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Luke Chapter 6

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Abstract: A commentary on the events of Luke 6, accompanied by parallel columns of the King James translation of the chapter alongside a new rendition.



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Luke Chapter 6

INTRODUCTION

The Savior stays completely away from the desert in this segment of Luke's account, which extends to 9:50, except at 9:10 and 9:12, which the Joseph Smith Translation modifies from "a desert place" to "a solitary place."¹ Instead, Jesus engages audiences everywhere in the Galilee area, including "the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes," more properly "the Gergesenes," in the Decapolis, a gentile locale on the east side of the Sea of Galilee (8:37).² The only exception lies in Jesus' withdrawal to the mountain for his transfiguration in the company of his three chief Apostles. This mountain represents a distinct topographical feature where revelation and instruction come to these men. Perhaps we should see a topographical progression from desert to water to mountain in chapters 3 through 9 of Luke's record. At the end of all these events, Jesus turns his gaze toward Jerusalem and leaves Galilee, adding a further topographical dimension (see 9:51).

Chapter 6 raises to view a critical moment in the Savior's ministry, the moment that the opposition to him becomes focused and public. It manifests itself in response to his healing of the man with the withered right hand. Both Luke and Matthew emphasize this point, Matthew even suggesting that Jesus keeps out of sight for a while because of the intense character of the opposition (see 6:11; Matt. 12:14–15). The account of the healing bears two main characteristics: (1) Jesus graciously restores the man not only physically but also socially and spiritually because he has been able to function only with his left hand for all of his needs; (2) Jesus essentially provokes his opponents by requiring the man to stand in the middle of the synagogue floor as the service was going on, thereby aggravating his

1. A textual problem exists in 9:10 with the phrase "into a desert place"; see the Notes on 9:10 and 9:12.

2. Aharoni and others, *Carta Bible Atlas*, map 233.

opponents and drawing them into the open so that their stormy response will no longer be private and muted. In effect, Jesus exposes them—almost against their wills—so that “they have no cloke for their sin” (John 15:22).³ Plainly Jesus is in charge of the scene and his helpless detractors can only react to him. In this vein, consistently throughout the Gospel, Jesus is in charge, even at the end during his interviews with Pilate and in his audience with Herod (see Luke 23:1–11).

This chapter also possesses a geographical character. The Savior “went out” and climbs “into a mountain to pray” (6:12). The next day “he came down” in company with the Twelve and “stood in the plain” (6:17). His withdrawal, ascent, and descent will visually announce the Twelve who will now serve with him to the gathered multitude. These actions also signal the formal organization of his new community, destined to replace the old, soon after uttering the parables about “new” and “old” (5:36–39). In addition, Jesus’ acts of ascending, praying, and descending confer a celestial grace not only on his choosing and announcing the Twelve but also on his miracles and sermon which immediately follow (see 6:17–19, 20–49).

The matter of Sabbath stories comes to the foreground. Why so many? Sabbath observance, of course, is “a sign” of the special relationship between God and people of the covenant (see Ex. 31:13–17). To many, Jesus must appear to be a maverick on this point, which may explain why the opposition flares so fierce. The first two stories in chapter 6 center on the Sabbath, one an account of filling ordinary needs (hunger) and the other a report of meeting extraordinary needs (healing a person’s crippled body). Indeed, people likely recall stories of Jesus’ words and actions on the Sabbath simply because confrontation and Jesus’ solution to an issue at hand often takes place thereon. On that day, he can meet the most people in one place, the synagogue. In a different vein, Jesus’ actions and words about the Sabbath in the first verses of this chapter continue a theme struck at the end of chapter 5—the old order is passing away and the new is pressing into the present moment. Jesus is changing the religious landscape.

Further, in response to the grinding opposition now galvanizing against his ministry, the Savior prays, evidently for those who oppose him (see the Note on 6:12) and obviously for those whom he will now choose to

3. See Luke 2:34–35 and the Notes; 4:16–30; 11:47–51, 53–54; John 5:16; 15:22–25; JST John 4:2, 4; Rom. 12:20; 1 John 2:19; D&C 84:50–51. The sense is grasped in the language “that the judgments which [God] shall exercise upon them in his wrath may be just” (Alma 14:11).

assist him in meeting that opposition, the Twelve. Because these latter will persevere even after Jesus' death in the face of continuing, sharp resistance, we can see that their time with him from this moment becomes a training experience in the broadest sense of that expression. Not incidentally, Jesus turns the multitude into a group of witnesses of his choosing of the Twelve, much as he will do with the multitudes in the New World (see 3 Ne. 11:18–22; 12:1; 19:25). Thus, the crowd becomes witnesses of this important act, as well as his audience for a most important sermon.

Of course, immediately the Twelve also become more or less formal witnesses of Jesus' words and deeds, beginning with the Sermon on the Plain. This sermon, it seems, is aimed as much at the Twelve as it is at the crowd, plainly setting out the rules for his community. He intends that the Twelve do as he will teach, offering them his guidelines as he and they step off together in their joint efforts to reach the hearts of others in both word and deed (see 6:47–49; also Matt. 5:19–20).

The sermon itself stands as a sleepless sentinel within the recorded words of the Savior, casting its reassuring gaze across his disciples and their lives. Its robust requirements touch much of how people live their lives and interact with others, lifting away the dazzle and heartache of this world and allowing a peek into the life to come. The command to love one's enemies in imitation of the Father graces the most important part of the sermon (see the Notes on 6:27, 35–36). His command to "do good," and then his illustrations of what it means to do exactly that, impart an enabling power and dignity into the lives of anyone who will follow this directive (see 6:27–34; the Analysis below). The differences in the content and recoverable setting between this sermon and the Sermon on the Mount point to the distinctiveness of the two sermons rather than to their unity (see the Analysis on 6:20–49 below).

THE QUESTION OF THE SABBATH (6:1–5)

(Compare Matt. 12:1–8; Mark 2:23–28)

King James Translation

¹ And it came to pass on the second sabbath after the first, that he went through the corn fields; and his disciples plucked the ears of corn, and did

New Rendition

¹ And it came to pass that while he was going through grain-fields on the sabbath, his disciples began to pick heads of grain and eat them, rubbing them in

eat, rubbing them in their hands. 2 And certain of the Pharisees said unto them, Why do ye that which is not lawful to do on the sabbath days? 3 And Jesus answering them said, Have ye not read so much as this, what David did, when himself was an hungred, and they which were with him; 4 How he went into the house of God, and did take and eat the shewbread, and gave also to them that were with him; which it is not lawful to eat but for the priests alone? 5 And he said unto them, That the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

their hands. 2 Some of the Pharisees said, “Why are you doing what is not permitted on the Sabbath?” 3 And answering them Jesus said, “Have you not read that which David did when he and those with him were hungry? 4 He entered the house of God, and taking the loaves of bread of the presence, he ate and gave to those with him what was not permitted to eat except by the priests alone.” 5 And he said to them, “The Lord of the Sabbath is the Son of Man.”

Notes

6:1 *the second sabbath after the first*: A problem exists with this expression. According to this reading, Luke describes the passage of time rather precisely. Indeed, all of the events narrated in chapter 5 evidently fall on weekdays between two Sabbaths. But the best manuscripts of Luke’s Gospel read simply “on a Sabbath day,” without forming a firm time frame. To be sure, the reference to “sabbath days” in Capernaum could refer to one Sabbath (4:31), continuing the count from the first mentioned Sabbath in Nazareth (see 4:16). But the best texts are ambiguous about which Sabbath day sees Jesus and the disciples in the grain field.⁴ Luke’s point may be to lift away from the specific, identifiable moments and thus hammer home the point that Jesus is the universal Lord of all Sabbaths (see the Note on 5:17).

***through the corn fields . . . his disciples plucked*:** These fields are planted with grain. The term *corn* is an early and still contemporary English word for grain. The Mosaic law allows persons to pick off heads of ripened grain when passing through a field belonging to another (see Deut. 23:25). Such an act is therefore not the issue; the question has to do with whether the disciples are threshing and winnowing and are therefore breaking the Sabbath.

***rubbing them in their hands*:** Those who object to the disciples rubbing the grains so that the husks fall away anticipate the ruling in the later

4. Marshall, *Luke*, 230.

Mishnah code wherein threshing and winnowing are forbidden on the Sabbath.⁵

6:2 that which is not lawful: In a potentially negative sense, the issue ties back to Luke’s highlighting of law-abiding people associated with the beginnings of the Christian movement, here raising questions about proper behavior by Jesus’ disciples (see the Notes on 1:6; 2:22, 39, 41). In another sense, the Pharisees’ objection indicates that the views codified in the Mishnah in AD 200 are already in play in first-century discussions about the Sabbath. In the next two verses, Jesus sets the record straight by an appeal to scripture, in contrast to the Pharisees’ appeal to traditional interpretation of law. Since he is Lord of the Sabbath, he has the right to set the standard (see 6:5; the Note on 4:16).

6:3 Jesus answering them said: This expression seems to reveal again that Jesus is an irrepressible conversationalist (see 5:31 and the Analysis following; 7:36–50; 11:37–52; 13:10–17; 14:5–24).

what David did: The reference is to the account of David and his companions seeking and obtaining—rather inappropriately, it turns out—loaves of the sacred shewbread that are baked fresh weekly for the sanctuary (see 1 Sam. 21:1–6). The table on which they sit is one of three pieces of golden furniture in the sacred place, standing on the north side of the sanctuary.⁶

6:4 How he went into the house of God: This item does not appear in 1 Samuel 21:1–6. It is not certain what written or oral source Jesus draws this detail from.⁷ The interrogative adverb “how” (Greek *hōs*) that begins an indirect question is missing from some early manuscripts.

take and eat . . . and gave: Jesus highlights the elements in the account wherein David serves as the host. The series of verbs invites one to think of Jesus in similar terms, in this instance as the host of the Sabbath, its activities, and proper observance. This aspect of his ministry will come forcefully to the fore in the next narration (see 6:6–10).

the shewbread: Literally, “the bread of the presence,” these twelve loaves are supplied weekly on the Sabbath and sit on a table inside the holy place.⁸

6:5 the Son of man: The second occurrence of this title broadens the character of Jesus’ ministry beyond that of forgiving sins and healing (see

5. *Mishnah Shabbath* 7:2; Schürer, *History*, 2:468.

6. Edersheim, *Temple*, 58; Schürer, *History*, 2:296–98; Ritmeyer and Ritmeyer, *Ritual of the Temple*, 24.

7. Josephus does not repeat this detail (see Josephus, *A.J.* 6.12.1 [§§242–44]).

8. Plummer, *Luke*, 167.

the Note on 5:24) and brings within the title's purview the right to control the Sabbath. The title appears at the end of Jesus' saying and is therefore emphatic.

Lord also of the sabbath: All contemporary Jews hold the Sabbath day in high regard and adopt ways to keep it holy (see the Note on 4:16). Jesus' declaration of his lordship over the Sabbath sets him crosswise of developing traditions within contemporaneous Jewish organizations and institutions that seek to strictly regulate Sabbath observance for others.

Analysis

The Sabbath day, and how to keep it as a special, holy day, lie at the heart of this report. To be sure, the Savior has been preaching and healing on Sabbath days, activities that themselves bring forward no objections, except as the content of sermons create discomfort in his hearers, as in Nazareth (see 4:16–30). Here, it is the actions of Jesus' disciples that cut across Pharisees' sensibilities, in two ways. First, for Pharisees, foods form a foundation of their devotion to God—how to harvest and prepare foods, whether to tithe them, from whom to purchase them, and when to make an offering of them. As a general point, the law of Moses allows a person to pick ripe heads of grain when passing through a field. But the casual acts of the disciples in picking grain to eat become objectionable because they are picking and rubbing the grain heads on a Sabbath day, an important issue for Pharisees and even for most Jews. For them, these actions count as the physical labor needed to harvest, thresh, and winnow grain. The occasion offers opportunity for Jesus to begin to put his own stamp on the Sabbath.

The most important piece of this narrative consists of Jesus naming himself as “Lord” of the Sabbath day. Here lies another announcement of who he is, complementing his revealing declaration in Nazareth. This time his disciples hear his bold words, doubtless setting them to wonder. This time, as in Nazareth, Jesus appeals to scripture, interpreting it in such a way that leaves no doubt about his views—human needs supersede all. In fact, meeting human needs carries and sustains the proper spirit of the Sabbath. Meeting human needs garnishes and sweetens Jesus' actions on the Sabbath, as Luke's following story will illustrate.

The Savior's appeal to David, of course, allows him to make his point about human needs as well as to show his self-conscious efforts to link himself both with the past and with what is authoritative (see the Analysis on 20:41–44). Even though David's act of eating bread baked for the sanctuary, bread that only priests are to consume, is strictly illegal in the light of

Mosaic law, his need for bread overrides the legal niceties of the moment⁹ and the priest Ahimelech senses and meets that need, even though his unusual generosity costs him and others their lives (see 1 Sam. 22:9–19). In a way, the priest’s fate following his generous act, a fact known to Jesus’ hearers, confers a sacredness on his generosity that comes in no other way. And Jesus’ choice of this story of meeting human needs and then paying the ultimate cost draws in this sense of the sacred when he makes his case about the Sabbath. Not surprisingly, the same pattern appears in his approach to his Atonement.

Pointing to David also underscores the Savior’s connections to that king. Throughout Luke’s Gospel and his book of Acts, we come upon these overt links (see 1:27; 3:32; Acts 2:29–36; 13:33–37). In the story of picking grain, Jesus in effect becomes David because he possesses the right to enter the house of God and partake of that which is holy. Moreover the sequence of the verbs “did take and eat . . . and gave” (6:4) vividly recalls the acts of a king at a royal banquet and perhaps purposely anticipates Jesus as host at the messianic banquet in the future age (see the Notes on 22:16, 18, 30).¹⁰

THE MAN WITH THE WITHERED HAND AND THE GALVANIZING OPPOSITION (6:6–12)

(Compare Matt. 12:9–14; Mark 3:1–6)

King James Translation

6 And it came to pass also on another sabbath, that he entered into the synagogue and taught: and there was a man whose right hand was withered. 7 And the scribes and Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the sabbath day; that they might find an accusation against him. 8 But he knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and

New Rendition

6 And it came to pass on another Sabbath that he went into the synagogue and taught. And there was a man there, and his right hand was withered. 7 And the scribes and Pharisees were watching him carefully to see whether he would heal on the Sabbath, so that they might find something to accuse him of. 8 But he knew their designs, and he said to the man who had the withered hand,

9. Marshall, *Luke*, 232.

10. Johnson, *Luke*, 101.

stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth.

9 Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing; Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it? 10 And looking round about upon them all, he said unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he did so: and his hand was restored whole as the other. 11 And they were filled with madness; and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus.

12 And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

“Rise and stand in the middle.” And he got up and stood.

9 And Jesus said to them, “I ask you, is it permitted to do good on the Sabbath or to do evil, to save a soul or to destroy it?” 10 And after looking around at all of them, he said to him, “Hold out your hand.” And he did so, and his hand was restored. 11 And they were filled with rage and began to discuss with each other what they should do to Jesus.

12 And it came to pass in these days that he went out into the mountain to pray. And he spent the night in prayer to God.

Notes

6:6 on another sabbath: Luke shows the passage of time, though it is imprecise (see the Note on 6:1). We take away the sense that this next experience falls on the following Sabbath. Apparently, he does not know exactly when this next event occurs vis-à-vis the earlier incident. But he has to rehearse the Sabbath story that follows so that its importance in Jesus’ early ministry is not lost. In fact, all three Synoptics repeat this story after Jesus’ declaring himself to be Lord of the Sabbath (see Matt. 12:8–14; Mark 2:28–3:6).

the synagogue: Presumably, Luke means the synagogue in Capernaum where Jesus has attended before, although we cannot be certain (see 4:31–33; Mark 1:21; 3:1).¹¹

taught: Jesus engages in teaching before calling the man into the center of the room. The content must be such that some present, at least “the scribes and Pharisees,” believe that he might perform a healing.

right hand was withered: Though one important text omits reference to the word “right,” the weight of evidence for its appearance in Luke’s Gospel is abundant (this detail does not appear in Mark’s and Matthew’s accounts). The term “withered” (Greek *xēros*) refers to a condition of dryness, implying serious atrophy or paralysis.¹² This condition means that the man is a

11. Marshall, *Luke*, 234.

12. Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 1190; BAGD, 550–51.

social outcast because he has to do everything with his left, unclean hand. His malady therefore affects his religious life because it becomes customary by late antiquity for a worshiper to lean the right hand on a sacrificial animal before giving it to the priest for to offer at the temple (Lev. 1:4 and 3:2 specify only “his hand” without distinguishing which hand the worshiper is to use at the altar).¹³ Hence, it is likely that by current custom the man cannot participate in certain ceremonies. Moreover, later rabbis rule against proxy laying on of the hand. If this is already in force, neither the man nor anyone else can represent him in temple worship. Hence, for certain ceremonies, he has no access to the temple and its services.¹⁴ Since Jesus meets him in a synagogue, it is clear that the man enjoys free access to this center of worship although perhaps not to full participation in the services, for example, by taking a roll of scripture in his hand and reading from it.

6:7 scribes and Pharisees: In three earlier scenes, officials are apparently curious observers only although they react negatively (see 5:17–25, 29–39; 6:1–5), the last event occurring on a Sabbath. But on this occasion, such individuals “watched him [closely]” (Greek *paratēreō*)¹⁵ in order to “find an accusation against him” (see 14:1; 20:20). Jesus surely knows this and goes out of his way to provoke their reaction (see the Note on 4:23). Luke thus signals that opposition to Jesus begins to galvanize. More than this, their response indicates that from this moment such opposition becomes public and organized (see the Note on 6:11).¹⁶ We note a similar, prior reaction to the Baptist (see 7:30, hinted at in 20:1–7).

that they might find an accusation against him: Luke writes of the hate-laced motive of the scribes and Pharisees, which goes far beyond the mere curiosity implied earlier in 5:17.

6:8 But he: Luke underscores the contrast of Jesus’ ability to perceive with the benighted inability of his opponents.¹⁷

he knew their thoughts: As in the scene with the paralyzed man, so here Jesus grasps the unspoken intent of the hostile visitors, a proof of his divinity in accord with Isaiah 11:3 (see the Notes on 5:22; 11:17; 20:23; 21:3). A major point has to do with the inner link between evil thoughts and evil acts (see 2:35; 5:22; the Note on 24:38).¹⁸

13. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 150–51.

14. *TDNT*, 2:38; Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 152–53.

15. Plummer, *Luke*, 169; *TDNT*, 8:146–48; Johnson, *Luke*, 102, 223.

16. Brown, “Arrest,” 166–69, 178–85.

17. Plummer, *Luke*, 169.

18. *TDNT*, 2:97.

Rise up, and stand forth: This language must be that of a judge in a court. If so, Jesus' question "Is it lawful . . . ?" makes perfect sense (6:9). The verb translated "rise up" (Greek *egeirō*) in other contexts links to rising from the dead (see 7:14; 9:22; Matt. 27:52). This tie is made more suggestive with the presence of a second verb, "he arose" (from Greek *anistēmi*), that often points to the resurrection.¹⁹

in the midst: This phrase bears architectural overtones, pointing to the open, elevated, center part of the synagogue where no one is seated.²⁰ The phrase also hints at the concept of the holy center (see 6:10 and the Notes on 4:16, 4:20 and 5:19).

6:9 I will ask you one thing: A reader notices the single focus of Jesus' question—the legality of a Sabbath activity that brings relief to another person.

Is it lawful . . . ?: Jesus asks this same question when, on a later Sabbath day, he is about to heal a man with dropsy in the home of a Pharisee (see 14:3). By doing so, he turns both occasions into legal proceedings. For a court is the proper place to display the proofs which solve the question that Jesus is asking in each place, whether healing on the Sabbath day is lawful. Moreover, the scene here becomes one of judgment against Jesus' opponents who now, more or less openly, are conspiring against him. Thus Jesus becomes a judge in this scene, effectively anticipating his eventual role as judge of all (see the Note on 18:14; Acts 10:42; 17:31; Rom. 2:16; 2 Tim. 4:1, 8; Heb. 12:23; Rev. 20:12–13). More than this, he stands as the legal opponent of his detractors, filling an unusual dual role of legal contestant and judge, mirroring what Jehovah does (see LXX 1 Kgs. 2:10; Isa. 41:11).²¹

to do good: Here lies the crux of Jesus' question, followed by the issue "to save life" which may already have been under discussion among Pharisees, if we can read back the regulation from the later Mishnah that permits a person to take medicines on the Sabbath.²²

to do evil: Although this part of the question may be rhetorical, because neither Jesus nor his audience would seriously contemplate doing something bad on a Sabbath, he seems to be sincere in suggesting that doing nothing is tantamount to doing evil since it often leads to needless, prolonged suffering.²³

19. BAGD, 69, 213–14; *TDNT*, 1:370–72; 2:334–38.

20. Schürer, *History*, 2:441–43; Meyers, "Synagogue," 6:253–55; Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 93–94, 185–86, 337–41.

21. *TDNT*, 1:374.

22. *Mishnah Yoma* 8:6.

23. Marshall, *Luke*, 235.

to save life: The meaning is to save a human life. According to the later Mishnah, only the most dire straits create an exception to performing no work on the Sabbath, such as rescuing valuables from a fire or assisting a woman in childbirth.²⁴ While Jesus grew up, his neighbors may have been less strict and allowed, even encouraged, genuine efforts to save a life without a crisis to justify them (see the Notes on 13:10; 14:3; the Analysis on 4:31–37).

6:10 looking round about upon them all: Luke’s description of Jesus’ action points to an eyewitness recollection (see 9:55; 10:23; 14:25; 18:40; 19:3; 22:41, 61; 23:28; John 8:6–8; the Notes on 7:9 and 7:44), as it does in Mark 3:5, and also underscores the fact that he is standing in the middle of the synagogue where he can see all by simply turning his head (see Luke 6:8). It seems apparent that he is giving his critics a chance to speak before he performs the miracle. But they remain silent.²⁵ Luke omits Mark’s note that he gazes at the attendees “with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts” (Mark 3:5).

his hand was restored whole as the other: In an instant, the man enjoys full health not only in his body but also in his social and religious life. For he can now perform actions that require his right hand, such as shaking hands with others and making an offering at the temple. Some early manuscripts omit the words “whole as the other,” with little impact on the meaning.

6:11 they were filled with madness: In a few words, Luke paints the dark motive that Jesus’ opponents carry in their souls as they begin to dog him relentlessly and eventually to take his life.

madness: The term (Greek *anoia*) can mean “ignorance, folly,” but the sense rather depicts “unthinking fury” or “madness.”²⁶

communed one with another: The plot is joined. The opponents find one another after a worship service, adding a layer of irony to their hateful actions.²⁷

6:12 in those days: It is not clear whether Luke intends readers to think of a time directly after the scene in the synagogue—naturally, Jesus will not go far during the Sabbath because of the restriction about a Sabbath day’s journey—or a general passage of time, perhaps a day or two later.

24. *Mishnah Shabbath* 16:1–7; 18.3; *TDNT*, 7:14; Johnson, *Luke*, 102.

25. Morris, *Luke*, 136–37.

26. *TDNT*, 4:962–63; Marshall, *Luke*, 236; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:611.

27. Brown, “Arrest,” 166–69.

went out into a mountain: Mountains, of course, are known as places of holy communion with God (see Ex. 3:1–4; 19:2–3, 16–20; 24:9–13; Isa. 2:2–3; 1 Ne. 11:1–6; etc.). In this case, a person can be reasonably certain that Jesus retreats into the high hills above the north shore of the Sea of Galilee. Within a few hours, he will descend to “the plain” with the Twelve, a likely reference to the broad, rather flat region between the lake and the steep hills that line it about three miles west of Capernaum, nowadays called the Valley of Ginosar.

to pray: Why go away to pray? The next scene will show that Jesus is praying for and about the Twelve whom he will choose (see 6:13–16). But it is probable that he is also distraught when foreseeing the horrible wrath that these opponents, also children of God, will pull down on themselves by pursuing their conspiracy against him. On this view, it seems that Jesus prays for these men and is reflecting on them and their actions when he utters instructions about how one is to respond to enemies (see 6:27–36). That Jesus does pray in this manner appears later in his words from the cross: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (23:34; also Acts 7:60; see the Notes on 6:28 and 23:34).

continued all night in prayer to God: Luke’s report of Jesus praying through the night underscores the importance of this particular event and, not surprisingly, continues his earlier insistence about Jesus’ habitual practice (see the Note on 5:16).

Analysis

In this story of the man with the withered hand, a number of currents run together. First, a set of issues surround the man himself as a social and religious outcast in his own society. This situation arises because his right hand is crippled in some way, and he therefore cannot interact properly with others. His lot is to meet his needs, including ablutions and eating, with his good left hand. As a result, no one will invite him to dinner nor will anyone shake his hand in greeting. In his society, the left hand is the cursed hand (see Matt. 25:33). Hence, he cannot participate in sacred acts that require a person’s right hand. Jesus makes him whole, solving all these difficulties. Hence, in a brief moment, he is healed physically, socially, and religiously.

Second, we effectively behold a painting of the Savior as both legal opponent of his detractors and their judge, a dual capacity that Jehovah fills (see LXX 1 Kgs. 2:10; Isa. 41:11). Jesus’ second role as judge hints broadly that he will ultimately be judge of all. The texture of his words clearly portrays him as judge, “Is it lawful . . . ?” He knows the smoldering thoughts of his

detractors, and, by healing the man, he offers irrefutable proof to all of his merciful, open view that Sabbath day activities are to bring relief, unless a person believes the devil stands behind his miracles (see 11:15; Mosiah 3:9). By stepping to the middle of the room, inviting the afflicted man to join him, and next asking the question “Is it lawful?” he turns the synagogue into a religious courtroom. Then he produces the evidence—the man’s hand made whole—that acts of mercy belong on the Sabbath. Even so, some do not believe, revealing in Mark’s words the “hardness of their hearts” (Mark 3:5).

Third, as has become apparent, the main dividing issue focuses on Sabbath observance. The Sabbath has been “a sign” and has framed “a perpetual covenant” between God and his people for centuries. Dishonoring the Sabbath can mean “death” for an offender. These elements of the law, going all the way back to “the seventh day [whereon God] rested” and guiding people’s efforts for centuries who seek to please and obey him, help to explain the hot feelings among Jesus’ detractors (Ex. 31:13–17). Jesus is pushing against hoary tradition, and he knows it. But raising fundamental questions about the beloved Sabbath allows him to bring his own agenda quickly and forcefully into the consciousness of his hearers. Moreover, this story establishes Jesus’ dominion over the Sabbath, welding it to his already visible authority and power.²⁸

Fourth, we come upon the very occasion when the Savior forces his silent opponents into the open and exposes their freshly hatched conspiracy. That this event occurs on a Sabbath day and in a place of worship adds a layer of irony to their undercutting actions, especially in light of the divine prohibition not to kill (see Ex. 20:13). From this day forward, the plot grows as it extends its insidious, malevolent tentacles over people who are in positions of influence and power. In our story, we encounter “the scribes and Pharisees” living and working in Galilee. But eventually the conspiracy will travel southward to Judea and settle itself maliciously among “the chief priests and captains” of the Jerusalem temple who already have their reasons for getting rid of Jesus (22:4; also John 2:13–19; 5:16; 7:30, 45; 11:57).²⁹

It is also worth noting that the topographical notes underlying these verses show an impressive accuracy to the geographical terrain. Luke mentions a “mountain” where Jesus gathers his disciples and chooses the Twelve, as does Mark (6:12; Mark 3:13). But only Luke reports Jesus coming down

28. Marshall, *Luke*, 233; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:606.

29. Brown, “Arrest,” 178–85.

to “the plain” (6:17). This combination of mountain and plain, remarkably, fits the landscape along the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. The north end of the lake, of course, is the evident place where all events of chapter 5 take place as well as the implicit locale for events recorded in chapter 6. This circumstance points either to Luke’s first-hand knowledge of the area or to the accuracy of his source (see the Introduction V.C).

This observation raises questions about Luke’s dependency on Mark whose order of incidents matches that of Luke, starting with Jesus’ cleansing of the leper and continuing to the healing of the man with the withered hand (see Luke 5:12–6:11; Mark 1:40–3:6). But then the correspondences end, at least temporarily. At this point Luke writes in his record about the mountain and the plain. A person can make a case for Luke’s dependency on Mark through the long passages of correspondence, but that dependency ceases when Luke follows Jesus into the mountain where he will pray about the Twelve and on behalf of his newly conspiring enemies.

CHOOSING THE TWELVE (6:13–16)

(Compare Matt. 10:1–4; Mark 3:13–19)

King James Translation

13 And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles; 14 Simon, (whom he also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, 15 Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphæus, and Simon called Zelotes, 16 And Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor.

New Rendition

13 And when day came, he called his disciples to himself, and from them he chose twelve, whom he also named apostles: 14 Simon, whom he also called Peter, and Andrew, his brother, and James, and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, 15 and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called Zealot, 16 and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

Notes

6:13 *when it was day*: The expression is emphatic, pointing to the end of the important night in prayer and emphasizing that Jesus’ act of choosing the Twelve takes place in the full light of day.

he chose twelve: Choosing Twelve from his growing group of disciples now sharpens Jesus’ intent, which is becoming evident. From the beginning of chapter 5, Jesus has been calling disciples and then preaching and performing miracles in their presence, turning them into witnesses of his surprising wisdom and extraordinary powers from the very beginning (see John 15:27; Acts 1:21–22). While his gathering of loyal followers continues, by choosing Twelve he separates out a quorum that will eventually stand at the head of his new church (see Acts 1:2). Jesus confers authority on them in a later scene (see JST 8:1; the Note on 9:1).

he named apostles: The labeling comes from Jesus, no one else. Such an act distinguishes the Apostles from his other disciples, for they are his because he calls them.³⁰ They do not choose him as other followers do. The word “apostle” (from Greek *apostolos*), meaning “one sent forth,” points generally to an emissary or expedition sent on another person’s behalf (see the Notes on 9:52 and 11:49). As a gauge of the Apostles’ importance in Luke’s narrative, we note that he mentions them six times in his Gospel and twenty-eight times in the book of Acts whereas Matthew and Mark each mention them once (see Matt. 10:2; Mark 6:30).³¹ In Christian parlance, the term denotes narrowly those whom Jesus chooses to serve with him from the earliest days of his ministry (see Acts 1:21–22). That the Apostles constitute a distinguishable group is demonstrated by Paul’s early reference to those who hold this office (see 1 Cor. 15:7).³² Plainly, Luke equates the Twelve with the Apostles.

6:14 Simon, (whom he also named Peter,): To this point, Luke consistently names Peter exclusively by his given Hebrew name, Simon, except once when he calls him Simon Peter (see 4:38; 5:3, 4, 5, 8). The name Simon also appears later in the Gospel (see 22:31; 24:34). In the book of Acts, he is called “Simon, whose surname is Peter” (Acts 10:18, 32; 11:13). This observation points to the diminishing over time of Peter’s patronymic “Bar-jona” (see Matt. 16:17) and the strength of the name Peter which, according to Mark and Luke, Jesus confers on him on the occasion of his call as an Apostle, though neither offer a reason for Jesus’ naming him Peter (see Mark 3:16). The Aramaic equivalent of the Greek *petros* is *kēphas* (see

30. *TDNT*, 1:424, 427; 4:452.

31. Morris, *Luke*, 137–38.

32. The literature on the word and office “Apostle” is enormous. See Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:617–18; S. Kent Brown, “Apostle,” in *EM*, 1:59–61; Hugh Nibley, *Apostles and Bishops in Early Christianity*, ed. John F. Hall and John W. Welch (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2005), 1–145; and Brown, “Twelve,” 98–124.

John 1:42; 1 Cor. 1:12; 3:33; etc.). Peter, in the company of James and John, will return to the Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in 1829 to restore the Melchizedek Priesthood (see D&C 27:12; 128:20).³³

Andrew his brother: Andrew finally makes his appearance in Luke's text. He is implicitly present as Peter's fishing partner in 5:5–6 (see the Notes thereon) and Luke names him only one other time, in a list of Apostles (see Acts 1:13). The name Andrew is Greek and demonstrates the acceptance of Greek names among Jews of this era. He is known principally from incidents recorded in the fourth Gospel (see John 1:40–42; 6:8–9; 12:20–22). Though he is Peter's brother and is chosen second among the Apostles, perhaps illustrating that he is a younger brother, he is not included in the threesome who make up Jesus' closest disciples (see 9:28; Mark 14:33; D&C 27:12; 128:20).

James: The older of two brothers to follow Jesus, his father is Zebedee and he is in the fishing business with Peter and Andrew (see 5:10; Mark 1:16–20). His name in the Greek text is Jacob. He will die as an early martyr for the Christian cause (see Acts 12:2). Along with his brother John and his friend Peter, he returns to the earth to bestow the Melchizedek Priesthood in 1829 (see D&C 27:12; 128:20).³⁴

John: The younger brother of James and a son of Zebedee, literarily he is responsible for the Gospel that bears his name as well as the Johannine epistles and the book of Revelation in the New Testament (see 1 Ne. 14:18–27). An early Christian source holds that he does not die following his exile on the island of Patmos, a fact confirmed in another scriptural source (see John 21:20–23; the apocryphal *Acts of John* 111–15; 3 Ne. 28:6–10).³⁵

Philip: Most of the information about Philip comes from John's Gospel where the Savior calls him to serve as a member of the Twelve and he is instrumental in introducing Nathanael to Jesus. According to John's Gospel, he comes from the town of Bethsaida. He is featured in the stories of the feeding of the five thousand and the approach of Greeks seeking an audience with Jesus in Jerusalem (see John 1:43–46; 6:5–7; 12:20–22).

33. John F. Hall, "Peter," in *EM*, 3:1077–79; Robert J. Matthews, "Peter, James, and John," *Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History*, ed. Arnold K. Garr, Donald Q. Cannon, and Richard O. Cowan (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000), 915; John F. Hall, *New Testament Witnesses of Christ: Peter, John, James, and Paul* (American Fork, Utah: Covenant Communications, 2002), 53–103.

34. R. Douglas Phillips, "James the Apostle," in *EM*, 2:716–17; Hall, *New Testament Witnesses of Christ*, 113–15.

35. C. Wilfred Griggs, "John the Beloved," in *EM*, 2:757–58; Hall, *New Testament Witnesses of Christ*, 107–51; *NTA*, 2:256–58.

Bartholomew: Almost nothing is known about this man except his name and his calling as one of the Apostles. Eusebius, the fourth-century Christian historian, knows a tradition that Bartholomew takes the gospel message to India. Later tradition identifies Bartholomew with Nathanael, but no reason exists to trust this view.³⁶

6:15 Matthew: This person, whose name appears in all the lists of the Apostles (see Mark 3:18; Acts 1:13), is called “the publican” by Matthew (Matt. 10:3). Identifying him with Levi of Luke 5:27–28 is not secure (see the Note on 5:27).³⁷ To Matthew is ascribed authorship of the first Gospel whose account undergoes the most changes in the Joseph Smith Translation.³⁸

Thomas: This is likely an Aramaic nickname because it means “twin” as does the Greek *didymos* (see John 11:16; 14:5; 20:24–28; 21:2).³⁹ Noted for his statement of doubt after he hears about Jesus’ resurrection, his known interactions with the Savior all appear in John’s Gospel, in which he declares his willingness to die with Jesus, asks where Jesus is going after the Last Supper, speaks his memorable words to the Risen Christ, “My Lord and my God,” and becomes a witness to one of the most important appearances of the Resurrected Jesus (see John 11:16; 14:5; 20:28–29). He is also said to have gone to India as a missionary.⁴⁰

James the son of Alphaeus: All the New Testament lists of the Twelve call this James “the son of Alphaeus,” offering no more information about him (see Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18; Acts 1:13). The addition of the patronymic “son of Alphaeus,” of course, distinguishes him from the other James in the Twelve.⁴¹ Because Mark writes that Levi is “the son of Alphaeus” (Mark 2:14), some hold that the two are brothers, a claim that may or may not be true. Further, some doubt exists whether this person is the same as “James the Less” in later Christian tradition.⁴²

36. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 5.10.3; Michael J. Wilkins, “Bartholomew,” in *ABD*, 1.615; Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 102–3.

37. Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 108–12.

38. Robert L. Millet, “The Testimony of Matthew,” in *Studies in Scripture: The Gospels*, ed. Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1986), 38–60; Wm. Revell Phillips, “Matthew, Gospel of,” in *EM*, 2:869–70.

39. Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 105–6.

40. Raymond F. Collins, “Thomas,” in *ABD*, 6:528–29.

41. Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 102.

42. Donald A. Hagner, “James,” in *ABD*, 3:616–18.

Simon called Zelotes: Luke refers to this man as a Zealot (see also Acts 1:13). Because the Zealot party comes into existence with the Jewish War of AD 66–70, this nickname does not point to radical political views but rather to his zealousness for the law of Moses. The term connects with the title “the Cananaean” in other lists (see Matt. 10:4; Mark 3:18), a transliterated term that derives from an Aramaic root meaning “zealous,” and distinguishes this man from the other Simon in the Twelve.⁴³ Jesus’ call of Simon, about whom we know nothing else, seems to indicate his willingness to reach out to, and serve with, people of firmly held opinions.

6:16 *Judas the brother of James:* The expression probably means “Judas the son of James.” This name, repeated by Luke elsewhere (see Acts 1:13), replaces the name Thaddeus, likely the Greek name of this man, in the lists of Matthew and Mark, but stands in a different place in the order of names (see Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18). As in other cases, the added element, here the patronymic “(son) of James,” distinguishes this Judas from the other member of the Twelve by the same name.⁴⁴ Except for a question that he poses to Jesus about how he will manifest himself to the world, we know nothing more about this man (see John 14:22).

Judas Iscariot: Judas’s name always stands last in the lists (see Matt. 10:4; Mark 3:19). Questions have arisen about the meaning of the surname Iscariot. Although no consensus exists, the most prominent proposals are (1) that the name points to his home town, Keriot, which lies in the south of the country, in Judea;⁴⁵ (2) that this word discloses a connection with a militant movement against Roman overlords whose members were known as *sicarii* because of the distinctive dagger that they carried. Judas appears prominently in three other passages in Luke’s two-volume record (see Luke 22:3–6, 21–23; Acts 1:16–20; the Notes on 22:3–6; the Analysis on 22:1–6 and 22:21–23).⁴⁶

was the traitor: The verb “was” (Greek *egeneto*) is better rendered “became,” conveying the sense that Judas is not ill-disposed toward Jesus at the first. The epithet “traitor” (Greek *prodotēs*) appears only here and in Acts 7:52 and 2 Timothy 3:4, where it carries the generic sense of “betrayers”

43. Schürer, *History*, 1:382; 2:598–606; BAGD, 403; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:619; David Rhoads, “Zealots,” in *ABD*, 6:1043–54; Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 104–5.

44. Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 73–74, 99–102.

45. Aharoni and others, *Carta Bible Atlas*, map 140; Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 106–7.

46. William Klassen, “Judas Iscariot,” in *ABD*, 3:1091–92; William Klassen, *Judas: Betrayers or Friend of Jesus?* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 32–34.

without reference to Judas.⁴⁷ The usual verb that points to Judas’s act (Greek *paradidōmi*) means “to hand over.”⁴⁸ Reference to Judas in this way shows that the list receives its current form following his betrayal and Jesus’ death but, significantly, also forges a clear connection between Jesus’ mortal ministry and the ministry of the church that follow his death.⁴⁹ An ancient Christian text titled the *Gospel of Judas* dates from the second century AD. It exonerates Judas as betrayer but exhibits little or no historical value. It was published in 2006.⁵⁰

Analysis

The Savior’s calling of the Twelve takes its rightful place as one of his most significant acts in gospel history. Before this moment, Jesus gathers followers in both a formal and informal manner. Those who have stood closest to him during these past weeks witness extraordinary miracles and hear remarkable wisdom from him.⁵¹ Now Jesus authoritatively ties the knot that will bind these men to him. Their evident willingness to accept his invitation, though unreported, stands plainly between the lines of Luke’s report.

The number twelve displays several possible connections. The most obvious tie appears in the number of Israelite tribes that come to the land of Canaan and, under the leadership of Joshua, join themselves in a common bond of faith and communal purpose (see Josh. 24). In this sense, the chosen Twelve represent the new Israel, the new people of God, the new bearers of God’s covenant.

A second link connects back to the family of Jacob and his twelve sons, the forebears of the tribes. This link underscores the concept of family, not exclusively in the sense that Jacob’s family survives and inherits a promised land, a notion that ties to the twelve Israelite tribes, but especially with the meaning that Jesus’ Twelve Apostles both represent a number linked

47. BAGD, 711.

48. BAGD, 619–21; *TDNT*, 2:169–72.

49. Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 96.

50. Rodolphe Kasser, Marvin Meyer, and Gregor Wurst, *The Gospel of Judas* (Washington, D.C.: National Geographic, 2006), 1–10; Herbert Krosney, *The Lost Gospel: The Quest for the Gospel of Judas Iscariot* (Washington, D.C.: National Geographic, 2006), 277–95; Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and others, “A Latter-day Saint Colloquium on the Gospel of Judas,” *BYU Studies* 45, no. 2 (2006): 5–53.

51. Brown, “Twelve,” 105–13.

to a family and, correspondingly, will promote family ideals within his movement.⁵²

A third possible connection, though more remote, taps into the celestial world. The number twelve reminds one of the months of the year and the chambers of the south through which the sun passes on its annual journey.⁵³ The luminous appearance of the Twelve in a vision of Lehi whose “brightness did exceed that of the stars” openly points to this tie (1 Ne. 1:10). Hence, in this view, the number twelve carries a metaphoric, celestial quality that highlights a connecting thread to heaven.

Although scholars have raised questions about whether Jesus himself institutes the title *Apostles* for the Twelve or whether this title arises long after his resurrection,⁵⁴ other scriptural accounts direct light on the matter. From a vision that features the future Messiah, the youthful prophet Nephi writes a pair of observations that are relevant. First, in three separate passages we meet the expression “the twelve apostles of the Lamb” (1 Ne. 11:35, 36; 12:9). Clearly, the language implies strongly that “the twelve apostles” are linked to “the Lamb,” the Messiah. But when is the connection forged? The second element clarifies. Earlier in his vision, Nephi beholds an infant whom an angel calls “the Lamb,” specifically “the Lamb of God” (1 Ne. 11:21). Here “the Lamb” is fully human, though a newborn. In this light, the expression “the twelve apostles of the Lamb” evidently points to a time during the Messiah’s mortality, not afterward. Hence, in Nephi’s vision, though it is highly symbolic, the terms *the twelve* and *apostle* are most likely linked to historic time.⁵⁵

52. The preserved statements from Jesus in the gospels seem to strike a somewhat negative tone about the enduring virtues of family life (see, for example, 8:19–20; 14:26; Mark 10:28–30). But these declarations are metaphorical and point to a person’s first line of loyalty, to the Savior. Instead, we should think of Jesus’ explicit statement about honoring father and mother (see 18:20) as well as the ideals undergirding the stories of revelation and inspiration coming into the home and family of Zacharias and Elisabeth and the fact that the angel finds Mary in her home for his grand announcement (see 1:28, 41–79). See the Notes on 6:48–49; the Analysis on 6:20–49; 11:14–28; and 20:17–19).

53. *TDNT*, 2:321; 1 Enoch 72, in R. H. Charles, ed., *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1913), 2:237–39; and James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1983, 1985), 1:50–52.

54. For example, Hans von Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power in the Church of the First Three Centuries*, trans. J. A. Baker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969), 12–29; *TDNT*, 1:424–25.

55. There is good reason to believe that Nephi wrote a term such as the Hebrew *shaliakh* rather than the Greek *apostolos*, but the meaning would be roughly the same,

It may seem a bit strange that Andrew fades in the Gospel narratives, almost as if he loses his place as the second called (see Matt. 4:18; Mark 1:16), being known ever after merely as Peter’s “brother” (6:14; Matt. 10:2). After all, he is called with his brother Peter, and therefore stands in a position of seniority (see Matt. 4:18; Mark 1:16; also the Note on Luke 5:6). But that is not how the divine economy is to work. The first-called, Peter, remains in his spot as the most senior, and he may have been the oldest of the Twelve. The brothers James and John are soon elevated to places of trust next to Peter, though Andrew is possibly older than both of them. We do sense that Andrew’s senior position is respected because his name appears in a post-resurrection list ahead of the other Apostles, except Peter, James, and John (see Acts 1:13).

The manifest interest in the two pairs of brothers—Peter and Andrew, James and John—in the earliest lists underscores the family ties within the Twelve. They also hint at a solution to the question of whether James the son of Alphaeus is a brother of Levi who, in one passage, is also called son of Alphaeus (see Mark 2:14). Because of the configuration of the lists, highlighting brothers, it is unlikely that James and Levi are brothers because the lists would probably have drawn their names together.

Except for a few references in the other Gospels, little is known of the majority of the Apostles, either before their calls or afterward. It appears that all, or virtually all, were from Galilee, as the angel’s words disclose when later addressing the eleven, “Ye men of Galilee” (Acts 1:11). We learn specifically that Peter, Andrew, and Philip come originally from the Galilean town of Bethsaida (see John 1:44). Judas Iscariot may have grown up in the Judean town of Keriot in the south of the country, although this possibility remains uncertain. Such a clustering of faithful men in one geographical region implies a divine design.⁵⁶

At some point, these twelve men receive the Melchizedek Priesthood, whether on the occasion of their call or later. One New Testament source, the epistle to the Hebrews, reports on Jesus’ Melchizedek Priesthood, but not on that of the Twelve (see Heb. 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:14–22; also 2:17–3:1). That these men come to hold this priesthood arises from the actions of

“a person sent.” On the presence of both historical and symbolic dimensions in Nephi’s dream, see Stephen E. Robinson, “Early Christianity and 1 Nephi 13–14,” in *The Book of Mormon: First Nephi, The Doctrinal Foundation*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1988), 177–91; *TDNT*, 2:325

56. Brown, “Twelve,” 103–5.

Peter, James, and John in conferring the Melchizedek Priesthood on Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in the spring of 1829 (see JS-H 1:72; D&C 27:12–13; also 128:20).⁵⁷

THE EXPECTANT MULTITUDE (6:17–19)

(Compare Matt. 4:24–25; Mark 3:7–13)

King James Translation

17 And he came down with them, and stood in the plain, and the company of his disciples, and a great multitude of people out of all Judæa and Jerusalem, and from the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases; 18 And they that were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed. 19 And the whole multitude sought to touch him: for there went virtue out of him, and healed them all.

New Rendition

17 And going down with them, he stood on a level area. And there was a great crowd of his disciples and large multitude of the people from all of Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast area of Tyre and Sidon, 18 who had come to listen to him and to be cured of their illnesses; and those troubled by unclean spirits were healed. 19 And all the crowd strove to touch him, because power proceeded out of him and cured everyone.

Notes

6:17 *he came down with them:* The scene glows with the warmth of the implied announcement of the newly constituted Twelve. Their highly visible attendance at the following events—the healings (6:18–19) and the sermon (6:20–49)—constitutes Jesus’ more or less formal introduction of them to the assembled crowd. Further, Jesus’ descent faintly echoes the descent of Jehovah onto the holy mount to announce the law (see Ex. 19:18–20) and Moses’ descent to prepare his people to receive the law (see Ex. 19:25). In addition, one senses on the edge of this language the descent of the divine presence, the so-called *Shekinah*, among the people of God which seems to be confirmed by the testimony in 7:16—“God hath visited his people.” This idea also lies in the promise, “ye shall see . . . the angels of

57. Jae R. Ballif, “Melchizedek Priesthood,” in *EM*, 2:882–87.

God ascending and descending upon the Son of man” (John 1:51).⁵⁸ Further, the verb translated “came down” (Greek *katabainō*) describes the descent of the Spirit at Jesus’ baptism (see 3:22; John 1:32–33) and his descent from the Mount of Transfiguration (see Matt. 17:9; Mark 9:14). Each of these scenes underscores the sacred act of descent. In addition, the phrase “with him” points to the rich fellowship that now begins to develop between these men and the Savior (see the Notes on 8:1, 45; 22:14, 28; 23:43; 24:33).⁵⁹ More than this, the geography matches exactly that of the area near the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee where, beyond a level plain that abuts the lake, the hills rise steeply (see the Note on 6:12; the Analysis on 6:20–49).

stood in the plain: The proper sense is “stood on the plain.” In light of the possible connections of this scene to events at Mount Sinai and the giving of the law, the preposition *on* may recall God’s arrival upon the holy mount (see Ex. 19:18–20). The verb “to stand” (Greek *histēmi*) has already appeared in Luke’s accounts of special moments, such as the angel standing on the right of the incense altar and Jesus standing on the shore of the lake before his sermon and the miracle of the enormous catch of fish (see 1:11; 5:1).

the plain: The Greek expression (*ho topos pedinos*) means “level place.”⁶⁰ Although the term for *level* occurs only here in the New Testament, the description recalls clearly the promise of Isaiah that Luke quotes, when introducing the Baptist, that everything in God’s kingdom would be level and inviting and smooth (see 3:5 and the Note on thereon). The one spot along the northern shore of the lake that matches “the plain” is the broad, flat place, known variously as the el-Ghuwayer Plain, the Valley of Ginosar, and the Valley of Gennesaret. Marked by the town of Gennesaret on the north and by the town of Magdala on the south, this area extends 3.5 miles north and south and 1.5 miles westward from the northwest shoreline to surrounding cliffs and mountains. Fed by three streams, it remains fertile into modern times. In antiquity, one branch of the Via Maris, a major Roman road, passed through the valley, providing a link between the Mediterranean coast to the west and Syria and Mesopotamia to the east.⁶¹

58. Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 1:33–34, 90–91; *TDOT*, 14:698–702.

59. *TDNT*, 7:770, 794–97.

60. BAGD, 644.

61. Douglas R. Edwards, “Gennesaret,” *ABD*, 2:963; Aharoni and others, *Carta Bible Atlas*, map 233; Holzapfel, Huntsman, and Wayment, *Jesus Christ and the World of the New Testament*, 76–77 (photograph of the plain).

the company of his disciples, and a great multitude: Three audiences appear in this scene: the Twelve, a large number of followers, and others who have heard about him and have come “to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases.”

people out of all Judea and Jerusalem, and from . . . Tyre and Sidon: The term “people” (Greek *laos*) often points to God’s covenant people (see 1:68, 77; 2:32; 7:16; etc.).⁶² The crowd, of course, includes people of Galilee. A person cannot rule out that the multitude is made up of both Jews and Gentiles, although those from Tyre and Sidon may have been mostly Jews living in those cities. But the gentile connection in Jesus’ work is not to be missed (see the Notes on 1:79; 2:32; 8:26; 10:1; and the introductions to chapters 8 and 10). Moreover, “the plain” on the northwest corner of the Sea of Galilee is the natural place for people from the north, such as Tyre and Sidon, to come to because the road that gives access to the lake from the west and north descends here through the Arbel Pass, a gap between the surrounding cliffs and hills (see the Note on 4:31).⁶³

Tyre: The name of this city appears here and in 10:13, 14, where, in connection with the Seventy’s mission to the Gentiles, Jesus points to a judgment that awaits its citizens (see the Note on 10:13). It seems that Jesus’ mention of Tyre in that context ties back to Isa. 23. There Tyre is the lowest of the lows, the least honored. A question begs for an answer: Does the fact that people from Tyre were in the audience for Jesus’ Sermon on the Plain point to a spiritual maturation, a spiritual coming of age? It seems so. This notion stands within the story in Mark of the Syro-Phoenician woman who seeks and receives a blessing from Jesus, a story that Luke does not preserve, although it would have served his interest in featuring Gentiles (see Mark 7:24–30).

6:18 vexed with unclean spirits: In his mind, Luke apparently separates people troubled with “unclean spirits” from those afflicted by “diseases” (6:17), although 8:2 and 13:16 hint that such maladies may have been linked in people’s perceptions (but see Mosiah 3:5–6).⁶⁴

6:19 sought to touch him: This sort of action also characterizes the woman with the issue of blood in 8:44 (see the Notes on 8:44, 46). Later

62. *TDNT*, 4:29–57; *TLNT*, 2:371–74.

63. Beitzel, “Roads and Highways (Pre-Roman),” 5:779; Holzapfel, Huntsman, and Wayment, *Jesus Christ and the World of the New Testament*, 150–51.

64. The study on maladies in *TDNT*, 4:1094–95, holds that bodily illness and infestation by evil spirits were linked together anciently.

believers try to place the sick in a spot where Peter's shadow will pass over them and bring relief (see Acts 5:15).

virtue: The Greek term is the word for power (*dynamis*),⁶⁵ the same term that appears in 8:46, which is also translated as virtue (see the Notes on 1:35; 4:6, 14, 36; 9:1; the Analysis on 4:1–13).⁶⁶ Luke's apparent intent is to underscore the joining of Jesus' miraculous powers and his potent words, which follow in his sermon.

healed them all: Luke intends that his readers grasp the overwhelming scene of Jesus healing all who have come to this level area, recalling his healing of all in Capernaum at the end of the Sabbath (see 4:40; also 3 Ne. 17:9).

Analysis

Echoes of the exodus sound across these verses, beginning of course with the Savior's descent to the plain and then his standing upon it, just as God descends onto Sinai. His descent also recalls Moses' descent from the holy mount first with God's instructions for the Hebrews and later with the tables of the law (see Ex. 19:18–20; 32:15). And as the ancient Israelites were to receive the law through Moses, so the Savior's hearers are to receive a new law through him. In the process, Jesus will establish another people of God whose resemblance to the old Israelite tribal system of twelve will be evident in the Twelve Apostles.

Just as the old covenant, whose requirements are verbalized through Moses, brings unity to the tribes so that they do not break apart into squabbling clans, so the new covenant, symbolized in the cohesiveness of the Twelve, will bring unity among the Savior's followers. The terms of the covenant, for those who embrace it, Jesus will lay out in his following remarkable sermon whose centerpiece is love (see 6:27; 36).

And just as God demonstrates his powers to the Hebrews gathered at the base of the holy mount, so the Savior discloses divine powers to the multitude gathered at the foot of the surrounding heights by healing those afflicted with diseases and evil spirits. It is likely that no such gathering has witnessed both the miraculous and the energizing power of God's word after the Israelites mark the stunning events at the holy mount. It will be another three or four years before a similarly large group of people

65. BAGD, 206–7.

66. BAGD, 206–7, 277–78; *TDNT*, 2:299–308, 562–70.

will witness a like set of manifestations at a temple in the New World (see 3 Ne. 11–18).⁶⁷

This scene that follows the calling of the Twelve—descent to the level area and the Savior’s healing of the afflicted—does not replicate anything that we find in Matthew and Mark, raising again the question whether Luke is following Mark’s order. Mark records that, after choosing the Twelve, Jesus visits a home where he is beset by such a large crowd that it is impossible even to eat a meal (see Mark 3:19–20). Matthew writes that Jesus sends the Twelve on their first mission immediately after calling them (see Matt. 10:5–6). For whatever reason, Luke’s narrative seems more natural, effectively introducing the newly called Twelve to a large gathering and then allowing them to witness more of Jesus’ acts and words before he sends them on their mission (see 9:1–6), much as the Risen Jesus will do with the twelve disciples in the New World (see 3 Ne. 11:18–22).

THE SERMON ON THE PLAIN (6:20–49) (Compare Matt. 5–7)

King James Translation

20 And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said,

Blessed be ye poor:
for yours is the kingdom of God.

21 Blessed are ye that hunger now:
for ye shall be filled.

Blessed are ye that weep now:
for ye shall laugh.

22 Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man’s sake.
23 Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for

New Rendition

20 And when he raised his eyes on his disciples, he said,

“Blessed are the poor,
because yours is the kingdom of God.

21 Blessed are those who are now hungry,

because you will eat your fill.

Blessed are those who now weep,
for you will laugh.

22 “Blessed are you when men hate you and when they shun you, and revile, and repudiate your name as evil because of the Son of Man. 23 Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for behold,

67. S. Kent Brown, *From Jerusalem to Zarahemla: Literary and Historical Studies of the Book of Mormon* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1998), 146–56; Brown, *Voices from the Dust*, 129–77.

joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.

24 But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation.

25 Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger.

Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep.

26 Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you!

for so did their fathers to the false prophets.

27 But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, 28 Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. 29 And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloke forbid not to take thy coat also. 30 Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again. 31 And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.

32 For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. 33 And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. 34 And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. 35 But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.

36 Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. 37 Judge not, and

your reward will be great in heaven; for their fathers did likewise to the prophets.

24 “Nevertheless, woe unto you wealthy,

for you are receiving your consolation.

25 Woe unto you who are now full, for you will hunger.

Woe to those who now laugh, for you will mourn and weep.

26 Woe when all men speak well of you,

for their fathers did likewise to false prophets.

27 “But I say to you who listen: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. 29 To him who strikes you on the cheek, offer also your other. And from him who takes your cloak, do not withhold even your inner tunic. 30 Give to all who ask of you, and do not demand back your own things from those who take from you. 31 And as you desire that people do to you, do to them likewise.

32 “And if you love those who love you, what benefit is it to you? For even sinners love those who love them. 33 And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is it to you? Sinners also do the same. 34 And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what benefit is it to you? Even sinners lend to sinners so that they may receive in return the same amount. 35 Rather, love your enemies, and do good and lend without expecting anything in return; and your reward will be great. And you will be the sons of the Highest, because he is kind to the ungrateful and to the wicked.

ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven: 38 Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.

39 And he spake a parable unto them, Can the blind lead the blind? shall they not both fall into the ditch? 40 The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master.

41 And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye? 42 Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye.

43 For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. 44 For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes. 45 A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.

46 And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? 47 Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like: 48 He is like a man which built an house, and

36 "Become compassionate just as your Father is compassionate. 37 And do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; forgive and you will be forgiven; 38 give and it will be given to you; they will give into the fold of your clothing a good measurement that is pressed down, shaken, and overflowing. For with the measurement that you measure it shall be measured back to you."

39 And he told them a parable as well: "The blind cannot lead the blind, can they? Will they not both fall into a pit? 40 The disciple is not above the teacher; but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.

41 "Why do you see the chip in your brother's eye but do not notice the beam in your own eye? 42 How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me remove the chip which is in your eye,' when you yourself cannot see the beam in your own eye? Hypocrite, first remove the beam from your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the chip in your brother's eye.

43 "For there is no good tree that produces rotten fruit, nor on the other hand is there a rotten tree that produces good fruit. 44 For each tree is known by its own fruit; for they do not gather figs from a thorn bush, nor do they pick grapes from a bramble. 45 The good man produces good from what good is stored in his heart, and the wicked produces wickedness from the wickedness stored in his. For out of the abundance of his heart does his mouth speak.

46 "And why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not what I say? 47 I will show you what everyone is like who comes to me and listens to my words

digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. 49 But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.

and does them. 48 He is like a man building a house who dug and went deep and put a foundation on the rock. And when a flood came, the river broke upon that house, but it did not have power to shake it because it had been well-built. 49 But he who has heard and not done is like a man building a house upon the ground without a foundation, upon which the river broke and it immediately collapsed and the fall of that house was great.”

Notes

6:20 *he lifted up his eyes*: As the other appearances of this expression show, the action occurs in special contexts (see 16:23; 18:13). This idiomatic expression ties back to very early sources that often describe lifting up the hands, the voice, or the eyes on sacred occasions (see Gen. 13:10, 14; 18:2; 21:16; 22:4, 13; Lev. 9:22; etc.; the Notes on 21:28; 24:50).⁶⁸

***his disciples*:** Jesus’ main audience for his sermon consists of his followers, but the others in the multitude listen too (see 7:1). In contrast, it appears from the Joseph Smith Translation that the audience for the Sermon on the Mount are the Twelve (see JST Matt. 7:1).⁶⁹

***Blessed*:** The Greek term (*makarios*) appears not only here but also in the beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere in the New Testament (see 1:45; 7:23; 10:23; Rom. 4:7–8; James 1:12; etc.). Its general meaning is “happy,” with a sense of joy rooted in an eternal hope (see Luke 14:15; Titus 2:13).⁷⁰

***poor*:** Jesus identifies himself earlier as the one “anointed . . . to preach the gospel to the poor” (4:18). The destitute situation of such people grinds them down so that they are truly humble and therefore receptive to divine influences, God being their only hope (see Isa. 25:4; 29:19–21; Ps. 35:10; also D&C 104:15–16).⁷¹ Matthew preserves the formulation “poor in spirit” (Matt. 5:3), which is not as broad as the saying preserved by Luke. Not incidentally, the Joseph Smith Translation renders this beatitude and the

68. TDNT, 1:186.

69. Faulring, Jackson, and Matthews, *Joseph Smith’s New Translation of the Bible*, 157.

70. TDNT, 4:367–70; TLNT, 2:432–44; Morris, *Luke*, 139–40.

71. TLNT, 2:438–39.

next as “Blessed are the poor” and “Blessed are they who weep now,” more in the style of the beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount (see JST 6:20; Matt. 5:3–4). In a related vein, those afflicted with poverty do not have a free pass—they are to avoid bad behavior and stand upright, as the Savior points out elsewhere: “Wo unto you poor men . . . whose bellies are not satisfied, and whose hands are not stayed from laying hold upon other men’s goods, whose eyes are full of greediness, and who will not labor with your own hands! But blessed are the poor who are pure in heart, whose hearts are broken, and whose spirits are contrite” (D&C 56:17–18). Perhaps importantly, the Greek text reads “the poor” (*hoi ptōchoi*) and may constitute an early designation for Jesus’ followers (see the Note on 4:18).⁷²

yours is the kingdom of God: This promise differs little from that in Matthew, except for the third person plural, “theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:3). However, Luke never writes the words “kingdom of heaven,” which is a favorite expression of Matthew (see Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 5:10, 19–20; 7:21; etc.), but consistently pens “kingdom of God” (see 4:43; 7:28; 8:1, 10; 9:2; etc.). On one level, the expression “kingdom of heaven” emphasizes the tie of the earthly kingdom to heaven and underlines its true locale, whereas the words “kingdom of God” draw one’s focus to the One in charge of the whole kingdom. In modern scripture, Joseph Smith clarifies that “the kingdom of God” is the earthly counterpart of “the kingdom of Heaven” (D&C 65:5–6). Moreover, the Savior himself repeats the words “kingdom of God” when setting out how the poor become linked to it: “the poor who are pure in heart . . . shall see the kingdom of God coming in power and great glory unto their deliverance; for the fatness of the earth shall be theirs” (D&C 56:18). Such statements represent a reversal of the accepted social and religious order of classes (see the Analysis below).⁷³

6:21 *ye that hunger now:* Matthew’s fourth beatitude reads “they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness” (Matt. 5:6), a report of Jesus’ words that focuses on a spiritual hungering. Jesus’ saying in Luke goes beyond this notion to include those who struggle with abject poverty, whether physical or spiritual. God is their only true hope.

ye shall be filled: Plainly implicit is a reward that will come from above, whether in a temporal or spiritual form. As one learns from another scriptural source, physical and spiritual nourishment complement one another (see 3 Ne. 19:6; 20:3–9).

72. Strathearn, “4Q521 and What It Might Mean for Q 3–7,” 406–8.

73. Green, *Luke*, 264–66.

ye that weep now: Jesus does not spell out the reasons for such persons' sorrow. Rather he makes a universal statement about grief and pain of whatever sort and whatever intensity from which he will offer deliverance (see 2 Ne. 9:21; D&C 18:11).⁷⁴

ye shall laugh: Lying just under this promise rests the long-standing assurance that God will exchange sorrows for joy (see Ps. 126:1–2; Isa. 35:10; Jer. 31:13; etc.).

6:22 *when men shall hate you:* The elements of this verse correspond only roughly to Matthew 5:10–11 in the Sermon on the Mount. Both in Matthew and here, Jesus leads his hearers to understand that, even though happiness will come, so will tests and trials, including from others. Earlier Zacharias sings that, with God's renewed revelation of his mercies, "we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us" (1:71). Hatred undergirds the hostile actions that Jesus will now detail.⁷⁵

when they shall separate you: These frightful words seem to call attention to social ostracism rather than to excommunication from the synagogue, a later practice.⁷⁶ The verb (Greek *aphorizō*) often has to do with God separating someone for his service, but not here (see Acts 13:2; Rom. 1:1; Gal. 1:15; etc.).⁷⁷ We sense that from the edge of Jesus' remark emerges a critique of the Pharisees who separated others from their company.⁷⁸ The Joseph Smith Translation adjusts the next expression "from their company" to "from among them" (JST 6:22).

shall reproach you: An echo of this saying, with the same verb (Greek *oneidizō*) appears in 1 Peter 4:14, "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye." The sense is "to censure, to scold," the meaning that lies beneath James 1:5, "and upbraideth not."⁷⁹ An allusion may also exist to the reproached woman of Isaiah 54:4–17 who will find refuge in divine deliverance and be kept safe within "the covenant of [the Lord's] peace" (Isa. 54:10; 3 Ne. 22:10).

cast out your name as evil: The matter has to do with defaming a person's name. In ancient Israelite law, such an act was punished only in the case of a husband defaming a recently married virgin (see Deut. 22:19).

74. Jeffrey R. Holland, "Atonement of Jesus Christ," in *EM*, 1:85; Johnson, *Luke*, 107.

75. Marshall, *Luke*, 252; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:634.

76. Marshall, *Luke*, 252, against Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:635.

77. *TDNT*, 5:454–55.

78. Schürer, *History*, 2:400.

79. BAGD, 573.

for the Son of man's sake: Though some have held that this expression represents a late addition to this saying,⁸⁰ the allusion in 1 Peter 4:14 demonstrates its tie to Jesus' teachings.

6:23 Rejoice ye: As in Matthew 5:12, where Jesus also instructs his disciples to rejoice, the meaning has to do with enduring inner joy, inner peace, rather than with momentary happiness.⁸¹

that day: Most commentators see this phrase as pointing to the day when a disciple suffers persecution, a reasonable idea.⁸² But the words also point to the day when God settles all accounts at the end of time (see 17:30; 19:43; 21:34–35; Isa. 61:2; Mal. 4:1–3, 5; D&C 97:21–23; 112:24; 133:10–11; the Notes on 17:22, 26; 19:42).⁸³

leap for joy: The verb (Greek *skirtaō*) appears only in Luke and earlier in connection with the unborn child of Elisabeth who is moved joyously by the Holy Spirit (see 1:41, 44). The verb usually makes reference to young, frisky animals: “ye shall go forth, and bound as young calves let loose from [their] bonds” (LXX Mal. 4:2).⁸⁴ The image also recalls the feet that turn (Hebrew verb *shuv*) from the paths of sin into the paths of righteousness (see the Note on 7:44; the Analysis thereon).⁸⁵

your reward is great in heaven: Because Jesus' kingdom brings a reversal of the customary order, which sees happiness and contentment arising mostly from wealth and influence, those who “endure grief, suffering wrongfully” in this life (1 Pet. 2:19), will experience a reversal of their earthly fate in the next life.⁸⁶ This future aspect receives emphasis in the Joseph Smith Translation: “your reward shall be great in heaven” (JST 6:23).

did their fathers unto the prophets: Examples of persecuting prophets are numerous (see D&C 127:4). One recalls Elijah (see 1 Kgs. 19:10), Zechariah to whom Jesus will refer later (see 11:51; 2 Chr. 24:20–22), Urijah (see Jer. 26:20–24), and Jeremiah (see Jer. 38:6–13).

80. Bultmann, *History*, 110, 127, 150–51, holds that 6:22–23 is a late addition to a set of authentic sayings of Jesus.

81. *TLNT*, 2:437–38.

82. Marshall, *Luke*, 254; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:635.

83. *TDNT*, 2:944–46, 950–53; Morris, *Luke*, 140; Johnson, *Luke*, 107; John W. Welch, ed., *Reexploring the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1992), 117–19.

84. Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 1611.

85. See, for example, Deut. 4:30; 30:10; 1 Kgs. 8:35; 2 Kgs. 17:13; 23:25; Isa. 9:13; 59:20; Jer. 3:10, 14; 18:8; 31:19; Ezek. 3:19, 20; 14:6; Amos 4:6–11 (negative); *TDOT*, 14:475, 480, 485–86, 492–96, 500–501, 506–9.

86. *TLNT*, 2:438.

6:24 *woe*: This term appears only rarely in idiomatic Greek and seems to be a translation of the Hebrew *‘oy*, a cry of pain because of affliction, or of terror because of looming misfortune. The word also carries a sense of lamentation.⁸⁷

***woe unto you*:** It seems likely that, beginning with this verse, Jesus is warning, or even lamenting over, some of his hearers who take the happy circumstances in their lives too seriously, as if they are a reward of some sort. But it is also possible that he is saying that life can take a different turn for these people and, as a result, they might end up making enemies whom, in his words, they are to love and pray for (see 6:27–28).

***rich*:** With this notice, Jesus begins an unvarnished assault on those who place wealth and property at the center of their lives (see 12:15, 21, 34; 16:22–23; 18:24).⁸⁸ The only softening—and it is significant—arises in connection with the crowd’s reaction to his saying about the rich young ruler (see 18:26; the Note on 18:27).

***ye have received your consolation*:** The Greek verb (*apechō*) appears in receipts for payment made, referring to full payment.⁸⁹ Thus, ominously, those to whom Jesus points have received all that will come to them (see the Note on 16:25).⁹⁰

6:25 *you that are full*: Jesus apparently takes aim at those who see their abundance as meeting all their needs and therefore feel no desire for the things of God.⁹¹

***ye shall hunger*:** This kind of hungering characterizes spiritual vacancy as well as physical.

***you that laugh now*:** Jesus seems to point to the type of laughter that accompanies a person’s momentary successes,⁹² perhaps even to an “excess of laughter” (D&C 88:69).

6:26 *when all men shall speak well of you*: Evidently, behind this statement stands the concern for breaches of principle that speciously allow “all” others to form a positive opinion of Jesus’ followers.⁹³

***the false prophets*:** In other instances, false prophets are those who will threaten future believers (see Matt. 7:15; 24:11, 24; Mark 13:22; 1 John 4:1).

87. *TLNT*, 2:441–44.

88. *TDNT*, 6:328; *TLNT*, 2:443.

89. *TDNT* 2:828; Marshall, *Luke*, 256; Morris, *Luke*, 141.

90. *TDNT*, 5:798; Marshall, *Luke*, 256.

91. Morris, *Luke*, 141.

92. Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:636–37; Morris, *Luke*, 141.

93. Morris, *Luke*, 141.

Here Jesus nods instead to past persons who drew people to them by falsely claiming to be God’s mouthpieces (see Isa. 30:10; Jer. 5:31; 23:11–22; Micah 2:11; 2 Pet. 2:1).⁹⁴

6:27 *But I say unto you:* Jesus pushes forward his authority, which rests in himself, for what he is about to say (see 4:24; 5:24; 7:9, 14, 26, 28, 47; etc.). We see a similar appeal in John’s address (see the Note on 3:8) and in Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount (see Matt. 5:22, 28, 32, 34, 39, 44).

you which hear: Two meanings spring to mind. The first has to do with those who really listen to Jesus’ words and incorporate their vivifying power into their lives (see 6:27; 8:12–15, 21; 14:35; 16:29, 31; 21:38; the Notes on 8:8; 11:28; 19:48; the Analysis on 8:4–15). The second touches on those who hear but refuse to internalize what he says, a possible allusion to Isaiah 6:9–10: “Hear ye indeed, but understand not.”⁹⁵ The Joseph Smith Translation adjusts and adds to this expression: “you who hear *my words*,” clarifying that Jesus is the source to which listeners should look (JST 6:27; emphasis added; see 6:47, 49; D&C 41:1).

Love your enemies: Jesus reaches one of the hearts of his sermon in words that he will repeat for reinforcement at 6:35 and whose theme will persist through 6:38. All his hearers must exercise the virtue of loving their enemies, whether it be the poor and downtrodden loving those who take advantage of them, or the rich and influential loving those who oppose them for some reason. None stand exempt from this imperative. Notably, the kind of love that Jesus draws attention to here (Greek *agapaō*) goes beyond romance and friendships and seeks to bless others, no matter the costs, as the next verses illustrate (see the Notes on 6:12, 28; 22:50; 23:34; the Analysis below).⁹⁶

them which hate you: As will become clear later, followers of Jesus will always be dogged by those who hate them: “ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake” (21:17). But rather than feeling put upon, disciples should feel happy to be treated thus: “Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you” (6:22).

6:28 *Bless them that curse you:* Jesus begins to spell out what it means to “do good” (6:27). A subtle link to Jesus’ Atonement may lie in these words because he is seen as cursed owing to the manner of his death, a form of executing criminals (see Deut. 21:22–23; 1 Cor. 12:3; Gal. 3:13).⁹⁷

94. Johnson, *Luke*, 108.

95. *TPJS*, 95–97.

96. Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:637–38; *TLNT*, 1:8–14.

97. Johnson, *Luke*, 108.

pray for them which despitefully use you: Jesus spends the night in prayer (see 6:12). What does he pray for? One obvious answer is that he prays for and about the Twelve. Moreover, knowing that he will not ask followers to do something that he is unwilling to do, we can reasonably conclude that he prays for his enemies who find one another and enter into a conspiracy the prior day (see the Note on 6:12). In a related vein, the Joseph Smith Translation broadens the group who are to receive the benefits of a disciple's prayers by adding "and persecute you" to the end of this verse, bringing the saying close to that in Matthew (JST 6:28; see Matt. 5:44).

6:29 *unto him that smiteth thee:* Jesus' instruction shows a progression from attitude (love) to words (bless, curse) to deeds.⁹⁸ In offering the other cheek, the disciple demonstrates his genuine love for an enemy. At this point, the Joseph Smith Translation adds, "or, in other words, it is better to offer the other [cheek], than to revile again," a statement that both clarifies and interprets Jesus' peaceful intent (JST 6:29; see D&C 98:23–27).

smiteth thee on the one cheek: The Greek verb *tuptō* points to a hard blow to the jaw with the fist, not merely a slap.⁹⁹

cloak: This outer garment (Greek *himation*) is the most valuable piece of clothing that a person may own and hence is of value to thieves and others (see the Notes on 10:30; 23:34).¹⁰⁰

forbid not to take thy coat also: To willingly surrender one's clothing to an adversary is to show in a dramatic, palpable way one's love. Such human acts, which brim with mercy, mirror God's mercy (see 3:11; 6:36).

6:30 *Give to every man that asketh of thee:* This saying, and the next, lift value away from material possessions, a point that underlies Jesus' sayings and parables that have to do with temporal goods such as one's treasures and the Prodigal Son (see 12:31–34; 15:11–32). Here, the verb "to give" (Greek *didōmi*) is a present imperative and calls attention not to a single instance of giving but to a lifetime pattern.¹⁰¹ The Joseph Smith Translation inserts before this entire verse the following words that underscore making peace and leaving judgment in God's hands: "For it is better that thou suffer thine enemy to take these things, than to contend with him. Verily I say

98. Johnson, *Luke*, 108–9.

99. Plummer, *Luke*, 185; BAGD, 838.

100. Plummer, *Luke*, 185; BAGD, 376–77.

101. BAGD, 191–93; Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, §1864a; Blass and Debrunner, *Greek Grammar*, §§36–335.

unto you, Your heavenly Father who seeth in secret, shall bring that wicked one into judgment” (JST 6:30).

him that taketh away thy goods: Jesus’ words, particularly the verb (Greek *airō*), invite us to think not only about those who borrow innocently (see 6:34) but also those who take goods by force, whether legally or not.¹⁰² In the prior verse, the Savior concerns himself with how to respond to a person “that taketh away thy cloke”; in this saying, he broadens the requirement for a gentle, generous response.

6:31 as ye would that men should do to you: This formulation of the golden rule parallels the concept as Jesus frames it in Matthew 7:12. In that passage, Jesus goes on to tie the rule to the Mosaic law and the prophets. In Luke’s report, Jesus is both summarizing what he has just said and introducing what follows. Additionally, he links the golden rule to how people interact with others.¹⁰³

6:32 if ye love them which love you: The Joseph Smith Translation adds one word that sharpens Jesus’ intent to lead his disciples to love all: “if ye love them *only* who love you” (JST 6:33; emphasis added).

what thank have ye: The expression, repeated in the next two verses, is literally, “What sort of gift is it to you?” By bringing up the word for “gift” (Greek *charis*), Jesus lays emphasis not on reciprocity but on giving gifts, pure and simple (see the Notes on 14:12–14). He is also demanding that his followers exceed the standards of other people in their normal, personal interactions.¹⁰⁴ With a similar meaning, the Joseph Smith Translation adjusts this expression to “what reward have you?” both here and in 6:34 (JST 6:33, 34), a change that brings the reading close to that of Matthew 5:46, “what reward have ye?”

sinners also love: Without judging them and without drawing attention to everyone’s shortcomings, the Savior gives voice to an important, elevating insight about those whom society generally despises. Further, Jesus beckons sinners into his circle, upon condition of repentance (see 5:8, 32; 15:1–2).

love those that love them: The Joseph Smith Translation changes these words to “do even the same,” making the expression identical to that at the end of 6:33 and closer to those in Matthew 5:46 and 5:47 (JST 6:33).

102. BAGD, 23–24.

103. For appearances of this law in other ancient sources, see Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:639–40; Johnson, *Luke*, 109.

104. Morris, *Luke*, 144; Johnson, *Luke*, 109.

6:33 if ye do good: Though the verb translated “do good” (Greek *agathopoieō*) differs from the pair of words translated thus in 6:27 (Greek *kalōs poieō*), Jesus’ point remains: for his disciples, doing good means reaching out not merely to one’s associates with whom one feels comfortable, but “to them which hate you” (6:27). Interestingly, the Joseph Smith Translation omits this verse altogether.

6:34 if ye lend: The Savior brings forward possessions, and one’s attitude toward them, as a graspable measuring rod of how well a person is abiding by the golden rule. Not surprisingly, possessions underlie much of what he will teach throughout his ministry, such as in the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, the Prodigal Son, and Lazarus and the rich man (see 15:3–32; 16:19–31; the Note on 18:24).

6:35 love ye your enemies: By repeating exactly his words from 6:27, as the Greek text shows, Jesus stresses the importance of the type of love that his disciples are to display. It forms the signature of his kingdom.

do good: Jesus has just defined what he envisions by doing good in the light of the golden rule: to exceed reciprocity and to go beyond the comfortable.

hoping for nothing again: The Greek verb *apelpizō* usually means “to despair” but here carries the sense “to expect nothing in return.”¹⁰⁵

your reward shall be great: Jesus repeats almost exactly his promise in 6:23 where he speaks of heaven as the place for receiving one’s reward, a meaning that attaches to his promise here. His words in this passage also bear the sense that a reward for loving, generous actions will come to a person while on this earth.

the children of the Highest: The language is almost formulaic, as if it highlights a celestial title of some sort that designates a special status beyond a person’s mere presence in heaven. This meaning adheres to the angel’s words to Mary about her child: “He shall be . . . called the Son of the Highest” (1:32; see the Note thereon). Hence, a direct, intimate association with the Father and Son is implicit in these words, much as we see in Mosiah 5:7: “ye are born of [Christ] and have become his sons and his daughters.”

6:36 Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father: Imitating the Father, who showers divine mercy on his people, lies at the center of what Jesus is trying to teach his hearers, as these words disclose. As the Father loves and does good “unto the unthankful and to the evil” (6:35), so the disciple is to do, thus mirroring the Father.¹⁰⁶

105. BAGD, 83; TDNT, 2:533–34.

106. TDNT, 5:161; Marshall, *Luke*, 265.

6:37 *Judge not:* In Matthew’s report, Jesus ties the act of not judging to the legal dictum that we receive back whatever we dish out unjustly (see Matt. 7:1–2). In this passage, Jesus’ words reach into the heavenly world with the promise that we “shall not be judged.” We cannot avoid unjust judgment in this world, but we will not be subject to such judgment in the next.

forgive, and ye shall be forgiven: The only realm wherein this assurance is valid lies in the celestial world. Forgiving in this life may or may not bring forgiveness. Even so, we are “required to forgive all men,” no matter the anticipated outcome (D&C 64:10).

6:38 *Give, and it shall be given unto you:* The other context for the promise “it shall be given unto you” is that of prayer whose result is receiving “the Holy Spirit” (see 11:9–13). Here Jesus affirms that giving generously brings forward its own reward. In fact, the entire verse brims with the sense of abundance.

good measure: Jesus now turns to images from the marketplace. The focus rests chiefly on the buyer who, in Jesus’ view, must be happy with the purchase. A secondary emphasis falls on the seller who is to be fully honest, even generous, in measuring out the goods that are sold.

running over: The other actions of the seller of goods—shaking them together and pressing them down—indicate a fundamental honesty in dealing with the buyer. But this requirement, that the goods sold should be running over, especially points to the generosity that characterizes the Savior’s expansive response to a disciple.¹⁰⁷

shall men give into your bosom: The Greek text reads “shall they give,” opening the door to a meaning of heavenly gifts, not just earthly. In fact, the only other occurrences of the word “bosom” in Luke’s Gospel (Greek *kolpos*) appear in the story of the angels carrying Lazarus to Abraham’s bosom, a plainly heavenly scene (see 16:22–23). It was the fold of the garment, or one’s *bosom*, that functioned as a pocket where a person put goods acquired in the market place.¹⁰⁸

measured to you again: This standard of justice appears elsewhere (see Matt. 7:1–2; 3 Ne. 14:1–2; Morm. 8:19; D&C 1:10; *Mishnah Sotah* 1:7). On one important level, it frames a warning against such activities as gossiping and backbiting. On another, it has to do with a person who gives a

107. Green, *Luke*, 275.

108. *TDNT* 3:824–26; Marshall, *Luke*, 267; Morris, *Luke*, 146; for the metaphorical sense of God’s *bosom* in Moses 7:24, 30–31, see Draper, Brown, and Rhodes, *Pearl of Great Price*, 127.

gift unwillingly, offering only the minimum, in contrast to the unstinting, steady generosity of God:¹⁰⁹ if a person gives “grudgingly . . . it is counted unto him the same as if he had retained the gift” (Moro. 7:6–8).

6:39 *he spake a parable unto them:* Luke’s inserted words create a bridge from the first part of the sermon to the second, and also connect with Jesus’ commandment to love others with a deep self-introspection that undergirds the following sayings—Why do I do what I do?

Can the blind lead the blind?: This vivid image, framed as a question, needs no answer. But Jesus’ query invites hearers and us to ask whether spiritual blindness darkens our actions that we intend to be helpful. A similar issue lies beneath the question in 6:41.

6:40 *The disciple is not above his master:* In these words, Jesus resolves the prior question of blindness (see 6:39) and the following inquiry about dimmed sight (see 6:41). It is the “master” who gives sight to the blind and clarity to the dim and unfocused. To John’s disciples Jesus says of his own activities, “tell John what things *ye have seen* . . . how that *the blind see*” (7:22; emphasis added).

every one that is perfect: The sense of the verb (Greek *katartizō*) is “properly prepared, fully trained.”¹¹⁰ The spelling of this verb does not tie with the Greek adjective translated elsewhere as “perfect” (Greek *teleios*; see Matt. 5:48; Eph. 4:13; etc.).¹¹¹

shall be as his master: Jesus’ statement reflects the notion of imitating the Father (see 6:36), but with the added dimension of becoming as the master is. This promise is not idle; see Romans 8:17 (“joint-heirs with Christ”) and 3 Nephi 27:27 (“what manner of men ought ye to be? . . . even as I am”).

6:41 *why beholdest thou the mote:* This second reference to sight—the other has to do with blindness (6:39)—underscores the disciple’s need for true, clear vision of the self. The noun translated “mote” (Greek *karphos*) means a speck of dry straw, wood, or stone.¹¹² The context for this saying in the Sermon on the Mount is similar to that here, a concern for how we perceive ourselves (see Matt. 7:3).

the beam: The term (Greek *dokos*) refers to a large log, often the main beam in a home.¹¹³

109. Marshall, *Luke*, 267.

110. BAGD, 418–19.

111. BAGD, 816–17.

112. Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 881; Plummer, *Luke*, 191; BAGD, 406.

113. Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 443; Plummer, *Luke*, 191; BAGD, 202.

6:42 *Brother, let me pull out:* The Joseph Smith Translation omits the word “Brother” and thus harmonizes Jesus’ words with those in the Sermon on the Mount (see Matt. 7:4).

when thou thyself beholdest not: This expression does not appear in Jesus’ words reported by Matthew (see Matt. 7:4). In Luke’s record, a strong emphasis falls on the willful lack of self examination.

hypocrite: The Greek noun (*hypokritēs*) refers to an actor who plays the role of someone else by consciously suppressing his or her natural character (see the Note on 12:1).¹¹⁴

6:43 *a good tree:* Besides being linked to natural plants and, possibly more remotely, to the tree of life, Jesus’ words demand that a listener ask whether he or she is good within, as a tree must be in order to produce good fruit (see 3:9; 6:44; D&C 52:17–18).

corrupt: The adjective (Greek *sapros*) generally means “rotting” or “spoiled.” The corruption or uselessness of the tree and its fruit therefore lies inside, a warning to disciples both about themselves and about false teachers (see 6:45).¹¹⁵

6:44 *every tree is known by his own fruit:* In addition to ties back to the creation of plants, and their fruits or seeds (see Gen. 1:11–12; Moses 2:11–12), Jesus’ words stress that a person’s true inner qualities will eventually poke out and become visible, even if one is a good actor (see 6:42).

grapes: The noun (Greek *staphulē*) means bunches of grapes and thus points to a genuine abundance.¹¹⁶

6:45 *good treasure of his heart:* Jesus brings forward two dimensions that grow out of one’s treasure—deeds and words. As he explains, the treasure of one’s heart becomes the wellspring of actions and words. But the nature of the treasure is rather difficult to pin down: is it an innate dimension within a person or a part of a person’s learned behavior and character? Furthermore, the term translated “treasure” (Greek *thēsauros*) also points to a treasure house or temple storage, opening our view onto a person’s sacred well of inner goodness.¹¹⁷

6:46 *do not the things which I say:* Jesus nods toward a potential disconnect within a follower who, in words, acknowledges that the Savior is “Lord, Lord” but, in actions, denies his lordship (see 13:25; D&C 41:5).

114. *TDNT*, 8:559–70; *TLNT*, 3:406–13.

115. BAGD, 749; *TDNT*, 7:94–97; Marshall, *Luke*, 272.

116. BAGD, 773.

117. BAGD, 362; *TDNT*, 3:136–38.

6:47 cometh to me: The image is compelling. A person is to come to the Savior as an essential first step, a notion made all the more vivid because of those who moments ago, with huge effort, “sought to touch him: for there went virtue out of him” (6:19).

heareth my sayings, and doeth them: It is abundantly evident that, as a second step, Jesus expects his hearers to obey him now. Anything different will certainly bring ruin (see 6:49; 3 Ne. 14:26–27). This notion receives support from the present participles that point to current action—hearing and doing—in contrast to the aorist or past tense participles in 6:49 that illumine past, unsatisfactory actions—heard and did nothing.

6:48 a man which built an house: The image of building, which Jesus appeals to here and elsewhere (see 20:17; Matt. 7:24–27; 3 Ne. 11:39; 14:24–27),¹¹⁸ is one that cuts across cultural and geographical settings, applying in desert settings, wherein one must be cautious about seasonal rains and floods, as in Matthew 7:24–25, and in river valleys—“the stream”—that are envisioned here.¹¹⁹ The point is not lost on the gathered throng who are evidently assembled only five miles west of the place where the Jordan River runs into the Sea of Galilee. The second element has to do with the house, essentially a person’s household or family (Greek *oikia*; Hebrew *bayit*). In this figurative sense, Jesus declares that a parent is obliged to create a home that rests on a sure foundation, which foundation is himself (see 18:29; Alma 8:20, 22; Moses 7:53; the Notes on 14:26; 18:20; the Analysis on 11:14–28 and 20:17–19).¹²⁰

digged deep: Hellenistic-style homes in Palestine often featured a basement and stone walls with a tile roof.¹²¹ Two verbs stand together here that give the sense of digging deep (Greek *skaptō* and *bathynō*).¹²²

a rock: It is not difficult to see the pointer to Jesus himself as the bed-rock or foundation stone (see 20:17–18; 2 Ne. 4:35; 28:28; Hel. 5:12; D&C 6:34; 50:44). The earliest allusion occurs in Moses 7:53, where the Lord calls himself “the Rock of Heaven, which is broad as eternity.” In this latter

118. Other references to erecting buildings on solid foundations include 2 Ne. 28:28; Jacob 4:15–17; Hel. 5:12.

119. Marshall, *Luke*, 275; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:644.

120. *TDNT*, 5:131–32; *TDOT*, 2:111, 113–15; *TLOT*, 1:235.

121. Dennis E. Groh, “Palestine in the Byzantine Period,” in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East*, ed. Eric M. Meyers, 5 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 4:229–30; Ann Killebrew, “Qasrin,” in Meyers, *Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology*, 4:382–83.

122. *BAGD*, 130, 760–61.

passage, the Lord becomes the anchoring influence for a person's ascent to heaven.¹²³ In a similar vein, the message of the gospel rests as a person's spiritual anchor (see 2 Ne. 28:28; D&C 10:69; 11:16, 24; 18:4–5, 17; 33:12–13). One further implication is that the Savior can serve as a “sure foundation,” an expression from Jacob 4:16–17.

it was founded upon a rock: Some early manuscripts read “it was well founded,” with no appreciable difference in meaning. The reading here may come from Matthew 7:25.¹²⁴

6:49 *heareth, and doeth not:* Jesus' words imply that the person has come to him, as he notes in 6:47. The difference, of course, lies in the doing or not doing. Unlike his teaching in Matthew 7:26–27, Jesus does not call the unresponsive person “foolish” but lets the parable carry its own penetrating force to his hearers. Elsewhere, the warning is to those “who receive the oracles of God” and then treat them “as a light thing, and are brought under condemnation thereby, . . . and stumble when the storms descend, . . . and beat upon their house” (D&C 90:5; also 2 Ne. 28:28).

without a foundation: The type of house that Jesus envisions is probably a Hellenistic-style home that often features a lower floor or basement for which an owner “dug deep” (see the Note on 6:48).¹²⁵ Galilee is a place that sees a mixture of Jews and Gentiles, and Jesus himself has experience with building. Therefore, he must be acquainted with different building techniques, even if only by description or hearsay.

upon the earth: A comparison with Matthew's “upon the sand” illustrates that Jesus is thinking here of a different building environment—in a river valley—wherein spring floods regularly lay down a new layer of soil. The end result is the same, of course, because a house built on top of such ground cannot stand against a strong flood.¹²⁶

the stream: The stream of water (Greek *potamos*), in Jesus' world, comes after a rain and fills the bottoms of the canyons or wadis with strong, raging torrents.¹²⁷

the ruin of that house was great: Jesus' final pronouncement of the sermon warns disciples strongly against spiritual foundations, particularly those undergirding families, that are inadequate to withstand the

123. Draper, Brown, and Rhodes, *Pearl of Great Price*, 142–43.

124. Plummer, *Luke*, 193.

125. Jeremias, *Parables*, 26–27; Marshall, *Luke*, 275.

126. Avoiding structures on sand appears in 2 Ne. 28:28; 3 Ne. 11:40; compare D&C 90:5.

127. *TDNT*, 6:603.

vicissitudes of life that will surely come, whether in the form of poverty, hunger, pain, temptations, or the despising acts of others (see 6:20–22). This observation receives support in other formulations of building on rock or sand where “the gates of hell” (Greek *pylai hadou*) stand open to receive those who build on loose soil (Matt. 16:18; especially 3 Ne. 11:39–40; 18:13; D&C 128:10–11; see the Note on 11:22).¹²⁸

Analysis

In the most emphatic spot, at the end of his sermon, the Savior turns deftly to the family, characterizing it as a “house” that needs a firm “foundation on a rock”—on spiritual bedrock (6:48). Although commentators have completely missed this aspect of Jesus’ words, the family stands front and center in the Greek term for house, *oikia*, and the roughly equivalent Hebrew word *bayit*.¹²⁹ For these terms carry firmly the metaphorical senses of home and household and family. Here Jesus appeals to us to secure the foundations of our families “on a rock” that lies “deep” in the earth, for that is the only way that our families will survive “the flood” and “the stream” that will pound against our homes in the forms of temptation and affliction (see 6:48–49; the Analysis on 11:14–28 and 20:17–19).

The opening verses of this section also offer figurative meanings for the terms “the poor,” those who “hunger now,” and those who “weep now” (6:20–21). We note above that “the poor” may be an early designation for Jesus’ disciples (see the Note on 6:20). But the sense may go deeper and mirror that of Matthew 5:3, “the poor in spirit,” that is, the truly humble.¹³⁰ Likewise, those who “hunger now” may be hungering “after righteousness,” though Jesus does not specifically say this (Matt. 5:6). Similarly, those who “weep now” may be weeping because they sense a lack of spiritual underpinnings or, in total contrast, because they feel to rejoice.

In these opening verses, Jesus turns the social order upside down (see 6:20–26). The accepted order envisions the wealthy and powerful as the truly favored. Rather, as we find in the quotation of Isaiah 40:3–5 and its implications for the arrival of the Baptist (see 3:4–6), the coming of John and Jesus alters strikingly both the social and especially the religious landscape. The degradation and pain suffered by the poor and vulnerable will be reversed. Moreover, the spiritual status quo now finds a new resting place,

128. *TDNT*, 6:924–28; also 3:744–47.

129. *TDNT*, 5:131–32; *TDOT*, 2:111, 113–15.

130. Stein, *Luke*, 200–201.

settling far away from the halls of power and influence (see the Analysis on 3:1–6). It begins effectively with the “word of God” coming to John “in the wilderness” (3:2). Instead of a top-down movement of spiritual blessings from temple priests and other religious leaders, Jesus will graciously share such blessings directly with the lowly, the humble, the seekers.¹³¹

In a different vein, the relationship between Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount (see Matt. 5–7) and his Sermon on the Plain remains a nettlesome problem that has escaped solution, and may never be solved. Most commentators accept the view that the two reports are versions of the same sermon or set of teachings, delivered very early to disciples at a hilly spot in Galilee.¹³² Although the similarities of both content and locale may lead us to see them as the same sermon, enough differences exist to suggest that the two are independent from one another.¹³³ In fact, as I read the texts, the locales of the sermons lie about three miles apart. And the strongly different character of the two suggests that their current shape is not due merely to the editorial efforts of Matthew and Luke, but to their sources.

The joining of the sermons, as if one and the same, rests on the apparent and, in my view, rather flimsy assumption that Jesus typically utters something only once, not repeating himself on different occasions and to new audiences. Such an assumption begs to be challenged. Anyone who pursues a career in teaching soon learns that repeating the same or similar material in different contexts becomes a common experience. Why should we assume something different for Jesus?

For Latter-day Saints, the integrity of the Sermon on the Mount is secure.¹³⁴ Why? Because the Risen Jesus delivers an almost identical discourse in the New World. The striking similarities assure readers that Jesus delivers such a sermon to his Old World hearers, much as Matthew records it.¹³⁵ Naturally, this observation does not solve the question about the relationship between the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plain, but it does establish the integrity of the Sermon on the Mount and pulls it out of the creative, editorial hands of Matthew, where many modern commentators seek to place it. On this view, we can begin with the Sermon on the Mount as a fixed point in Jesus’ career and then ask the next question:

131. Green, *Luke*, 264–66.

132. Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:627–32; Johnson, *Luke*, 110–12.

133. Morris, *Luke*, 138–39.

134. John W. Welch, *The Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple* (Surrey, Eng.: Ashgate Publishing, 2009), 1–14, 183–221.

135. Welch, *Illuminating the Sermon*.

Is the Sermon on the Plain a variant of the Sermon on the Mount, perhaps drawn from Matthew’s Gospel, or from a common source, and then reshaped by Luke into its current form?

Topography may offer one key for approaching an answer. According to Matthew’s report, before uttering the Sermon on the Mount Jesus is traveling “about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues” (Matt. 4:23), a line that points to a broad field of activity rather than a precise locale. The words that “his fame went throughout all Syria” and, by implication, that people from there “brought unto him all sick people” (Matt. 4:24), are geographically vague because, in Jesus’ day, Syria lies northward from Galilee and covers a huge area.¹³⁶ Hence, Matthew’s geographic notes immediately before the sermon do not help us to locate the Sermon on the Mount except to say that Jesus “went up into a mountain” to deliver it (Matt. 5:1). Instead, it is Matthew’s description following the sermon that offers a geographic context.

Matthew writes that Jesus comes “down from the mountain,” cleanses “a leper,” and then “entered into Capernaum” (Matt. 8:1–5). A reader comes away with the impression that the sermon somehow connects to the area north of Capernaum because that is where “the mountain” near the town rises up. To the south, of course, lies the Sea of Galilee. To the east and west of town stretches a narrow shore-line plain that features a road along which, east of town, the customs house is perched where Levi is employed (see 5:27 and the Note thereon). Hence, in Matthew’s scheme, Jesus apparently delivers the Sermon on the Mount somewhere on the slopes north of Capernaum.

The story about cleansing the leper, which but follows the Sermon on the Mount (see 5:12–16; Matt. 8:1–4), does not really help us. According to Mark, before Jesus encounters this man, he is preaching “in their synagogues throughout all Galilee” and, after the cleansing, he retreats to “desert places” before returning to Capernaum (Mark 1:39, 45; 2:1). On his part, Luke plainly implies that the cleansing occurs in the neighborhood of Capernaum, but he may be depending on Mark for this story of cleansing. Luke repeats the story immediately after recounting Peter’s calling at the lakeside, an event that must happen at Capernaum because that is where Peter resides and enjoys access to his tools and other equipment for his fishing trade (see the Note on 5:1). By placing the two stories together—Peter’s calling (see 5:1–11) and the cleansing of the leper (see

136. Aharoni and others, *Carta Bible Atlas*, maps 243, 249, 251, 253, 270.

5:12–15)—Luke plainly ties the cleansing to the vicinity of Capernaum. But Mark’s vague references to geography may undercut attempts to firmly locate the miracle at or near Capernaum.

Instead, we must examine the topography that emerges in Luke’s description of the setting of the Sermon on the Plain. We note first of all the story of the disciples picking grain on the Sabbath (see 6:1–5). The area must have been level enough for farmers to plant grain. But Jesus and his followers may have moved from such a place when, apparently on the next Sabbath, “he entered into the synagogue and taught” (6:6). Here he heals the man with the withered right hand and then withdraws “into a mountain to pray” (6:12). From this height “he came down with them [the Twelve whom he had chosen], and stood in the plain” (6:17). With these details in mind, we look at the topography of the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, the region where Jesus evidently delivers the Sermon on the Mount, as noted above.

There is no promising region east of Capernaum where, within two miles, a person encounters the Jordan River which runs into the Sea of Galilee at this point.¹³⁷ Rather, three miles or so to the west of Capernaum lies a region that matches Luke’s description of Jesus ascending “a mountain to pray” and then descending with the Twelve to “the plain” (6:12, 17). There, beyond the northwest shore of the lake, the mountainous terrain rises sharply from a broad maritime plain, called the Valley of Ginosar or Valley of Gennesaret, and matches Luke’s remembered specifications for the setting of Jesus’ sermon recorded in chapter 6.

So far, then, the topography of the two sermons differs and, according to what remains of geographical memory, points to settings three or four miles apart. But topography is not the only point of separation. Two other elements invite a similar conclusion, the nature of the audience and the contents of the sermons. In introducing the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew writes that Jesus delivers his words in the company of “the multitudes”

137. We hear little of Jesus’ activities to the east of the Jordan River’s mouth, and certainly not in the context of Jesus’ two sermons. Jesus does go later to the east shore of the lake where he heals the man with the legion of devils (see 8:26–40) and, still later, withdraws to an uninhabited area near Bethsaida with the Twelve, a town on the northeast corner of the Sea of Galilee (see 9:10). Although Luke does not tie Peter’s confession of Jesus’ messiahship to Caesarea Philippi (see 9:18–21), both Mark and Matthew do (see Matt. 16:13–20; Mark 8:27–30). This town lies at one of the three sources of the Jordan River and represents a crossing of sorts to the east bank of the river. Even so, we should see most of Jesus’ ministry occurring west of the Jordan River.

and “his disciples,” of whom he chooses four before that moment (Matt. 4:18–22; 5:1). Luke brings a very different audience into the picture, implying a dissimilar occasion. First, during the prior morning, Jesus chooses the Twelve, whom Luke identifies (see Luke 6:13–16). The Twelve make up part of the assemblage. In addition, he specifies that the gathered crowd includes other “disciples, and a great multitude of people out of all Judaea and Jerusalem, and from the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon,” meaning that people come long distances from the south and north to hear him (6:17). We are left with the sense that, within a few weeks, Jesus’ reputation reaches a very large number of people, a fact that Luke stresses early on (see 4:14, 37; 5:15).

The contents of the two sermons, although very similar in some passages, stand apart in significant ways. Only a few dimensions draw our attention here. Unlike in Matthew, where the beatitudes stand as unified sentinels (see Matt. 5:3–11), in Luke they are balanced by a series of woes, and are many fewer: Luke’s four in contrast to Matthew’s eight. Moreover, according to Luke, Jesus heals a number of people “of their diseases” and “unclean spirits” just before delivering his sermon (Luke 6:17–18). Matthew reports no such event. Further, Jesus’ words in Luke do not include any of the contrasts with the old law, and do not even mention the Mosaic law, whereas these elements receive strong emphasis in Matthew’s record (see Matt. 5:17–45). In addition, although the two sermons feature Jesus’ commands not to judge others (see 6:37–42; Matt. 7:1–5), Luke’s report does not touch on almsgiving or prayer or fasting, as we find in Matthew (see Matt. 6:1–18). Furthermore, although the two sermons present Jesus’ teachings about the golden rule and corrupt fruit and building a house (see 6:31, 43–44, 47–49; Matt. 7:12, 15–20, 24–27), only in Matthew do we find an extended treatment of what it means to say “Lord, Lord” (see 6:46; 13:25–30; Matt. 7:21–23). In this light, and in light of the respective settings and audiences of the sermons, it is most difficult to argue persuasively that the two accounts draw on a common source.

Another point is worth making. Although a person can point to additions introduced by the Joseph Smith Translation into Luke’s version of the sermon, with the effect of drawing Luke’s record closer to the language of Matthew’s rendition, such changes are minor and do not affect the overall character of the Sermon on the Plain. For example, the JST adds the expression “and persecute you” (JST 6:28) to Jesus’ command that his followers “pray for them which despitefully use you,” making the language identical to Matthew 5:44. Additionally, later in the sermon the

JST adjusts Luke's expression "what thank have ye" (6:32) to "what reward have you," an almost identical wording to Matthew 5:46, a change that actually mirrors the intent of Luke's underlying Greek text (see the Note on 6:32). But such adjustments do not appreciably change the overall tenor of the Sermon on the Plain and, because they are scattered and almost random, cannot be appealed to as evidence that the two sermons go back to a common source. Rather, as argued above, the topography by itself drives the point that Jesus delivers the sermons to different audiences and in different places. Moreover, the structure of the sermons differs strikingly. In sum, it makes more sense to conclude that Jesus offers similar teaching on different occasions.¹³⁸

Fitzmyer calls the Sermon on the Plain "loose and rambling."¹³⁹ But a close examination shows the Savior organizes his sermon into three broad subjects. In the first, he deals with this world and its vicissitudes through a series of beatitudes and woes (see 6:20–26). In the second, he unveils his command to love enemies as an imitation of what the Father does (see 6:27–38). In the third, he treats our treatment of others, including our building of a house because its soundness of structure affects all who reside therein, including ourselves and others (see 6:39–49).

In the first section, the Savior cleverly balances four statements on happiness with a contrasting set of four statements on unhappiness, clearly an aid to recalling them at a later date. Jesus' concerns with poor and rich, weeping and laughing, point forcefully to the concept that the happiness he offers does not connect to power or status in this world.¹⁴⁰ In fact, he stands as the one who offers and then guarantees the "reward" which "is great in heaven" (6:23). This whole section brims with overflowing abundance, though not as the world presents it.

In the second part, Jesus explores the parameters of what it means to love. In a word, it means to imitate the Father who "is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil" (6:35). Blessing "them that curse" and offering "the other" cheek to a person who lashes out and giving "to every man that asketh" characterize the Father's generous, expansive response (6:28–30). Can we do less? Are we merely to "love them which love" us and "do good to them

138. Plummer, *Luke*, 437; *TDNT*, 2:631, n. 29; 4:326; Jeremias, *Parables*, 107–8, 115, 202; Marshall, *Luke*, 701; Morris, *Luke*, 299; Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 286.

139. Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:628.

140. *TLNT*, 2:438–44.

which do good” to us (6:32–33)?¹⁴¹ Not in the spirit of true discipleship. In fact, the observation that Jesus does not ask his followers to do what he does not do implies boldly that, during the prior night, he is already praying for those from the synagogue who “were filled with madness,” a prayer that finds its full public voice at the end of his ministry, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (6:11; 23:34; see the Notes on 6:12, 27–28; 22:50; 23:34).

In the third portion, the Savior treats on one level how a person deals with others, especially from a position of pride or self-aggrandizement (see 6:39–49).¹⁴² His examples are compellingly simple and direct. He requires that all ask the following. Do I pridefully offer my help to a person needing direction when I myself am blinded, particularly by the log in my eye? Do I arrogantly equate myself with my master? In my blind state, do I see myself as a “good tree” that produces “good fruit” when, in fact, with a little introspection, I would be able to see my own “corrupt” ways that taint “the treasure of [my] heart” (6:43, 45)? For the sake of impressing others, and even myself, do I profess my loyalty to the Savior by crying out “Lord, Lord” when, disdainfully ignoring good sense, I build a house of loyalty and faith “upon the earth” whose foundation is therefore insecure and subject to the roiling currents of opposition and trials that will surely swirl around my house (6:46, 49)?

Jesus’ two sermons also disclose a difference in emphasis that lies in the Gospels of Luke and Matthew. It has to do with the characterization of the divine kingdom that Jesus represents. Exclusively in Matthew, Jesus speaks of the “kingdom of heaven” (see Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 5:3, 19; 7:21; 10:7; etc.). The other three Gospels preserve quotes about the “kingdom of God.”¹⁴³ Although it is possible to see no difference between these two expressions,¹⁴⁴ they invite more than a passing glance. The expression “kingdom of heaven” evidently emphasizes the tie between God’s earthly kingdom and that over which he presides in heaven, as well as its location in the celestial regions. On the other hand, the words “kingdom of God” point directly to God as the proprietor of the kingdom, the one in charge. Admittedly, the difference is

141. Green, *Luke*, 273–74.

142. For a different view that emphasizes the inner nature of the disciple, see Marshall, *Luke*, 267–68.

143. For example, see Mark 1:15; 4:11, 26, 30; 9:1, 47; Luke 4:43; 6:20; 7:28; 8:1, 10; 9:2, 11, 27, 60, 62; John 3:3, 5.

144. Dodd, *Parables*, 29.

rather subtle because both expressions describe a divine entity that binds God's work in heaven with complementary efforts on the earth.

One other topic of the Sermon on the Plain stirs a comment. For the first recorded time in his preaching, the Savior draws in living plants as metaphors—"good tree . . . corrupt tree . . . thorns . . . bramble bush" (6:43-44). Later he will appeal to lilies and to living and dry grass (see 12:27-28), to sown seed and to mustard plants (see 8:5-8; 13:18-19; 17:6), to unproductive and green fig trees (see 13:6-9; 21:29-31). All such appeals, of course, derive from and are made vivid by the agrarian character of his society. But there may be more. Beneath such references one senses subtle threads which reach back to the past acts of God wherein he plants on the earth "grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit" (Gen. 1:12). All such plants are to be for the good of creatures that appear later on the earth. More importantly for Jesus' words, the planting of plants is directly tied to God and his sacred acts of creation. The vista of divine abundance appears once again in God's efforts to provide for the needs of his children. All of this seems to run just under the surface of Jesus' words about trees and grasses and seeds.