

welcome and of inhospitality. Irrespective of outcome, he emphasizes, the message is the same. The kingdom of God has drawn near regardless of whether it is received or rejected. This is because, for Luke, the kingdom of God is historically present in the ministry of Jesus; wherever he is active, the kingdom is being manifested.<sup>89</sup> The blessed state of the disciples<sup>90</sup> resides in their recognition that the kingdom is being manifested, irrespective of how it is received, not only when Jesus is present but also when his envoys act in his name, under his authority and in harmony with the purpose of God. Jesus thus interprets the work of the seventy-two in an eschatological way, thus enabling them to see in Jesus' mission, in which they now participate, the revelation of God's salvific will coming to expression. Luke's readers may well be reminded of Simeon, whose eyes beheld God's salvation in its universal proportions, and whose vision of God's redemptive purpose was not diminished by the knowledge that the coming of salvation would engender conflict and anguish (2:29-35).

#### 5.1.4. The Parable of the Compassionate Samaritan (10:25-37)

25 Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 26 He said to him, "What is written in the law? How do you read it?"<sup>91</sup> 27 He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." 28 And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live."

29 But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" 30 Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. 31 Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32 So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with compassion.<sup>92</sup> 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35 The next day he took out two

89. See Korn, *Geschichte Jesu*, 99-104, 122-24; Wolter, "Reich Gottes"; Luz, "βασιλεία," 204.

90. On μακάριος, see above, 1:45; 6:20-22; 7:23.

91. NRSV: "What do you read there?"

92. NRSV: "pity."

denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.'<sup>36</sup> Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?"<sup>37</sup> He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

The high point in the narrative portrayal of Jesus' relationship with his disciples, reached in vv 20-24, is abruptly interrupted by a lawyer. Luke records no shift in scene, so he pictures the lawyer breaking in on what had become a private conversation between Jesus and the seventy-two (v 23). That the lawyer is present at all raises questions about the boundaries between the disciples and others outside the circle of Jesus' followers both here and elsewhere in the journey narrative.<sup>93</sup>

To label the lawyer's question as abrupt is not to say it is out of place, however, or that it moves the narrative in a fresh direction. Jesus has been about the task of presenting faithfulness to God as hearing and doing God's word. This motif is served well, even advanced, by his dialogue with this man.<sup>94</sup> Jesus has just affirmed the genuine insight of the seventy-two, manifest in their faithful service in the mission. Will he find similar faithfulness in his encounter with the legal expert?

That the practice of God's word is the central issue in this narrative unit is obvious from the repetition and placement of the verb "to do." The lawyer inquires, "What must I do?"; following their exchange, Jesus responds, "Do this" (vv 25, 28). In this way the first segment of this unit (vv 25-28) is bound together with references to *praxis*. The question of the identity of one's neighbor leads into a further exploration of appropriate behavior, however, with the conclusion drawn by the lawyer himself. The one who was a neighbor, he acknowledges, is "the one who *did* mercy";<sup>95</sup> Jesus responds, "Do likewise" (v 37). Jesus' closing words, then, do not summarize the parable of the compassionate Samaritan (as though the purpose of the parable were to present a moral obligation to act in such-and-such a way). Rather, they return to the original question of the lawyer: "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" The parable thus serves a hermeneutical function. It interprets the summation of the law provided by the legal expert.<sup>96</sup> Although it is too easy to pit "obedience to the law" over against

93. See above on 9:51-19:48.

94. This is true all the more when the coherence of this narrative unit with Deuteronomy 6-7 is recognized — cf. Wall, "Martha and Mary," 21-24; C. A. Evans, "Luke 16:1-18," 138-39.

95. ὁ ποιήσας τὸ ἔλεος; NRSV: "the one who showed mercy." A form of ποιέω appears in vv 25, 28, and 37 (2x).

96. Cf. Bailey, *Through Peasant Eyes*, 41; Hedrick, *Parables*, 94-95.

“discussing the law”<sup>97</sup> — since the parable itself must be read as Jesus’ attempt to clarify the law (Lev 19:18) by means of narrative exegesis<sup>98</sup> — it is nonetheless true that, for Luke, hearing is authenticated in doing (cf. 6:46-49; 8:21).

The particular focus of the kind of praxis leading to eternal life articulated in this narrative unit is underscored by three elements — two internal to this unit, the other external. First, located at the midpoint of Luke’s account is the response of the Samaritan to the condition of the one assaulted on the road: “he was moved with compassion.” Luke’s presentation of the Samaritan’s comportment thus replicates that of God in his covenant faithfulness (1:78) and of Jesus in the face of a widow’s loss of her only son (7:13). Employing comparable language, the lawyer recognizes the “mercy” characterizing the Samaritan’s behavior (v 37). This is an important reminder of the message of the Sermon on the Plain (6:17-49), that practices are manifestations of one’s character and dispositions; in the language of the current passage, love of neighbor flows out of radical love of God. Second, the parable itself is framed with questions concerning the identification of “neighbor” (vv 29, 36). Whereas Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Plain had eliminated the lines that might be drawn between one’s “friends” and one’s “enemies,” this legal expert hopes to reintroduce this distinction. He does so by inquiring, “Who is my neighbor?” — not so much to determine to whom he must show love, but so as to calculate the identity of those to whom he need not show love. By the end of the story, Jesus has transformed the focus of the original question; in fact, Jesus’ apparent attempt to answer the lawyer’s question turns out to be a negation of that question’s premise. Neighbor love knows no boundaries. Third, the geography of the parable (on the road from Jerusalem), and the identification of two of its characters as temple personnel and a third as a Samaritan, provide reminders of the geography of Jesus’ mission.<sup>99</sup> Jesus has already attempted to involve himself with a Samaritan village (9:51-56), and he is now on the way to the center of the Jewish world, Jerusalem, which, with its temple, had come to perpetuate and determine the boundaries of

97. For example, Salo, *Luke’s Treatment of the Law*, 108-9: “Thus Luke wishes to concentrate on the practical application of the law leading to eternal life, not on a philosophical discussion of legal issues.” Similarly, Wilson, *Luke and the Law*, 14-15.

98. “Narrative exegesis” is an exposition of a text that takes the form of a story rather than of a prose-oriented argument or presentation — cf. Banks, “Narrative Exegesis,” 570 (though Banks’s discussion does not deal with the presence of this form of explication already in the Gospels).

99. This, of course, reminds us that geographical markers are not neutral or objective, but are social products that reflect and configure ways of understanding the world (cf. *m. Kelim* 1:6-9; Pred, *Human Geographies*; Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*; Werlen, *Society, Action and Space*).

acceptable social intercourse. In his Galilean ministry, Jesus had worked to exterminate those boundaries that predetermine human interaction; what was begun there will continue to characterize his message on the way to Jerusalem. His portrayal of a Samaritan as one who embodies the law, and whose comportment models the covenant faithfulness of God — and whose doing so stands in sharp contradistinction to the practices of temple personnel on the road — serves this wider motif as it obliterates the construction of human existence sanctioned by the religious establishment in Jerusalem. Although Luke does not document the response of the lawyer, he nevertheless shows the degree to which his encounter with Jesus, if taken seriously, would destabilize the world of this lawyer and challenge him to embrace the new world propagated through Jesus’ ministry.<sup>100</sup>

The structure of this narrative unit is straightforward, with its two parts presented in parallel:

	Part 1	Part 2
Identification of the Lawyer’s Motive	v 25	v 29
The Lawyer’s Question	v 25	v 29
Jesus’ Answer and Counterquestion	v 26	vv 30-36
The Lawyer’s (Appropriate) Reply	v 27	v 37a
Jesus’ Final Word, in the Imperative	v 28	v 37b

**25-28** Luke’s presentation of an unnamed lawyer is mixed. On the one hand, he stands before Jesus, a sign of esteem, and addresses Jesus respectfully as “teacher.” On the other hand, his identification as a “lawyer” accesses earlier information provided by the narrator: (1) Legal experts have been present to monitor Jesus’ faithfulness to the law. (2) Legal experts are among those identified as persons responsible for Jesus’ pending rejection and suffering.<sup>101</sup> When it is recalled that priests functioned as experts on the law when not performing their priestly duties at the temple,<sup>102</sup> this adds to the drama of the unfolding encounter — not least since the ensuing parable will have as one of its primary characters a priest returning from duty at the temple (v 31). That is, within the socio-historical context imagined by the narrative, the identification of this lawyer and the temple staff of the parable may be more immediate than normally thought. Moreover, Luke explicitly portrays

100. See Mazamisa, *Beatific Comradeship*, 106; Crossan, “Parable and Example,” 75-76. This point is registered in a more focused way, with reference to the ethics of election, in J. A. Sanders, “Ethics of Election,” 113; C. A. Evans, “Luke 16:1-18,” 138.

101. See above on 5:17-19; 9:22. Luke uses “lawyers,” “teachers of the law,” and “scribes” interchangeably (cf. on 9:22).

102. See Schwartz, *Jewish Background*, 89-101; E. P. Sanders, *Judaism*, 170-82.

the lawyer as intent on “challenging” Jesus.<sup>103</sup> On the other hand, the content of the lawyer’s question employs another of the range of terms Luke uses to depict salvation, “life” — in particular, “eternal life,” a phrase that first appears in Dan 12:2 and is then developed in apocalyptic Judaism to refer to the life of the coming epoch.<sup>104</sup> The question itself is admissible and will provide the platform for Luke to expound on the behavior appropriate to an orientation to the resurrection. Yet, the encounter as a whole is formulated along antagonistic lines.

Jesus, challenged with respect to his status as a teacher, maintains common ground with this expert on the law while at the same time redirecting the challenge with a counterquestion. Inquiring into the content of the law, Jesus assumes and endorses its ongoing normativity. What is at stake for him is not the law per se, but its construal. Hence, he inquires into the nature of his antagonist’s legal interpretation.<sup>105</sup> Just as the lawyer’s question had derived from the axiomatic connection between obedience to the law and inheritance/life resident in Deut 6:16-25,<sup>106</sup> so his answer reflects the Shema (Deut 6:5) — a passage that was fundamental to Jewish life and worship in the home, the synagogue, and the temple.<sup>107</sup> To the Shema the lawyer attaches, inexorably, the law of neighbor-love found in Lev 19:18. In its co-text in Leviticus, love of neighbor is a disposition of the heart expressed in tangible behaviors — related, for example, to a neighbor’s honor and possessions. Jesus concurs with the lawyer’s answer, and rightly so, given the impressive degree to which it meshes with Jesus’ own message. Indeed, the lawyer has stated more succinctly than Luke has recorded of Jesus the need for a comprehensive love of God,<sup>108</sup> encompassing uncompromising allegiance and conformity to his purpose, from which springs love for others. Of course, it is one thing to interpret the law correctly, another to internalize and perform it. Returning to the lawyer’s original question concerning behavior appropriate to eternal life, then, Jesus counsels not only this representation of the law but also its practice.

103. ἐκπεράζω — cf. 4:12.

104. See Bultmann, “Concept of Life,” 856-57. This question is repeated in 18:18.

105 For the use of ἀντινόσω in Lukan co-texts where the issue of interpretation is at stake, see 6:3; Acts 8:28-35 (vv 28, 30, 32); 13:27; 15:21.

106. Wall, “Martha and Mary,” 21-22; see also *Psalms of Solomon* 14.

107. See the discussion in E. P. Sanders, *Judaism*, 195-96; Schürer, *Jewish People*, 454-55.

108. Although no clear line can be drawn between these four aspects of the human, each is capable of nuance — e.g., “heart” (the seat of one’s emotions), “soul” (one’s vitality), “strength” (one’s drive and energy), and “mind” (one’s understanding and dispositions); the primary purpose of this fourfold inventory is to stress the totality of one’s love for God. On the text-form of Luke’s citation vis-à-vis the LXX, cf. Kimball, *Jesus’ Exposition*, 123-25.

29 If the level of concordance between Jesus and the lawyer has masked those original indications marking this as at least a potentially antagonistic exchange, Luke’s second reference to the lawyer’s motives provides a pointed reminder. Refusing the standard of God’s purpose, this legal expert is bent on self-justification — that is, the assertion of his status based on the wrongheaded but widely held canons of his day, and the use of his knowledge and position to invoke for himself the respect of others.<sup>109</sup> His question grants the importance of Lev 19:18 as a summary of the law,<sup>110</sup> but also exploits its ambiguity — at least, the ambiguity that came to be attached to it in Second Temple Judaism. In its co-text in Leviticus 19, love for the neighbor is love for fellow Israelites, though love for the other is extended to “resident aliens” who embrace the covenant with Yahweh (Lev 19:33-34). As a consequence of Hellenistic imperialism and Roman occupation, it could not be generally assumed in the first century of the Common Era that those dwelling among the people of Israel qualified as “neighbors.” Different attitudes toward these foreign intrusions developed into a fractured social context in which boundaries distinguished not only between Jew and Gentile but also between Jewish factions.<sup>111</sup> How far should love reach?

30-32 Like other contemporary Jewish teachers, Jesus employs a parable in order to expound a scriptural text — in this case, Lev 19:18.<sup>112</sup> The details of the parable are true-to-life<sup>113</sup> and therefore may be elucidated in light of the socio-historical context in which the parable is set.

The choice of opening, “a certain man,” constitutes a powerful rhetorical move on Jesus’ part. In light of the debate surrounding the reach of love, grounded in how one reads Leviticus 19, the impossibility of classifying this person as either friend or foe immediately subverts any interest in questions of this nature. Stripped of his clothes and left half-dead, the man’s anonymity throughout the story is insured;<sup>114</sup> he is simply a human being, a neighbor, in need.

109. See 7:29-30! Also, 18:9; 20:46-47.

110. On the popularity of Lev 19:18 in this role, see E. P. Sanders, *Judaism*, 257-60.

111. See Jeremias, *Parables*, 202-3; he notes, e.g., the division between love for the children of light and hate for others in IQS 1:9-10.

112. McArthur and Johnston (*Parables*, 112-13) note that the majority of extant rabbinic parables function exegetically, to explain a scriptural text, incident, or narrative.

113. This is helpfully emphasized by Hedrick, *Parables*, 93-116.

114. See Champion, “Parable,” 32; Bailey, *Through Peasant Eyes*, 42-43; Hedrick, *Parables*, 103 — though they do not make the connection to Leviticus 19. This is not to say that Jesus’ auditor might not identify the wounded man in some way, for this is a narrative gap that can be filled easily enough by one’s imagination; rather, it is to recognize that neither Jesus nor Luke provides any support for one reading of his nationality or religious commitments over another.

The care the Samaritan offers is not a model of moral obligation but of exaggerated action grounded in compassion that risks much more than could ever be required or expected.<sup>127</sup> He stops on the Jericho road to assist someone he does not know in spite of the self-evident peril of doing so; he gives of his own goods and money,<sup>128</sup> freely, making no arrangements for reciprocity (cf. 6:32-36); in order to obtain care for this stranger, he enters an inn, itself a place of potential danger; and he even enters into an open-ended monetary relationship with the innkeeper, a relationship in which the chance of extortion is high.<sup>129</sup>

**36-37** Having completed his exposition-parable, Jesus, as before, counters the question of the legal expert with a question of his own. Interestingly, however, his counterquestion proposes a focal shift. Rather than asking again, Who is my neighbor? Jesus inquires, Who acted as a neighbor? The lawyer's question would have focused on whether the wounded man possessed neighborly status, but the parable has failed to provide the grounds necessary for conjecture on this matter. It is a nonissue. Rephrased, Jesus' question presupposes the identification of "anyone" as a neighbor, then presses the point that such an identification opens wide the door of loving action.<sup>130</sup>

By leaving aside the identity of the wounded man and by portraying the Samaritan traveler as one who performs the law (and so as one whose actions are consistent with an orientation to eternal life), Jesus has nullified the worldview that gives rise to such questions as, Who is my neighbor? The purity-holiness matrix has been capsized. And, not surprisingly in the Third Gospel, neighborly love has been concretized in care for one who is, in this parable, self-evidently a social outcast ("the poor" — cf. on 4:18-19), and in the uncalculated disposition of one's possessions.

The lawyer seems to agree with Jesus; at least, he follows the point of the parable, noting (1) the quality ("compassion," "mercy") of the Samaritan that set him apart from the priest and Levite, and (2) the action of the Samaritan over against the inaction of the others. How does he respond to Jesus' directive to "do" likewise? What we do know is that the lawyer has received the answer for which he originally sought; indeed, with his own mouth he has articulated the response. What we know also is that Jesus' exegesis of neighborly love subverts the world system shared by this lawyer and by society-at-large. Beyond this, though, Luke's description of the encounter between Jesus and this expert on the law is open-ended. He has heard the word; will he do it?

127. Cf. Coote, "What Is a Person Worth?" 208; Champion, "Parable," 32-33.

128. Two denarii would be equal to two days' wages (cf. Matt 20:9-13).

129. The negative image of inns in antiquity is noted by Oakman, "Samaritan Story," 122-23; Royse, "ΤΙΑΝΔΟΞΕΙΟΝ."

130. Cf. 6:27!