

Gospel of Luke
Week 5 Summary
Luke 9:51–11:54

Because Luke's gospel has reached a pivotal point, I thought that it would be helpful to remind us of Pastor David's (P.D.) discussion of McKnight's book the previous week. Specifically, that we all have a history or a worldview through which we see and understand the gospel. It's helpful to know that Jesus of Nazareth had a history and worldview as well. He belongs to the long story of Israel (something that is not well known and understood within evangelicalism generally).

As a prologue to this week's section, I focused on Isaiah 40-55. A large unit containing what is referred to as "the servant songs." This, I believe provides a narrative backdrop or framework of Luke's gospel. Briefly, in chapter 39 the judgment is given: Israel is going into exile. This sets the stage for 40-55 which open with a word of comfort. It is from these chapters that the angel Gabriel gives the purpose of John's life: he will make ready a people prepared for the Lord (Lk 1:17; Mal 3:1).¹ In Jesus' baptism Luke draws from Isa 42:1: in you I am well pleased. This word alerts us to the messianic destiny of Jesus.²

In broad strokes the 4 servant songs run this way:

1. Isa 42 Israel is the Lord's servant called for a redemptive purpose.
2. Isa 49 Something has gone wrong. The servant now stands against Israel.
3. Isa 50 The servant will suffer.
4. Isa 53 The servant dies for the sin of the people.

Once atonement is made, chapter 54: the covenant is renewed. After the covenant is renewed, chapter 55: creation is renewed.

We now find ourselves in a pivotal point in Luke's story: 9:51-56. Luke's story begins in the Temple and ends in the Temple. From the beginning until now Jesus has gone from the Temple to the wilderness, to Galilee, and now he "set his face to go to Jerusalem (v.51 NRSV). We remember that in 9:31 (the transfiguration) Moses and Elijah (representing the Law and the prophets) were speaking to Jesus about his *Exodus* that he was about to accomplish in Jerusalem. Jesus begins this purposeful journey by sending messengers (gk "angels") ahead of him to "get things ready" (v.52). This was the role of John the Baptist who was the Elijah to come in order to prepare the way (Mal 3:1). But the Samaritans did not receive these messengers which sparked a harsh reaction from the disciples: "fire from heaven" they cried. This was a natural response. After all, Malachi 3:1b-2 says, "'Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,' says the Lord Almighty. But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap." We recall that John's message was in line with this call for fiery judgement (he will burn the chaff and gather the wheat). Jesus says no. The Day of the Lord and the Servant of YHWH are coming together. There will be judgement, but it will fall of God's servant (Isa 40-55).

In 9:57-62 we see that despite the initial rejection people wish to follow and are still invited to follow. But there is a cost. In the Kingdom of God (or under the Rule of God) there can be only one King and it is to him we give our allegiance.

In 10:1-24 I focused on the outcome of sending of the 72 (or possibly 70) disciples. "The seventy-two returned with joy and said, 'Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.' He

¹ I had said that night that this came from Isa 40. I need to look at my notes more often.

² I noted how scriptural echoes work according to Richard Hays.

replied, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you.'" (vv17-19 NIV).³ The main point I wanted to highlight here was that this concept of Satan falling like lightning. This has less to do with a description of the transformation of Lucifer into Satan (nothing to do with that actually) and more to do with the thrust of Jesus' messianic mission. The time of Satan's rule is coming to an end. It is now time for God to install his King on his holy hill (Ps 2:6).

In vv 25-37 we assume that we have now passed through Samaria and are back in Jewish territory due to the presence of an "expert in the law." Who is my neighbour? Jesus' answer by way of a parable harkens back to Luke 4 and his rejection in Nazareth. There he highlighted that his messianic mission was to expand beyond nationalistic boundaries to include the gentiles. This was not a popular message.

In verses 38-41 Luke continues to break down boundaries. This scene takes place in the home of Martha (v 38) who had a sister named Mary. We know from John's gospel that Mary and Martha lived with their brother Lazarus in Bethany. Despite this Luke describes the house as belonging not to Lazarus as we might assume in a patriarchal society, but to Martha. Martha ascribes her frustration to the work being left to her alone. The first century reader would have focused more on the description of Mary who "sat at the Lord's feet." This is a description of a student, a disciple. Mary had taken her place within what was considered off limits to women. This is more likely the source of Martha's frustration. Jesus declares that the gender barrier is coming down and Mary's place (read women's place) alongside the men will not be taken away from her/them.

In 11:1-13 we have Luke's version of the Lord's prayer with a further exhortation. Again, we see that this is a scene change introduced by "One day Jesus was praying." This teaching comes in response to a request by the disciples. Aside from the content of the prayer (think form over content: our tradition tends not to recite this prayer verbatim as in other traditions) we have the parable of a man imploring his friend for help. The friend helps because of the persistence of the request. The point is that God will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask. We noted the role of the Spirit in Luke's gospel by way of comparison to Matthew's version (Mt 7:11) where God gives "good gifts" to those who ask. This also links back to the declaration of John (Lk 3:16) "I baptize with water but he will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire."

This brings us to the Beelzebul controversy in vv 14-28. It begins with an abrupt scene change: "Jesus was driving out a demon..." This ties back to the passage where we see Satan fall like lightning. Satan's authority is being broken: it's time for God's rule. Jesus is accused of using demonic power to cast out this mute demon. The key takeaway from this exchange is verse 20. If Jesus is doing these things by the finger (or power or authority or Spirit) of God, then this is a sign that Satan's power has been broken and the kingdom of God (rule of God) has now come in the ministry of Jesus.

Before the paragraph about the "Sign of Jonah" is a strange beatitude pronounced over Jesus' mother by an anonymous woman. This blessing is redirected by Jesus to be over all who hear and obey the Word of God. To emphasize this point (and to develop the theme of Gentile inclusion in Luke's gospel) the Queen of the South and the men of Nineveh are said to rise at the resurrection to condemn this generation for their lack of repentance. We know from Matthew's telling of this scene (Mt 12:38) it is in response to a demand for a sign from Pharisees and teachers of the law. Here in Luke it is a spontaneous blanket judgement.

Skipping over the Lamp of the Body paragraph (because it's getting late and this summary is very late) we come to the final section of woes pronounced against the Pharisees and legal

³ You'll notice I like to remove chapter and verse numbers.

experts (but only because they felt left out). In this section we get a sense of the story of Jesus being a kind of resolution to the story of Israel or at least the Old Testament. Jesus declares in verses 50, 51 that this generation will be held responsible for the shed blood of all the prophets from Abel (Gen 4:8) to Zechariah (2 Chron 24:22). For this to make sense we need to remember that the Hebrew Scriptures begin with Genesis and end with 2 Chronicles.

The King Jesus Gospel

Chapter 5

1. What did you hear Dave say last week?
2. What is your own founding story around creeds/tradition?
3. In all the creeds that McKnight lists why is their being rooted in 1 Corinthians 15 important?
4. Why did the Reformation pave the way to shift from Gospel to Salvation?