxes, tithes, rents, and became debtors. There were also poor who lived partially or fully on relief: the beggars, sick, blind, lame, lepers, destitute, the unemployed poor and drifters, the fatherless, widows, and victims of ill fortune who needed social care and received such. Although they would receive some form of help like daily or weekly food, they were treated with contempt by the well-to-do. Their material poverty involved loss of dignity, status, security, and even resulted in uncleanness.[20] Jesus' concern for them astounded them. Jesus offered the poor and the sick knowledge of God and forgiveness even when they could not go to the temple and afford to offer sacrifices for the forgiveness of sins. Jesus was really good news to them. However, not all who heard Jesus and witnessed

[18]Sri, "Release from Debt of Sin," 192.

[19]P. Miller, "An Exposition of Lk. 4:16–21," *Interpretation* 29 (1975): 417–421, quoted by Sri, "Release from Debt of Sin," 193.

[20]M. Prior, *Jesus the Liberator: Nazareth Liberation Theology (Luke 4:16–30)* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 172.

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his astounding deeds believed in him. Jesus preached to the poor but only the poor who were open to God accepted him.

In light of the above considerations, it can be fairly said that Luke broadened the horizon for understanding the poor. The good news of Jesus is not only for Israel but for the Gentiles as well. This is shown more clearly in the narrative of the Acts of the Apostles. Jesus turned his attention to the materially poor but not all who heard him, poor or rich, were convinced of his preaching. Those who accepted his good news and believed in him were the poor who were humble and open to God. The acceptance of Jesus' message erases the divide between rich and poor.

2. The Poor in Luke's Narrative

By the time of Luke's writings, the Christian movement had progressed through the Mediterranean world of the Roman Empire. He had a broader perspective of Jesus' mission which continued to his own day through the handing on of tradition from the apostles and eyewitnesses of Jesus as well as from missionaries. Though he kept a distance between his own time and the narrated world of the gospel, his worldwide perspective and the concerns of the community or communities he was addressing influenced his writing. The teachings on wealth and poverty in the gospel show Luke's concern both for the poor and the rich. The following section presents the characters that are portrayed in Luke's narrative as receiving and experiencing the good news.

The first recipients of the good news in Luke's narrative were Zechariah and Elizabeth. Both were characterized as righteous before God and blameless (1:5). They belonged to the priestly clan. Zechariah was a country priest; he was poor compared to the priestly aristocracy in the temple. Both Zechariah and Elizabeth were advanced in age. They were childless. The good news that the angel brought to Zechariah was the birth of a child, and not just any child; he would be John who would go before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah to make a people ready for the Lord (1:13–17). The good news proclaimed to Zechariah was experienced by Elizabeth herself when she conceived

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and bore John. She recognized that God looked at her and took away her reproach (1:25).

Mary, a young woman of Nazareth and betrothed to Joseph, accepted the word of the angel and conceived in her womb the Son of God (1:26–38). Luke does not mention Mary's pedigree. She is simply a young woman from Nazareth and a kinswoman of Elizabeth (1:36). Mary in her song of praise (1:46–55) speaks of herself as a lowly servant. God "regarded the low estate of his handmaiden" (ἐπέβλεψεν ἐπὶ τὴν ταπείνωσιν τῆς δούλης αὐτοῦ [1:48]). The birth of the Messiah is announced to the shepherds (2:10–11). Although "shepherd" is used as an image of God in the Jewish Scriptures, the shepherds during the time of Jesus were not viewed favorably. They were classed among robbers and cheats because they were suspected of stealing the increase of the flock entrusted to them. With this background of the place of shepherds in Israel's society, the angel's proclamation to them is significant. Here is another instance when God showed favor to the poor and the lowly.[21]

In Lk. 3:18, John is described as proclaiming the Good News. He was proclaiming into all the regions about the Jordan a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (3:3). He was proclaiming the coming judgment and exhorted the people to "bear fruits that befit repentance" (3:8). He preached to the multitudes (3:10), to the tax collectors (3:12), and to the soldiers (3:14). Each of these groups asked him "What then shall we do?" John replied to the multitudes: "He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise" (3:11). To the tax collectors, he said: "Collect no more than is appointed you" (3:12b), and to the soldiers, "Rob no one by violence or by false accusation, and be content with your wages" (3:14b). The concrete acts of repentance John advised were actions of justice, sharing, and kindness toward the poor. John's teaching touched on the social, economic, and political issues of his day but there was no hint of questioning the established system. Luke must have found this teaching relevant for his own time as well. Only he

[21]The story may also be interpreted on a symbolic level. The mention of shepherds evokes connection with David who was a shepherd.

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among the evangelists gives us this teaching of John the Baptist. John could have proclaimed this to his contemporaries or Luke interpreted the preaching of John in this way for his community. The text shows Luke's concern for the materially poor and conveys the idea of sharing as a way of addressing the needs of the poor.

After his proclamation in Lk. 4:16–30, Jesus undertook his ministry. Luke gives us stories of people who witnessed Jesus' teaching and experienced his healing presence. They were those who were sick with various diseases and those oppressed by demons (4:40ff; 5:15; 6:17–19; 7:21–22; 4:31ff; 4:38ff). Luke illustrates through stories how Jesus' activities fulfilled the Isaiah prophecy.

- Demoniacs were released from the power of evil spirits (4:31ff; 8:26ff; 9:37ff);
- lepers were cleansed (5:12ff; 17:11ff);
- a paralytic was forgiven and made to walk (5:17ff);
- a sinful woman was forgiven (7:36ff);
- a man with a withered hand (6:6ff), a centurion's slave (7:1ff), a woman with hemorrhage (8:49ff), a bent woman (13:10ff), a man with dropsy (14:1ff), and a blind beggar (18:35ff) were healed;
- the hungry crowd was fed (9:12ff);
- and a daughter (8:40ff) and a son (7:11ff) were raised to life.
- Tax collectors and sinners had table fellowship with him (5:27ff; 15:1–2).
- His own disciples witnessed his saving power (8:22ff).

These were the poor who experienced the joy of the kingdom through Jesus' care, compassion, healing, and forgiveness.

Luke, however, shows us that Jesus did not associate only with the poor. Jesus also accepted invitations to dine in the houses of a Pharisee (7:36ff) and a ruler (14:1ff). The banquet became a means for Jesus to teach about hospitality and liberality to the poor. "When you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. You will be rapid at the resurrection of the just" (14:13–14). Without doubt, the poor refers to

the materially poor and the rich are encouraged to open themselves to the poor in view of future judgment. In his association with the rich, Jesus calls them to turn toward the poor, to relate to them. His concern for the poor also reveals a concern for the rich, for he teaches them what they need to do in order to be part of the kingdom of God. Jesus invited himself to Zacchaeus' house (19:1ff). Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector and rich yet considered a sinner, received Jesus joyfully in his house. Zacchaeus' conversion is shown in his decision to give half of his possessions to the poor and to restore fourfold anyone whom he has defrauded (19:8).

When Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts in the treasury and a poor widow also putting in two copper coins, he was quick to point out the contrast to his disciples (Lk. 21:1–3). He praised the poor widow rather than the rich because the rich gave out of their abundance but the widow "out of her poverty put in all the living that she had" (Lk. 21:4). This story in Luke is preceded by Jesus' denunciation of the scribes whom he accused as desiring the best seats in the synagogues and places of honor at feasts but who devour widows' houses (Lk. 20:47). The point at issue is not only the contrast between rich and poor but the actions of the rich and powerful against the poor, actions of injustice that impoverish the widows and the poor more and more. The theme of justice is also conveyed in the parable of the widow and the unjust judge (18:1–8) which is told as a teaching on persistence in prayer. It concludes with the saying, "Will not God vindicate his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will vindicate them speedily" (18:7–8a).[22]

Throughout his ministry, Jesus was accompanied by disciples who left everything and followed him (5:11, 28; 18:28). They shared his life of poverty and proclaimed the Gospel according to his instructions: "Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not have two tunics" (9:3). He gave similar instructions

[22]See J. D. Hays, "'Sell Everything You Have and Give to the Poor': The Old Testament Prophetic Theme of Justice as the Connecting Motif of Luke 18:1–19:10," *JETS* 55/1 (2012): 43–63.

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to the seventy(-two) disciples: "Carry no purse, no bag, no sandal" (10:4). There were women in their company too. These women and many others provided for Jesus and the Twelve out of their means (8:3). Jesus and his community of disciples lived a poor life and carried out their mission in poverty but they were not destitute. At the Last Supper, Jesus asked his disciples, "when I sent you out with no purse or bag or sandals, did you lack anything?," and they said, "Nothing" (22:35). Their life of poverty was a life of total trust and confidence in God as Jesus was teaching them (6:20ff; 11:1ff; 12:22–34).

From a consideration of the different characters who were addressed by and accepted Jesus' proclamation, we can say that the poor in Luke's narrative encompasses the materially poor, the morally poor, and the religiously poor. This is in line with the theme of universality of salvation in Luke's gospel. Jesus proclaimed to all who cared to listen.

3. Being Poor to Follow Jesus

Luke gives us the stories of the call of Jesus' disciples who left everything to follow him. Peter and his companions "brought their boats to land, left everything and followed him" (5:11). Levi, who was sitting at the tax office when Jesus called him, left everything, "rose and followed him" (5:27–28). After hearing Jesus' saying on the difficulty of a rich man to enter the kingdom of God, Peter remarked, "We have left our homes and followed you" (18:28). Jesus replied, "Truly, I say to you, there is no man who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God who will not receive manifold more in this time, and in the age to come" (18:29–30).

The story of the rich ruler (18:18–23) shows that riches can be an obstacle to following Jesus. He asked Jesus what he should do to inherit life. Jesus told him to keep the commandments. When he said he had observed them from his youth, Jesus told him: "One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor (πάντα ὅσα ἔχεις πώλησον καὶ διάδος πτωχοῖς), and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me" (18:22). Hearing this, he became sad for he was very rich (ἦν γὰρ πλούσιος σφόδρα). Luke's story of the rich ruler appears open-ended. Luke omitted Mark's conclusion: "he went

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away sorrowful" (Mk. 10:22). Lk. 18:22 calls to mind Jesus' saying to his disciples in Lk. 12:32–33:

> Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give alms (πωλήσατε τὰ ὑπάρχοντα ὑμῶν καὶ δότε ἐλεημοσύνην); provide yourselves with purses that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys.

This saying comes after the teaching on trust in God's providence (12:22–31). The call to sell possessions and give alms is a call to live a life of trust and confidence in the Father's goodness. It is also a call to a renunciation of property that benefits the poor. Jesus challenges the disciples to an attitude that gives priority to spiritual value over material things, to sharing and concern for others over concern for one's possessions and security. The renunciation of possession has meaning in view of the kingdom but it remains a difficult condition of discipleship. A more radical formulation is found in Lk. 14:33: "whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple" (πᾶς ἐξ ὑμῶν ὃς οὐκ ἀποτάσσεται πᾶσιν τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ ὑπάρχουσιν οὐ δύναται εἶναί μου μαθητής). The demand is unmistakable; it calls for total renunciation of one's possessions. The saying is addressed to the multitudes (14:25). The response to this call will distinguish the true disciples from the crowd.

The teaching on renunciation of possessions is to be considered in relation to one's view of life and death. In the parable of the rich fool (12:16–21), the rich man whose land brought forth plentiful harvest decides to pull down his barns and build larger ones where he can store all his grain and goods. He plans to live a life of security. But God says to him, "Fool! This night your soul is required of you; and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?" The parable is Jesus' reply to the one who asked him to help get his share of inheritance from his brother (12:13). Jesus uses this parable to illustrate his saying on covetousness: "Take heed, and beware of all covetousness; for a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (12:15). Jesus challenges the attitude of the rich to secure oneself and build one's future without consideration of others. No matter how the rich secure themselves with possessions, they do not know the time

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of their death which can bring to nought what they have worked for. Death is a moment when one loses everything. Possessions cannot secure any person from death. In the face of death, one learns the relative value of wealth and possessions (cf. Sir. 41:1–2). Luke follows this parable with Jesus' sayings on trust in God (12:22ff). It is the view of the end of one's life that can guide people to make right decisions about their life and possessions (cf. Sir. 7:36). For Luke, the end in view is the eschatological reality of sharing in the kingdom of God. It is this eschatological reality that gives meaning to the renunciation of possessions. It appears that the sayings on the renunciation of possessions are really expressions of the value of the kingdom of God.

What Jesus started in his ministry is an alternative lifestyle of radical prophetic poverty. It is an alternative lifestyle that manifests radical trust in God, serves as a protest against rich living, and expresses solidarity with the least.[23]

The renunciation of possessions may be seen as a manifestation of the self-denial that Jesus calls for: "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. Whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake, he will save it" (9:23–24). Possession may be seen as symbolic of the person; thus, to renounce possession is symbolic of renouncing the self. Underlying the hoarding of possessions is the desire to preserve the self.[24] Self-denial may be equated with renunciation of possessions. Thus, the call to deny the self in order to follow Jesus appears as another expression of the demand to renounce possessions or it is the attitude that grounds the possibility of fulfilling the demand to detach from possession. Learning to deny the self begins with learning to detach from what one has. Becoming poor to follow Jesus is not just a matter of ascetic discipline. It is clear from Lk. 6:20ff that the poverty of the disciples is for the sake of Jesus and the kingdom of God. Jesus teaches

[23]H. Welzen, "Spiritualiteit in het Lukasevangelie: Verscheidenheid en Gemeenschap," *Acta Theologica* 32/2 (2012): 326.

[24]L. T. Johnson, *The Literary Function of Possessions in Luke-Acts* (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1977), 150.

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his disciples to be rich toward God (12:21), to seek his kingdom, and that "these things will be yours as well" (12:31).

Luke appreciates Jesus' call to renunciation. He highlights what he has received from tradition (Lk. 9:23–27 par Mk. 8:38–9:1; Lk. 18:18–30 par Mk. 10:17–22; Lk. 12:22–31 par Mt. 6:25–45; Lk. 12: 33–34 par Mt. 6:19–21) by repeating the saying on the renunciation of possessions (Lk. 12:33; 14:33; 18:22) and adding stories and parables that challenge people's attitudes toward possessions. This is a challenge that Luke poses to his own contemporaries. The focus is not so much the possessions but the kingdom of God, and the good news of the kingdom of God is what grounds and gives meaning to the renunciation of possession.

4. Sharing of Possessions as a Way of Discipleship

Besides the teaching on renunciation, Luke's gospel contains parables and sayings on having and using possessions. These teachings on possessions seem contradictory. Thus, it was observed that Luke consistently talks about possessions but he does not talk about possessions consistently.[25] Does Luke really contradict himself? Or does he intend to give different views about possessions for his contemporaries?[26] To our mind, all these sayings are governed by the good news of the kingdom.

[25]Johnson, *The Literary Function of Possessions in Luke-Acts*, 129–130.

[26]See the review of proposals by different scholars in T. E. Philips, "Reading Recent Readings of Wealth and Poverty in Luke and Acts," *CBR* 1.2 (2003): 231–269. Very briefly, we can note how he classifies the different proposals. One group seeks to find the reason for the inconsistency in terms of Luke's readers; another group seeks to prove the consistency of Luke's view. Schmithals considers the situation of a possible persecution of the Lukan community, a situation that gives light to the contradictory views on poverty and wealth; Degenhardt sees two groups being addressed: renunciation for the disciples (ecclesiastical authority) and proper use of possessions for the people (members); Karris sees the Lukan community composed of rich and poor and the gospel is addressed to the rich; Stegemann situates the Lukan community in the city of the Roman empire but not in Palestine and considers the tensions in the

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Luke gives examples in the gospel of people who use their possessions to benefit others. The women in Jesus' company provided for their needs out of their resources (8:1–3). Zacchaeus decided to part with his possessions (19:1–9). The Samaritan who attended to the needs of the man who fell among robbers (10:29–35) is an example of using one's possessions to help the needy (10:33–35). The parable of the dishonest steward (16:1–8) illustrates how one deals with possessions to secure his immediate future and conveys that there is a way of dealing with possessions that leads one to inherit the kingdom. A negative example is given in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (16:19–31). The rich man's neglect of his responsibility toward the poor and his failure to attend to the need of Lazarus who was just there at his door brought him to Hades. This is a serious warning to the rich who only think of this life and themselves. In Luke's view, the members of his community need to learn how to deal with wealth and possessions for these can be obstacles to the kingdom of God as they are a cause of tensions in the community.

Jesus' teachings on poverty, renunciation, and the use of wealth and possessions are related to the kingdom of God. It is the vision of the life beyond this world, the eschatological dimension, that gives meaning to these teachings. Luke shows in the Acts of the Apostles how the early Christian community in Jerusalem fulfilled Jesus' teachings on possessions (Acts 2:42–47; 4:32–35; 5:12–16). Luke describes the community as being together and having all things in common (2:44). They "sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need" (2:45). They lived their community life in joyful table

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community due to economic differences as the reason for the different views on poverty and wealth. The other group seems to accept that the disciples' poverty is a literary ideal for Luke who gives a critique of the rich. Seccombe thinks the gospel is addressed to the rich about the poor; Koenig relates the texts to hospitality and considers two groups being addressed: residential Christians and itinerant preachers; Kim accepts that Luke's community is composed of wealthy and poor members and relates the texts to slavery; Garret takes the viewpoint of an ascetic reader; Phillips makes a distinction of apostolic (renunciation) and post-apostolic time (use of possessions); Prior takes the stance of a contemporary reader and York that of an eschatological reader.

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fellowship, prayer, and holding fast to the teaching of the apostles. Luke is quick to point out that the sharing of goods comes from an inner disposition of each believer. "Now the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common" (4:32). Here Luke gives a compelling picture of complete unanimity and profound unity among the believers. The basis of their unity and harmony is their common faith. The union of heart and soul is further described as ingrained in a basic attitude of unselfishness particularly with regard to material possessions. Not one makes an egoistic claim even to what are rightfully one's own. Their sharing of temporal goods is an external manifestation of the union of heart and soul, an outflow of their interior disposition of openness, detachment from material possessions, and freedom from self-seeking interests. The sale of possessions and distribution to each as any has need results in a situation where "there was not a needy person among them" (οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐνδεής τις ἦν ἐν αὐτοῖς· [4:34]), an echo of Dt. 15:4. In Acts 2:42ff and 4:32ff, Luke pictures an ideal community inspired by the first group of Jesus' disciples who lived with Jesus and shared his life of poverty. Luke gives an ideal portrait of a Christian community that is permeated by the spirit of self-giving and generosity.

The absence of πτωχός in the narrative of Acts does not mean that Luke has abandoned his concern for the poor. The narrative of Acts focuses on the spread of the Christian message yet there are still some stories that show the concern for the poor (Acts 6:1ff, 11:28ff). In the description of the early Christian community in Jerusalem, Luke has united the demand of renunciation of possessions with the practice of sharing of possessions. This is Luke's vision of an egalitarian community of disciples of the Risen Lord. Luke's good news to the poor is a challenge so that in the community there would be no needy person. The goal of renunciation and sharing of possessions is not to impoverish the community but to enable it to witness to the Resurrection of the Lord.

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Good News to the Poor

Luke's understanding of good news enables us to look at the teachings on wealth and poverty in a new light. Our study of the meaning of good news in Luke-Acts led to a clarification of Luke's meaning of poor. Luke includes among the poor not only those who lack material and non-material goods, but also those who are morally, religiously, or spiritually poor. The proclamation of the good news to the poor gives the proper perspective for interpreting the different sayings and parables on wealth and poverty. Both renunciation of possessions and sharing of possessions are geared towards an egalitarian community which manifests the kingdom of God.

The good news that the poor are blessed may be met with different reactions. "Blessed are you poor, yours is the kingdom of God" (Lk. 6:20). Jesus' good news to the poor is that, though they are considered of no account and are despised, they are actually the first beneficiaries of the kingdom. Jesus assures them of their worth and the Father's care for them. Jesus challenges his society's prevailing view on and estimation of the poor.

Today there is a lot of discussion on global poverty. Reducing global poverty has been an issue for several decades. It is startling how, despite so many international and local organizations, agencies, institutions, and groups working for, with, and among the poor, the problem of poverty becomes more pronounced and the gap between rich and poor becomes even wider. A discourse analyst draws our attention to the discourse on poverty and stirs people to think about what they communicate by the way they speak of, about, and to the poor. How can the fight against poverty not become in reality a fight against poor people or the program to eradicate poverty a program to eliminate poor people? Is it still appropriate to speak of "poor" as a category or label for people living in poverty? Sandra Jeppesen has this to say about poverty:

> Poverty is in my bones. The lessons of poverty are that money is not everything, people come first and sharing can cover you. Free things carved a path into my life. Hanging out with punks and anarchists,

> poverty is an intentional way of life, a political anti-consumerist asceticism. If everyone you know lives in poverty, you have a community; it is no big deal … a life of poverty has its good moments too, like any life.[27]

She continues by identifying different situations of poverty.

> Poverty is complex in gendered and racialized lives and as it is experienced by indigenous people, people with disabilities, children, homeless people, squeegee kids, alcoholics, sex workers, people with mental health issues, drug addicts, et cetera. People living in poverty become criminalized, objects of targeted policing, automatic suspects. There is a sense of injustice.[28]

How is it possible to speak of the poor without labeling them and perpetuating the societal and cultural presuppositions about the poor? One challenge for us today is to clarify our notion of poverty and our way of speaking of and about the poor. It is not enough to pronounce a blessing on the poor; there is a need to recognize the poor as a blessing too, and to work with them so that they can enjoy the blessings of God.

Sadly, the many advancements in our society seem to push the poor further into the margins of social life. Our globalized world has produced tremendous wealth "to such an extent that if it would be distributed equally, all poverty would be eradicated."[29] This might seem to be an exaggeration, but even in our local setting, growth in the country's economy is reported but such growth has little or no impact on the poor. Luke's teachings on wealth and possessions can at least disturb those who gain wealth at the cost of the poor. Luke reminds us that an unlimited striving for wealth can engulf persons with a passion that makes them slaves of their possessions.

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[27]S. Jeppessen, "From 'War on Poverty' to 'War on the Poor': Knowledge, Power and Subject Positions in Anti-Poverty Discourses," *Canadian Journal of Communication* 34/3 (2009): 488.

[28]Jeppessen, "From 'War on Poverty,'" 488.

[29]Eben Scheffer, "Luke's View on Poverty in its Ancient (Roman) Economic Context: A Challenge for Today," *Scriptura* 106 (2011): 131.

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One of Luke's solutions to the problem of poverty and relationship in his community is for the rich to share their possessions. This is not only a matter of benevolence to the poor but a challenge to establish a condition in the community that will enable the poor to live according to their human dignity.

Luke also makes us aware that poverty is interconnected with other forms of human suffering and marginalization, such as "sickness, mental disturbance and social ostracism …. Any association or identifying with the poor for the sake of self-interested political gain which in the end does not benefit the real poor should be exposed."[30] This is a challenge to prophetic witness.

The renunciation of possessions is an ideal that may be difficult to follow. In Luke's gospel, this is not motivated by asceticism but by joy, the good news of the kingdom. The ideal of renunciation may be the narrow door to the kingdom. As the disciples orient themselves to the kingdom of God and follow Jesus in this mission of proclaiming the kingdom, the disciples tread the path towards renunciation that opens themselves to embrace the kingdom wholeheartedly.

In 2009, Pope Benedict XVI chose the theme "Fighting Poverty to Build Peace" for his Message on the World Day of Peace. In his homily (January 1, 2009), he distinguished between the poverty to be chosen and the poverty to be fought. The poverty to be chosen is the one Jesus chose and proposed for his disciples; the poverty to be combated is a deprivation which God does not desire, "a poverty that prevents people and families from living as befits their dignity, a poverty that offends justice and equality and … threatens peaceful co-existence."[31]

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[30]Scheffer, "Luke's View on Poverty in its Ancient (Roman) Economic Context," 131.

[31]http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/homilies/2009/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20090101_world-day-peace_en.html.

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