

**FINAL ESSAY QUESTIONS**  
NT 511

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1. What Lukan themes resonate as you focus on the great “Travel Section?” Give an overview of the structure and organizing principles of this special Lukan material. From this great “Travel Section” find and discuss two examples of each of the seven distinctives underscored in class for Luke. Use an essay format to explain and discuss your choices.

As this writer focuses on the great “travel section” of Luke (9:51-19:44), there are several Lukan themes that resonate. The writer’s universal perspective, his focus on rejoicing, travel and special groups along with his inclusion of the marginalized sense of spiritual life and contrast of old and new ways are clearly evident as he reveals the words and character of Jesus to the reader.

The “travel section” of Luke contains a complex structure that is supported by several key organizing principles. In this significant block of the Lukan narrative, we find eleven chapters of material that are almost totally unique to Luke. The setting of this section is extremely significant as Jesus is traveling to Jerusalem and the reader should note the strong works of Jesus as He moves closer to the passion. Also important to the organization of this section are the way the disciples behave as they are instructed by Jesus during the journey. These ‘rules for the road’ highlight the way authentic disciples should follow and learn from our Savior.

The “travel section” most notably is symmetrical in its structure and has been seen as chiasmic by many scholars. The central theme of Jerusalem can be seen at the beginning of this section (9:51-56) in the mid-point or high-point (13:22-35) and at the close (19:10, 28-48). The symmetrical organization of this section of Luke repeats themes such as prayer (11:1-13 & 18:1-14) and following Jesus (9:57-10:12 & 18:35-19:9). The repetition of Jesus’ teachings should assist a reader in a heightened learning experience from this text.

From this great “travel section,” this writer will now find and discuss two examples of each of the seven distinctives that were underscored in class for Luke. The first distinctive is the

universal perspective and comprehensive scope that Luke wrote with. Two examples of this can be found in Luke 13:10-12 when Jesus heals a specific woman whose condition is described in some detail at a synagogue on the Sabbath and in Luke 14:1-2 when Jesus heals a man on the Sabbath whose specific condition is described. The specific mention of this particular day of the week along with the individual explanations of the injuries healed display for the reader the characteristic aspect of Luke as a valued historian.

Secondly, there is a sense of expectancy linked with joy, rejoicing and celebration in each of these passages. In Luke 13:12-13, the woman is told that she is “free” and rejoices when restored. Likewise the entire crowd rejoices at Jesus’ works in Luke 13:17. As we turn to chapter 14, the man is sent away by Jesus but the parable of a wedding banquet follows. This certainly highlights the sense of celebration that surrounded Jesus and His work in Luke.

A third aspect of Luke’s writing is the special emphasis that he provided to travel and movement. As readers should be aware, in the two Sabbath healings (13:10-12 & 14:1-2) Jesus was traveling and worshipping in different synagogues as His journey to Jerusalem progressed. A second example of travel in this “travel section” is that of Jesus sending out the 70 in Luke 10. This journey was distinct from Jesus and resulted in the rejoicing and celebration of these disciples (Luke 10:17).

The fourth aspect of the Lukan gospel is that of inclusion of the marginalized within the people of God. Each of Jesus’ Sabbath healings speaks directly to this aspect especially when Jesus calls the religious leaders’ attention to how they treat animals (oxen – 13:15 & 14:5) with more concern than the infirm (or marginalized). Following this, Jesus makes it clear in ‘The Parable of the Large Banquet’ (Luke 14:15-24) that the servant was sent to find and invite the

poor, maimed, blind and lame (verse 21) to the banquet. Yes, those marginalized by religious law were now being healed on the Sabbath and welcomed in with the people of God.

Without a doubt, Luke shows us that each Sabbath found Jesus as an observant Jew in the synagogue. The emphasis of prayer, worship and righteous living are evident in each of the Sabbath healing passages (13:10 & 14:1) as well as in the teachings of Jesus as highlighted in both Luke 11:1-4 (The Lord's Prayer) and Luke 18:9-14 (His discourse regarding the publican and the Pharisee). This fifth aspect of Luke's writing reminds readers that Luke was more than a historian; he was also a sophisticated theologian and pastor that reveals to us the drama of redemption. This can be seen when the woman healed (Luke 13:13) "glorifies God" for her healing and not Jesus.

The importance of Luke as a theologian and pastor is also evident in his interest of how gentiles and outsiders fit into God's plan. In a masterful way Luke bridges the old and new ways of living in the Kingdom of God, sometimes through contrast such as the prayers of the publican and Pharisee (18:9-14) and at times through direct conflict with religious leaders such as experts on the law and Pharisees (14:3). This sixth characteristic of Luke's writing creates an important bridge to the book of Acts which chronicles the work of the early church.

The seventh characteristic of Luke's writing is the way he displays the character of Jesus in his words and actions. As discussed earlier, Jesus without a doubt was observant of the Sabbath, but He also valued those that other religious leaders had marginalized. The actions of Jesus display His character and are directly in line with His teachings as He traveled to Jerusalem. The parables of the lost sheep, lost coin and lost son (Luke 15) were used to answer the Pharisees that did not understand the task that His Father had given Him to do. These tasks were to find the lost (sheep), to value what may seem insignificant to others (coin) and to

welcome lost sons home. The reader of Luke's gospel can find no incongruity in the actions and character of Jesus through His teachings and discourses. Luke, as a conscientious pastor and missionary, allows us to see clearly how Jesus was completely consistent in both word and deed as He traveled on His journey.

Through this great "travel section" of Luke, a reader cannot miss how God was breaking through in a new way; through radical teachings and the miracles of Jesus. One also cannot ignore Luke is plainly displaying for us Jesus' intention that outsiders have a place in His Father's kingdom. Jesus was offering open invitations to join in His work and there is a growing sense in this travel narrative that the disciples are sharing ever more directly in the advent of the kingdom.

In conclusion, this writer is glad Jesus did not go on this journey alone and that in my journey I am never alone either. As God continues to seek the lost and break into our world in new ways, we must be committed to loving the marginalized on our journey each day. As we offer open invitations of God's love and forgiveness to the unlikely, unlovable and marginalized, we are walking in the very steps of our Savior and sharing in the kingdom work that He has prepared for us to do. We should be a people rejoicing in the salvation of the marginalized, not the brother huffing about the party. We should be joining with our Father in true celebration; celebrating joyfully that what was lost is now found. As this travel narrative shows, it took a journey for this to happen.

2. Compare the outline of chapter 3 in John's Gospel and the special Johannine themes identified in this chapter with either chapter 4 or chapter 9. Do you see a similar Johannine pattern? Choose examples of these pertinent themes for discussion and interaction.

This writer will be comparing the seven aspects of Jesus' interaction with people as found in chapter 3 (Nicodemus meets Jesus) with the 7 Johannine themes as viewed by this writer in chapter 9 of John's gospel.

The confrontation is the first step in this outline and clearly verse 1, the "passing by" of Jesus, fits this criteria. Next the other initiates the conversation by asking a question. The disciples in this case ask Jesus "who sinned" (verse 2)? To this question Jesus provides the third step of the outline which is a clear declaration as He says "neither this man nor his parents sinned." The disciples most likely were confused by this declaration although step four of the outline is not as clearly seen in the text as it is in chapter 3. Most likely, Jesus expanded explanation in verses 3b-5 was provided due to the lack of comprehension by the disciples and fulfills step five of the outline.

At this point the narrative takes an interesting turn as the man born blind is sent by Jesus to wash in the pool of Siloam and returns seeing. Verses 8 through 34 chronicle the man being questioned by his neighbors and Pharisees regarding his sight. Even the man's parents are summoned by the Pharisees and questioned regarding his healing. Of great interest to this writer is the dialogue of verse 28 where the Pharisees ridicule the man and call him a disciple of Jesus. This identifies the man with the disciples who initiated the question that the Pharisees were still wrestling with. Verse 35 again shows a confrontation as the first step in the Johannine themes. Jesus found the man and asked him a question. The man responds or initiates with a question in step two of the outline.

Jesus' answer in verse 37 is clearly a declaration (step 2) that not only answers the man's question but refers to the healing as well. As the man now understands, Jesus provides an expanded explanation for this man and the disciples. The disposition of the disciples who brought the original question in verse 2 can be seen in the identification of the man with the disciples in verse 28 and the subsequent belief and worship in verse 38. However, the disposition of the Pharisees as seen in verse 40 (and throughout this chapter) shows that, similarly to Nicodemus in chapter 3, they do not yet understand (step 6). The seventh step in the outline can then be seen in Jesus' teaching in chapter 10:1-6 regarding the "ideal shepherd" and 10:7-18 regarding the "good shepherd." This Homily ends in producing greater division in the crowd as only some can see the truths that Jesus is revealing.

This outline is highly useful in assisting the reader in seeing the irony of confrontation as Jesus revealed truth during His ministry. The contrast between questions of disciples and Pharisees is made sharp through the use of this exercise. Also, the sharp distinction between Jesus seeking and finding the man born blind and the Pharisees summoning the man and his parents can clearly be seen as the approach of Jesus is noted through the use of this exercise.

Dr DeSilva wonderfully points out (DeSilva, 425) that Jesus' teaching in chapter 10 highlights that He is "the good shepherd and the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (10:11). This Old Testament imagery should have helped the blind Pharisees to better comprehend His message. But also as Jesus speaks He says that He knows His sheep and they know me (10:14); so clearly Jesus understands that some in the crowd will continue in the camp of the blind.

In conclusion, this writer would like to highlight John 10:8-34 in light of Dr. DeSilva's comments on page 445 as he expands on the idea of using "the model of the good shepherd" for

use in ministry and counseling. As I read the central portion of this chapter, my heart sank for this poor man who after experiencing the gift of sight and the presence of Jesus was suddenly alone and being drilled with questions by neighbors and seemingly all his old peers. Jesus later found him and continued His teaching but that in-between time was when the seed could have been snatched away. I am very glad that Ashland Theological Seminary takes Spiritual Formation and discipleship very seriously. Jesus never wanted us to be returned to our old lives, but to be transformed through experiencing both salvation and discipleship in the community of believers.

3. By way of synthesis, what are the significant discoveries you have made as you have noted the differences and distinctives of the four gospels we have studied? Reflect on handouts, lecture notes and the special characteristics of each gospel as they were presented by DeSilva and Powell.

Through our study of the four gospels, many differences and distinctives have been brought to the attention of this writer. While each gospel contains an accurate record of the career and ministry of Jesus, it is important to note that each account delivers a differing aspect of Jesus. The gospel accounts are more than the story of Jesus and His career. They are redemptive stories told from particular perspectives and they seek to share the Good News of Jesus with various groups of people in the early church. Certainly the gospels do not share the same plot, after all, they are in fact sermons in story form.

Each gospel contains its own unique style, plot and view; however, each is accurate and needed for the body of believers. Mark Allan Powell describes these as “Four Pictures of Jesus” (Powell, 2) and his four descriptions will be utilized by this writer to begin a discussion on the distinctions of the four gospels.

“The Gospel of Mark is interested in Jesus primarily as the one who died on the cross for sins. Jesus gave His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45)” (Powell, 2).

Mark is the shortest of the four gospel accounts and is described as the lion because this practical, action oriented gospel centers on deeds and not words. The power of Jesus is displayed through the recording of more miracles in Mark than anywhere else in the gospels. There is a sense of urgency in this book as the lion bounds quickly along. With recurring words such as immediately and next, the reader is encouraged to follow the lion as Jesus is especially found in situations of conflict and controversy.

Mark may contain the smallest amount of unique material in comparison to the other three at 7%, but this practically minded book should not be overlooked. The lion continues to roar as the disciples follow along confused and helpless. Mark's gospel concludes with a long and dominating account of the passion narrative. As we see the obedient servant of ministry endure a day-by-day and hour-by-hour account of the last week of His life, we see the crucifixion as the most important aspect of this gospel (Powell, 40).

"The Gospel of Matthew is interested in Jesus primarily as the one who abides with His people always until the end of time. Jesus founded the church in which sins are forgiven, prayers are answered and the power of death is overcome (Matthew 16:18-19; 18:18-20)" (Powell, 2).

Matthew is pictured as the messenger, the announcer, the proclaimer of the good news. This book is the most instructional of the gospel accounts. It contains five sermons of Jesus and has been viewed as a well-organized handbook for new believers. Jesus is often found on a mountaintop which brings the prophetic words of the Old Testament to mind and is one way Matthew shows us that Jesus is the prophesied Messiah and King. Following this prophetic theme, the word 'fulfilled' is found twenty-seven times in Matthew's gospel. The fulfillment of prophecy is meaningful to the Christian-Jewish audience that this book was written to. What does this "new Moses" have to say about Righteousness? What ties to the old ways of worship should the religious audience maintain? With 42% unique material, Matthew clarifies the "good news" for new believers in his well-written gospel.

"The Gospel of Luke is interested in Jesus primarily as the one whose words and deeds liberate those who are oppressed in any way. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost and to bring release to all those he described as "captives" (Luke 4:18; 19:10)" (Powell, 2).

Luke sees Jesus as a compassionate caregiver. Jesus is gentle; born among animals and obedient to be led by His Father. There is a spirit of joy found in the book of Luke as relationships are healed and lost things found. Jesus is most often seen teaching in parables as He travels. The book of Luke repeats the phrase “on the road to Jerusalem” forty-seven times. However, this travel narrative does not contain the rushed feel of Mark and because of this Luke is often pictured as the oxen or cow. The discipline and commitment of Jesus is seen as He labors as a workhorse for His people. Fifty-eight percent of Lukan material is unique to this book. Most of which is found in the extended travel narrative that goes from Luke 9 to Luke 19.

“The Gospel of John is interested in Jesus primarily as the one who reveals what God truly is like. Jesus was the word of God made flesh and He revealed through His own words and deeds all that can be know of God (John 1:14; 14:8)” (Powell, 2).

John contains the most unique material of any of the gospels at 92% not appearing elsewhere. This spiritually reflective gospel is pictured as the eagle soaring above and highlighting the Divinity of Jesus as the Son of God. This book is known for the many conversations and lengthy discourses delivered by Jesus. Repeatedly John finds Jesus in conversation with people engaging them directly and telling them to believe. There are symbols and signs presented to us in John as well as signs of Jesus. Water, light and love are a few that stand out as the eagle soars.

As each of the four gospels can be represented pictorially to illustrate their unique qualities, they can also be set apart as differing locations in the church. Matthew stands in the pulpit declaring the good news and Mark calls from the baptistry requiring participation. Meanwhile Luke waits on the marginalized at the communion table as John leads a choir of

heavenly voices from the choir loft above. The four gospels fill our church with the full presence of Christ. As Powell writes so masterfully in his introduction (Powell, 9):

“An objective, dispassionate reception is the last thing the gospel writers would have wanted their books to receive. We are free to accept, reject, belittle or embrace, but whatever our response, we ought to understand what those books intend to do: they intend to convert us.”