

**“Do you see this woman?” (Luke 7:44).
The Multi-Faceted Witness of Women in Luke’s Gospel.**

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Abstract

Title: “Do you see this woman?” (Luke 7:44). The Multi-Faceted Witness of Women in Luke’s Gospel.

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The open question that is posed in this research, seeks to ascertain what the women exemplify as they interact with Jesus in the Lukan Gospel. How does Jesus engage them and what aspects of discipleship and response do they model? Furthermore, what do their reactions reveal of Jesus and how do they anticipate his ministry? By doing a comparison and contrast with the men what more can be learned?

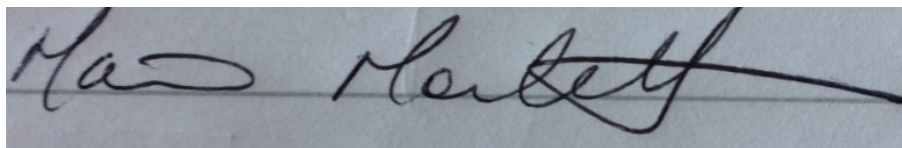
The methodology focuses on characterisation and, in particular, on reader response with the implied reader of the first century. It involves a detailed exegesis of all pericopes where women encounter Jesus in his adult ministry, an analysis of the female character in her interaction with Jesus and the other characters, a synkrisis of the male-female pairings (usually in juxtaposed pericopes) and finally a summary based on the cumulative reading of the female characters and their relationship with Jesus.

The diversity and complexity of individual women, who appear in only one pericope each, demonstrate a variety of interactions with Jesus and many aspects of discipleship. Alongside the singular characters, a group of Galilean women form a continuous link from Jesus’ earliest ministry through to the empty tomb. This culminates in their witness to the resurrection. The sequential reading and synkrisis show that there is a complementarity between the responses of the men and women with different emphases at different times. Luke’s aim, in establishing the synkrisis, is not to show competition between men and women but to help elucidate what it means to follow Jesus, irrespective of gender. This inclusive discipleship is demonstrated in Jesus’ extension of his fictive kindred to include all who “hear the word of God and do it” (8:19-21; 11:27-28). The response of Jesus to the women further elucidates his ministry, and frequently, anticipates that ministry in particular in relation to the Paschal mystery.

Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis represents my own work and has not been submitted, in whole or in part, by me or any other person, for the purpose of obtaining any other qualification.

Signed:

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in black ink. The signature appears to be 'Mas Hantef' written in a cursive style.

Date: 21 September, 2020

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Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . Edited by David Noel Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
ABR	<i>Australian Biblical Review</i>
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library
ANTC	Abingdon New Testament Commentaries
BDAG	Danker, Frederick W., Walter Baure, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, eds. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> , 3 rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
<i>BLE</i>	<i>Bulletin de littérature ecclésiastique</i>
<i>BR</i>	<i>Biblical Research</i>
<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
BTS	Biblical Tools and Studies
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
<i>CurBR</i>	<i>Currents in Biblical Research</i>
<i>CurTM</i>	<i>Currents in Theology and Mission</i>
<i>ETL</i>	<i>Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses</i>
<i>EvQ</i>	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
<i>ExAud</i>	<i>Ex Auditu</i>
<i>Greg</i>	<i>Gregorianum</i>

<i>HeyJ</i>	<i>Heythrop Journal</i>
IBC	Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>ITQ</i>	<i>Irish Theological Quarterly</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JFSR</i>	<i>Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTS	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Series
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
L&N	Louw, Johannes P., and Eugene A. Nida, eds. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains</i> . 2 nd ed. New York: United Bible Societies, 1989. Electronic Edition.
LNTS	The Library of New Testament Studies
<i>Neot</i>	<i>Neotestamentica</i>
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
<i>NJBC</i>	<i>The New Jerome Biblical Commentary</i> . Edited by Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer and Roland E. Murphy. London: Burns and Oates, 1989.
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NTOA	Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>PEQ</i>	<i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</i>
<i>PRSt</i>	<i>Perspectives in Religious Studies</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i>

<i>ResQ</i>	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
<i>RevExp</i>	<i>Review and Expositor</i>
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SP	Sacra Pagina
<i>TC</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Textual Criticism</i>
<i>ThTo</i>	<i>Theology Today</i>
<i>TS</i>	<i>Theological Studies</i>
TVZ	Theologischer Verlag Zurich
<i>VC</i>	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
<i>WBC</i> Ringe	<i>The Women's Bible Commentary</i> . Edited by Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Jacqueline E. Lapsley. London: SPCK, 1992.
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
<i>WW</i>	<i>Word and World</i>
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</i>

Note: All Old Testament quotations are from the Septuagint.

Chapter 1: Introduction and Literature Review

1.1 The Question

Even though the women of Luke's Gospel have been widely studied, certain aspects still remain neglected. This research hopes to fill one of these gaps, by examining the discipleship that the women model and what they reveal about Jesus in their encounters with him. The multi-faceted witness shown by the women in their own responses to Jesus, as well as in foreshadowing and revealing of Jesus and his ministry, will be studied through exegesis of the passages that involve women and synkrisis¹ with men in related pericopes.

1.1.1 Situating the Question

In most recent studies, the question in the background is usually whether Luke is positively or negatively disposed to women, rather than focusing on the women themselves. While some studies have been done of all of the women in the Gospel, very few follow a consistently sequential reading and fewer again build up the information in a cumulative fashion. Male/female parallels are recognised and Luke's reason for using them is explored in many studies, but the light that these synkrisis throw on the women, when compared or contrasted with the men, is seldom examined. Reader response criticism is used, but rather than reading with the implied reader of the first century, it is usually done through a modern feminist lens.

¹ Synkrisis consist of comparisons and contrasts. This will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 2 Methodology.

Since there are more women in this Gospel than in any of the others and, in fact, reference is made to thirteen women who are not mentioned elsewhere in the Gospels,² many studies have been done from different perspectives. They have included monographs on all of the women in the Gospel, as well as detailed studies on particular pericopes. Different methodologies and combinations thereof have been used, ranging from historical methods (including form and redaction criticism), to ideological (including feminist and liberationist criticism), and narrative studies. These have produced a wealth of results, which have varied from seeing Luke as positively disposed towards women to seeing him as having an agenda that wants to undermine the role of women and place them in a subservient position.

1.1.2 The Question to be posed

The purpose of this research is to discover what the women, who are associated with Jesus' ministry, manifest in Luke's Gospel. It moves away from the commonly posed question about whether women are portrayed positively or negatively in Luke's Gospel, to ask what the women exemplify as they interact with Jesus. How does Jesus engage them and what aspects of discipleship and response do they model? Finally, what do these responses reveal about Jesus and how do they anticipate his ministry? This study will follow the implied readers of the first century, who have already experience of the Jesus movement (Luke 1:1-4),³ as they examine and construct the characters of the women from the indices in the text, with a view to discovering more about the central figure of the narrative, namely Jesus. Since many of the women are complex characters, each will be

² There are ten named women, ten unnamed and two groups in the Gospel. Of those thirteen are mentioned only in Luke's Gospel. See Jane Schaberg, "Luke," in *The Women's Bible Commentary*, ed. Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe (London: SPCK, 1992), 275-292, 280.

³ All subsequent references to the Gospel of Luke will indicate only chapter and verse number.

considered in her own pericope, thus allowing for her individual characteristics to emerge, but by reading the Gospel sequentially and comparing and contrasting the women with the men in their synkrisis pairings, it will also be possible to see the evolving patterns of response to Jesus. The cumulative effect will be to see what is revealed about Jesus and hence the varied forms of discipleship.

The field of research that will be considered here includes all of the women who encounter Jesus in his adult ministry. This ministry will be deemed to start at 4:14 when, having emerged from the Infancy Narrative (1-2), been baptised with the baptism of John in the Jordan and confirmed in his mission by the voice of the Father from heaven and the descent of the Holy Spirit (3:21-22) and been challenged in the temptations (4:1-13), the narrator now declares that Jesus begins his ministry by “teaching in their synagogues” where he is “praised by everyone” (4:14-15).

Since this work will begin at Jesus’ public ministry, the Infancy Narrative will not be discussed. Much has already been written about it and since this study involves responses to the character Jesus, it is more appropriate to begin with his adult life.⁴ However, the primacy effect of the three women (Mary, Elizabeth and Anna) in the Infancy Narrative, influences readers as they read the rest of the Gospel.⁵ They, as well as the men Simeon and Joseph, and ultimately Zechariah, provide model responses that can be used as comparisons later in the Gospel. Furthermore, the very complex series of male-female synkrisis trains Luke’s readers to be on the lookout for future male-female synkrisis in the Gospel, and to be familiar with how to read them.

⁴ A few examples include: Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A commentary on the infancy narratives in the gospels of Matthew and Luke* (New York: Doubleday, 1993); Mark Coleridge, *The Birth of the Lukan Narrative JSNTS 88* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993); Andres Garcia Serrano, *The Presentation in the Temple: The narrative function of Lk 2:22-39 in Luke-Acts* (Rome: Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2012).

⁵ See Chapter 3: Introduction to the overall thesis.

1.2 Literature review

Early research on the women in Luke's Gospel divides into two main camps: those who consider him very positively disposed towards women and others, quite often feminist scripture scholars, who propose that he undermines women in the Gospel. Karris gives a comprehensive summary of the various positions.⁶ Recent scholarship is more nuanced and can be seen, for example, in the 2016 article by Barbara Reid, where she revised the opinion that she had outlined in her earlier book⁷ and came to the conclusion that women are viewed more positively than she had previously concluded.⁸ An important element, in all of these studies, continues to be the question about how Luke views women.

1.2.1 Luke: Friend of Women

Those who consider Luke a 'friend of women'⁹ agree with Witherington's opinion that "what emerges is Luke's desire to show that women are equally objects of God's salvation and equally good illustrations of God's dealings with mankind."¹⁰ However, when examined more attentively, they still maintain that Luke kept women in more traditional roles. For example, Witherington suggests that women, in their service of Jesus and the family of faith, continued to prepare and serve food while only men were chosen to

⁶ Robert J. Karris, "Women and Discipleship in Luke," in *A Feminist Companion to Luke*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine with Marianne Blickenstaff (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2002), 23-43.

⁷ Barbara E. Reid, *Choosing the Better Part, Women in the Gospel of Luke* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996).

⁸ Barbara E. Reid, "The Gospel of Luke: Friend or Foe of Women Proclaimers of the Word?" *CBQ* 78 (2016): 1-23.

⁹ For example see: Ben Witherington III, *Women in the Ministry of Jesus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A literary interpretation Vol 1: The Gospel according to Luke* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986); Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Luke, A literary and theological commentary on the Third Gospel* (London: SPCK, 1990).

¹⁰ Witherington, *Women in the Ministry of Jesus*, 36.

have the leadership offices in the community.¹¹ He acknowledges, however, the strong validation of the women in the final sections of the Gospel.¹² Tannehill agrees that Luke promotes women's traditional roles but in a few situations is more radical, for example, when the women are on the road with Jesus (8:1-3) and also, when he describes their witness in the Passion Narrative.¹³ He also points to Luke's use of 'doubling' not so much to compare and contrast the male and female characters, but "to enhance the position of women in a male-dominated society."¹⁴ Talbert is very conscious that Luke's "authorial audience" comes from a Mediterranean culture of the first century and that this has a serious influence on the Gospel.¹⁵ Therefore, when he focuses on the women of Luke 8:1-3, he proposes that Luke sees these women as equal witnesses to the twelve but, only when it does not undermine the church's position in Greco-Roman culture.

Many of these studies date from a time when there was a particular interest in the socio-cultural background of the New Testament and, therefore, take particular note of women's position in Greco-Roman society and see Luke's treatment of them as very positive within that culture. In line with this, Witherington describes his methodology as historical, while also drawing on "mishnaic information" of the time.¹⁶ That same focus on background is evident in Talbert, but at the same time, along with Tannehill, he does a literary study of the Gospel. Tannehill uses a thematic approach but within that follows a linear reading of the text, while Talbert's literary methodology concentrates mainly on the women of 8:1-3. While these writers give quite a positive reaction when they compare the

¹¹ Witherington, *Women in the Ministry of Jesus*, 11.

¹² *Ibid.*, 122.

¹³ Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts Vol 1*.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 132.

¹⁵ Talbert, *Reading Luke*, 5.

¹⁶ Witherington, *Women in the Ministry of Jesus*, 1.

women with the men in the context of Greco-Roman society, they neglect to situate the teaching about women in the overall counter-cultural teaching of the Gospel. The transformative vision that Jesus puts forward in the synagogue in Nazareth (4:18-19), and confirms in teachings like the beatitudes and woes (6:20-26), is then demonstrated in his association with the less privileged, like his affirmataion of the children that he welcomes (9:46-48; 18:15-17) and his table fellowship with the marginalised (5:29-32; 7:36-50; 19:1-10).¹⁷ Instead, in these early studies, women are often viewed in the light of the Greco-Roman background, rather than within the wider context of the Gospel.

1.2.2 Feminist Scholars' view of Luke's Gospel

Feminist scholars¹⁸ on the other hand, in line with the frequently quoted statement of Schaberg, consider Luke's Gospel as "an extremely dangerous text, perhaps the most dangerous in the Bible."¹⁹ Schüssler Fiorenza blames this on the patriarchalization of the church, which she maintains, was already well established by the time Luke was writing. She therefore proposes that the Gospel must be read with a hermeneutic of suspicion, to read behind the texts to reconstruct the situation that is being subtly obscured.²⁰ Feminist scholars see the texts as written by men and therefore not neutral or objective, and so, must always suspect an anti-woman bias and therefore use a liberating hermeneutic to retrieve the text.²¹ Many of them propose that, by using a hermeneutic of suspicion, it is possible

¹⁷ Warren Carter, *The Roman Empire and the New Testament: An essential guide* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2006), 20, 114, 121.

¹⁸ For example see: Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A feminist theological reconstruction of Christian origins* (London: SCM, 1983); Mary Rose D'Angelo, "Women in Luke-Acts: A redactional view," *JBL* 109 (1990): 441-461; Schaberg, "Luke," 275-292; Sharon H. Ringe, *Luke*, WBC (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995).

¹⁹ Schaberg, "Luke," 275-292.

²⁰ Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*.

²¹ Sandra M. Schneiders, *The Revelatory Text: Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 183.

for readers to look behind the tradition to recover an earlier reading hidden by redaction and retrieve that message for women.²² These writers are looking at the Gospel from a twentieth century feminist viewpoint, which will not be utilised in this study. Instead, the Gospel will be read with the implied reader of the first century, who is expected to trust the narrative in the reading pact with the implied author.

Like the earlier scholars who posit that Luke favours women, many of the feminist scholars agree that Luke wants to make the Gospel acceptable to the Greco-Roman audience of the time, by portraying Christianity as a religion that does not oppose Roman societal values.²³ They see that this has negative implications as Luke portrays women as “models of subordinate service, excluded from the power centre of the movement and from significant responsibilities.”²⁴ In her exegesis of five sections connected with women, Schaberg recognises ambivalence with regard to women being allowed to listen to the Word but not proclaim it, and being expected to take up a subservient position in that silence (1:1-80; 7:36-50; 8:1-3; 10:38-42 and 23:49; 24:1-12). While recognising Luke’s use of the compositional technique of pairing men and women, D’Angelo views it with a hermeneutic of suspicion and sees it is a clear example of his redaction of the text, with the intention of educating women to have subservient positions in the community.²⁵ These authors discuss those who were leaders within the early Christian community, but do not take into account Jesus’ teaching about servant leadership that is a core tenet of Luke’s Gospel (22:24-27). However, close reading of the Gospel shows that, following the example of Jesus, the importance of service is demonstrated more by women than men.

²² Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*; Schaberg, “Luke,” 275-292; Schneiders, *The Revelatory Text*.

²³ D’Angelo, Schaberg.

²⁴ Schaberg, “Luke,” 275-292.

²⁵ D’Angelo, “Women in Luke-Acts,” 441-461.

This brief resumé places earlier scholarship largely within a historical setting, and also recognises that the scholars usually pose the question as to whether Luke favours women or not.

1.2.3 More Recent Works

The studies of Lukan women from the last three decades have a wide range of perspectives. Among those that will be examined here, Ricci,²⁶ Reid,²⁷ Bieberstein²⁸ and Dowling²⁹ state that they are coming from a feminist perspective. Reid explains this as meaning a recognition that “anything that denies the full humanity of women is not of God.”³⁰ Seim is more nuanced in her approach and prefers to call it “women’s studies,”³¹ while Spencer describes himself as positive, though critical.³²

Ricci draws on all three synoptic gospels, but all of the others focus on Luke’s Gospel only. Spencer does not treat of all the women in the Gospel, but takes a number of them and deals with them in great detail.³³ All of the others follow a sequential reading, some more rigorously than others. Seim emphasises the fact that Luke’s work is a narrative and stresses the importance of the narrative sequence, and therefore works sequentially, but

²⁶ Carla Ricci, *Mary Magdalene and many others: women who followed Jesus* (Tunbridge Wells: Burns and Oats, 1994).

²⁷ Reid, *Choosing the Better Part*.

²⁸ Sabine Bieberstein, *Verschwiegene Jüngerinnen-vergessene Zeuginnen: Gebrochene Konzeptim Lukasevangelium*, NTOA 38 (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag Freiburg Schweiz; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998).

²⁹ Elizabeth V. Dowling, *Taking away the pound: Women, theology and the parable of the pounds in the Gospel of Luke* (London: T&T Clarke, 2007).

³⁰ Reid, *Choosing the Better Part*, 8.

³¹ Turid Karlsen Seim, *The Double Message: Patterns of gender in Luke-Acts* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 10.

³² F. Scott Spencer, *Salty Wives, Spirited Mothers, and Savvy Widows: capable women of purpose and persistence in Luke’s Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), x.

³³ Mary (Luke 1-2); Joanna (8:1-3; 24:10); Martha and Mary (10:38-42); the ‘foreign’ women: the widow of Zarephath (4:25-26); the queen of the South (11:31); the wife of Lot (17:32) and the widow in the parable of the unjust judge (18:1-8).

rather than follow a linear reading, she selects certain themes and follows through on them. She discusses women as models of servant leadership, their prophetic role that is never actualised in public and the value that Luke places on asceticism for women. One of her conclusions, that Luke wants to keep women within a domestic setting, does not fully acknowledge the convincing discipleship that they show in the sequential reading. Jesus meets women, not only in the privacy of their own homes (4:38-39; 8:48-56; 10:38-42), but also on the road (7:11-17; 23:26-31), as they journey with him (8:1-3), in public settings (7:36-50; 8:19-21, 40-48; 11:27-28) and even in places of worship (13:11-17; 21:1-4). Bieberstein works sequentially, but only from 8:1-3. Reid and Dowling follow sequential readings and discuss the individual periscopes, but with little emphasis on the effect of cumulative reading.

Many of the authors concentrate on the women of 8:1-3, who later reappear in the passion scenes at the crucifixion and tomb of Jesus. Ricci's comparison with the twelve is quite useful and she successfully highlights the fact that women, as well as men, followed Jesus as disciples from his early ministry in Galilee.³⁴ She also uses 8:1-3 as a lens, through which she examines the role of women throughout the remainder of the gospel. Bieberstein also focuses on 8:1-3 (where the women and the twelve are with Jesus) and the events surrounding the passion in chapters 22 to 24.³⁵ Looking through the lens of 8:1-3, she examines the concepts of discipleship and attitudes to possessions, which contrasts the men who left everything to follow Jesus with the women who still have their own resources. In the chapters on the passion, she links the women at the cross and tomb (23:49, 55; 24:6) to the Galilean women (8:1-3) and notes that in their witness they are

³⁴ Ricci, *Mary Magdalene and many others*.

³⁵ Bieberstein, *Verschwiegene Jüngerinnen-vergessene Zeuginnen*.

finally described as following Jesus (24:22-23). Then, by taking a retrospective view, she invites readers to fill in the gaps and see the women as constant members of those who travelled with Jesus from Galilee. Even though she criticises Luke's androcentric view, she posits that, by careful reading and linking of the various episodes, the women can be seen more clearly.

Where the individual women, who only appear in one pericope are concerned, Reid and Dowling discuss each of them. Reid treats each pericope individually, to arrive at her conclusion that women are silenced, and is particularly critical of the lack of commissioning for women at the empty tomb (Even though almost all of her study is focused on Luke, she uses a synoptic comparison at this point with Matthew and John). She does a sequential reading of the Gospel through modern feminist eyes. Dowling's monograph uses the lens of the parable of the pounds (19:11-28) to examine all of the women characters.³⁶ Like the slave with one pound, she examines stories of women where their metaphorical pound is also taken away, in particular with regard to speaking in public. She notes that the speech of many women is not recorded (2:38; 8:47; 13:13), but makes no mention of the men, like Joseph, who are described in the same way. Jesus also corrects women when they speak to him directly (2:49; 10:41; 11:27-28) and the witness of women is not accepted (24:11). Those who are silent are commended (7:50; 10:41-42). She concludes that the only woman character, who challenges this silencing, is the woman in the parable of the unjust judge (18:1-8). However, her work takes a very innovative approach in using a parable as a lens for examining the women and therefore shines a different light on many of the pericopes.

³⁶ Dowling, *The Parable of the Pounds*.

When earlier scholars, like Tannehill and D'Angelo, examine Luke's use of 'parallelism' or pairing men and women in the Gospel, it is usually in relation to the historical situation of his community at that time. However, when Seim looks at what she calls 'gender doublets' in Luke-Acts, she looks for elements of comparison and contrast, not only in theme, but also in structure and language. She states that Luke shows "a gender-determined completeness or complementarity," while still insisting that men and women remain in their own traditional roles which places men in the public sphere and keeps women in the home.³⁷ Her double message however is quite nuanced, as she posits that Luke sends out a mixed message where it seems that the women are well respected even though they are silenced. Since her work examines both Luke and Acts, she posits that the narrative places women in a strong position in the Gospel, but that then is diminished by the masculinisation of Acts, where the men take over the servant leadership role, that was modelled by the women in the Gospel.

These more recent works all include detailed exegesis of various pericopes. Most use a combination of other methodologies along with narrative criticism. Literary criticism, used by Seim, Reid, Bieberstein, Dowling and Spencer, focuses very much on the text and so they all give a clear picture of the women as they exist in the actual narrative. Within narrative criticism, Dowling emphasises the role of the implied reader to read behind the text to find the true situation of the women who, she believes, are treated unfairly in the text. Redaction criticism is used by Bieberstein and Seim and cultural, historical and social background are used by Ricci, Seim and Reid. However, while Darr thinks in terms of the extratext as understood by his implied reader of the first century, most of the others are

³⁷ Seim, *The Double Message*, 24.

looking at it from a modern understanding.³⁸ This means that, looking through a modern lens, they are sometimes predisposed to see the women as subservient in a patriarchal society and this can over determine the reading that they arrive at. The implied reader of the first century is, as Luke explains in his preface (1:1-4), familiar with the story of Jesus and, even though living in a patriarchal society, is also aware of the challenges that the Gospel message and values pose in that society.

1.2.4 Recent Developments

In her 2016 article, Reid revises her thinking in *Choosing the Better Part* and, instead of looking only at the passages relating to the women characters, she decides to look at the whole narrative.³⁹ She infers that, when Jesus speaks, men as well as women are silenced. However, she does not consider Dinkler's useful point that, in Luke's Gospel, silence as well as speech can be seen from a positive as well as a negative point of view. "For Luke, what matters most is how one uses speech and silence."⁴⁰ However, by focusing only on those who speak in the Gospel, her sequential reading misses much of the discipleship, that is shown by the actions of both women and men and also their reactions to Jesus. She also revises her conclusion and states that, when the Infancy Narrative is taken along with the final chapters, she sees Luke as more favourably disposed to women proclaimers of the word. Once again, however, she asks the question about how women are portrayed in the Gospel in comparison with the men.

³⁸ John A. Darr, *On Character Building: the reader and the rhetoric of characterization in Luke-Acts* (Louisville, Westminster John Knox, 1992).

³⁹ Reid, "The Gospel of Luke," 1-23.

⁴⁰ Michal Beth Dinkler, *Silent Statements: Narrative representations of speech and silence in the Gospel of Luke* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 98.

More recently still, the work of two other writers proposed a further understanding on the study of women in the Gospels. They moved away from the gender of the women to examining their discipleship, which can be an example for all, both men and women, to emulate.

A recent article by Holly J. Carey, while looking at women and discipleship in Mark's Gospel rather than Luke's, the subject of this study, has some interesting propositions that can also be examined in Luke's Gospel.⁴¹ She proposes that Mark champions the type of active discipleship, modelled by the women, as against the inaction and misunderstanding of the male disciples.⁴² She contrasts the male and female disciples in adjacent passages, or sometimes within the same pericopes, to understand discipleship as better exemplified by the women. This type of comparison, or *synkrisis*, proves to be a very useful tool and will be utilised in the present study, to help clarify the role of the women in the Gospel.

Jennifer S. Wyant's monograph on Mary and Martha, which looks at one pericope only and not the whole Gospel, posits that gender is not the most important element of the story.⁴³ She suggests that it is a story about discipleship and the fact that the two main characters are women is not relevant to an understanding of it. She does a detailed exegesis and reception history of the text examining monastic, patristic, medieval, Reformation and modern readings of the text. Her conclusion is that earlier readings did not focus on gender and it is only in recent times that the text has been used as a tool to teach women about their role as followers of Jesus. She recommends "taking them out from

⁴¹ Holly J. Carey, "Women in Action: Models for discipleship in Mark's Gospel," *CBQ* 81 (2019): 429-448.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 429.

⁴³ Jennifer S. Wyant, *Beyond Mary or Martha: Reclaiming ancient models of discipleship* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2019).

the niche of women's ministries" so that they can speak about discipleship to all.⁴⁴ This approach will also be taken in this study.

1.3 Summary of Approach to be taken in this Thesis

Despite the variety of studies on women in Luke's Gospel and the different approaches that are employed, this research aims to fill some of the gaps that still exist.

- Narrative methodology is used in most of the recent research on Luke's Gospel. However, in many cases it is combined with other methodologies. While these can prove useful at times, this study will use narrative criticism as a single methodology to place the focus firmly on the characterisation of the women characters in Luke's Gospel.
- Rather than use a hybrid narrative methodology, this research will employ a reader response type study of the women characters in the Gospel, based mainly on John A. Darr's methodology.⁴⁵
- It will employ consistent, cumulative reading because while there is much research on individual pericopes and sequential reading is frequently used, there is little consistent, cumulative reading of the stories of the women in the Gospel.
- Many studies discuss the use of male-female parallels or pairing in the gospel as outlined by Koperski in "Is Luke a feminist or not."⁴⁶ Much of the study is on what exactly constitutes gender pairs and how they are defined. When the pairs

⁴⁴ Wyant, *Beyond Mary or Martha*, 276.

⁴⁵ Darr, *On Character Building*; John A. Darr, *Herod the Fox: audience criticism and Lukan characterisation* (Sheffield: JSNT, 1998).

⁴⁶ Veronika Koperski, "Is "Luke" a feminist or not? Female-male parallels in Luke-Acts," in *Luke and His Readers Festschrift A Denaux*. ed. R. Bieringer, G. Van Belle and J. Verheyden (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2005), 25-48.

themselves are referred to, it is usually to try to discover Luke's purpose behind the use of the pairs. Instead, this research will form a synkrisis between the male/female pericopes to see how it further elucidates the characters.

- Many of the recent studies are still being read with a hermeneutic of suspicion, from a feminist perspective, rather than a detailed study of the narrative, as read by a first century reader, which is what this research will employ.
- Finally, studies on women usually focus on the women in relation to Jesus. As well as looking at the women's response to Jesus in this research, it will also examine what that interaction reveals about him. It will ask what the women anticipate about Jesus and how they reflect his ministry.

The next chapter will outline in greater detail the methodology that will be employed in this research.

Chapter 2: Methodology

The methodology, to be used in this narrative study of the characterisation of the women in the Gospel, consists of a sequential reading along with the implied reader of the first century and in this way, builds up a cumulative picture of the women's responses to Jesus and how the women have a revelatory role with regard to Jesus. A synkrisis of the male-female pairings, that emerge throughout the reading, will throw further light on this. The reader response analysis, with the implied readers, accumulates the information that they gather from the figures of the women as they progress through the Gospel and analyses what is thereby conveyed by the implied author.

2.1 Narrative Criticism

The methodology to be used in this study will be narrative criticism,¹ with a particular focus on characterisation. Narrative criticism means that “the ‘what’ of a text (its content) and the ‘how’ of a text (its rhetoric and structure) are analyzed as a complete

¹ The following terms are essential in a study using narrative methodology:

Implied author: “The implied author is a theoretical construction based on the requirements of knowledge and understanding presupposed in a narrative; in other words, the implied author is the one who would be necessary for a particular narrative to be told or written.” Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, *Mark's Jesus: characterization as narrative Christology* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), 7.

Implied reader: “The recipient of the narrative constructed by the text and capable of realizing its meanings in the perspective into which the author leads him: this image of the reader corresponds to the readership imagined by the author.” Daniel Marguerat and Yvan Bourquin, *How to Read Bible Stories* (London: SCM, 1998), 15.

Narrator: “the narrative ‘voice’ from which the narrative comes and the one who relates it.” Ibid.

Narratee: “the textual figure of the reader, the narrative authority to whom the narrator addresses his narrative.” Ibid.

tapestry, an organic whole.”² Powell comments that a “primary attraction has been the ability to study biblical stories on their own terms - as stories, rather than simply as sources for historical or theological reflection.”³

2.1.2 Characterisation

Character is defined as “a human actor, individual or collective, imaginary or real, who plays a role in the story of a literary narrative.”⁴ Up to the 1980s, very little study had been done of character in biblical narratives. The argument was put forward, following Aristotle, that character is subordinate to plot and that characters never really developed in Greek literature, because of its focus on story and events.⁵ As a result, characters in the gospels received little attention, since it was believed that gospel narratives followed a similar pattern.⁶ In more recent years, however, this has changed and a number of studies on characterisation have appeared.⁷ From earlier studies that focused on the text, attention has shifted to the reader or audience. This can be seen in the active involvement of the reader in sequential, cumulative reading and the filling in of gaps in the text. More attention has also been paid to the different functions of the narrator, the implied author and the implied reader in the text.

² James E. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament: An introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 18.

³ Mark Alan Powell, “Narrative Criticism,” in *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for interpretation*, ed. Joel B. Green (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 239-255.

⁴ Cornelis Bennema, *A Theory of Character in New Testament Narrative* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 2014), 29.

⁵ Aristotle, *Poetics* VI, trans. S. H. Butcher, classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/poetics.html.

⁶ Bultmann for example states that “There is no historical-biographical interest in the Gospels, and that is why they have nothing to say about Jesus’ human personality, his appearance and character, his origin, education and development; quite apart from the fact that they do not command the cultivated techniques of composition necessary for grand literature, nor let the personalities of their author appear.” Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, rev. ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 372.

⁷ Some examples in relation to Luke-Acts include David B. Gowler, *Host, Guest, Enemy and Friend: Portraits of the Pharisees in Luke and Acts*, Emory Studies in Early Christianity (New York: Lang, 1991); Darr, *On Character Building*; Darr, *Herod the Fox*; Luke Macnamara, *My Chosen Instrument: The characterisation of Paul in Acts 7:58-15:41* (Rome: Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2016); Frank Dicken and Julia Snyder, eds., *Characters and Characterization in Luke-Acts* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016).

Since this study focuses on the implied reader:

The crucial issue in the process of characterization is thus what information [. . .] a reader is able to associate with any character as a member of the storyworld and where this information comes from.

There are at least three sources of such information: (a) textually explicit ascription of properties to a character; (b) inferences that can be drawn from textual cues (e.g. “she smiled nervously”); (c) inferences based on information which is not associated with the character by the text itself but through reference to historically and culturally variable real-world conventions.⁸

This study will explore how readers construct characters from the above three sources of information, which Darr calls respectively telling, showing⁹ and the use of extratext.

Through “telling,” the narrator comments directly on the character, explaining his thoughts, motives or actions and thus influences the readers’ reaction and response since, in most gospel narratives, readers consider the narrator “omniscient, omnipresent, retrospective and fully reliable.”¹⁰ Along with the narrator, some characters are portrayed as particularly reliable, because “if any characters’ speeches or actions are approved or sanctioned by the narrator, the readers, consciously or unconsciously, consider them reliable and authoritative.”¹¹ This reliability can be seen particularly in the character, Jesus (3:21-22; 4:1-13, 16-21).

“Showing” is more common in the gospels. Here, the narrator presents the characters in speech and action and readers then have the freedom to deduce character’s motives and thoughts. “Showing” can go from internal speech, to direct speech, to characters commenting on each other and to description of actions of the characters. It can

⁸ Fotis Jannidis, “Character,” Paragraph 22 in *The Living Handbook of Narratology*, eds. Peter Hühn et al., Hamburg: Hamburg University. URL=<http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/article/character> [view date:12 Feb 2019]

⁹ Darr, *On Character Building*, 44.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 50.

¹¹ Ju Hur, *A Dynamic Reading of the Spirit in Luke-Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001), 93.

further include external appearance, environment (physical, social class, family etc) and comparison or contrast with other characters.¹² Biblical allusions are also used in the showing of characters.¹³ Resseguie, in highlighting the advantage of showing, makes the point that, at the upper end of the scale, readers are allowed to see the thoughts of the character in the narrative and so, can learn far more about their inner world than a person in real life.¹⁴ “Showing” gives readers a sense of participation in discovering the characters and evaluating them for themselves. Readers take ownership of their constructions of characters and, therefore, adhere more strongly to such hypotheses than if told directly.

This construction of character arouses feelings in readers that can be divided into three categories namely empathy, which consists of close identification with the character; sympathy, which, while still involving identification with the character, is less intense as readers may not share the same values as the character and finally antipathy, which is when the character elicits a negative reaction from readers because of a different value system.¹⁵ Since implied readers have some familiarity with the Jesus movement, they will bring their values to bear as they encounter the characters in the Gospel.

Characters are part of a narrative and are not real people and, while readers may speculate about what went before in the narrative and anticipate what is to come, the characters must stay within the narrative, which is a necessary framework for the text.¹⁶ However, there is a tension here as, while the people within the narrative are characters, the gospels reference real people, who are known to the readers and about whom they have a

¹² Gowler, *Host, Guest, Enemy and Friend*, 63.

¹³ Jean-Noel Aletti, “La construction du personnage Jésus,” in *Analyse narrative et Bible*, BEThL 191, éd. Camille Focant and André Wénin (Leuven: University Press; Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2005), 41-42.

¹⁴ Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament*, 127.

¹⁵ Marguerat and Bourquin, *How to Read Bible Stories*, 68; Powell makes these same divisions in Mark Allan Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1990), 56-57.

¹⁶ Darr, *On Character Building*, 46.

prior knowledge and expectations. So, Luke does not have the freedom of a writer of fiction to invent as he sees fit, but is constrained by the historical background.

This study proposes to focus on women characters, who, although they are not protagonists but usually secondary or background characters, are not static figures either, but frequently somewhere on the continuum between the two.¹⁷ Indeed, the women are often quite complex characters.¹⁸ It must also be said that the women cannot be treated as a group character in the sense that, for example, the Pharisees quite often are in the Gospel.¹⁹ There are both individual women characters and groups of women in the Gospel.

Most of the women appear as individuals in a single episode in the Gospel, but a particular group of women appear a number of times at crucial stages. These are the women of 8:1-3, which consists of a group of named and unnamed women. A cumulative picture can be built up of them as they are described, firstly, as disciples in Galilee and appear, later, at the cross, burial and empty tomb on the day of the resurrection. By retrospectively filling in the gaps, it will be seen that this group has been with Jesus all the time and has followed him from the early stages of his ministry and, by comparing them with the group of male disciples who also journey with Jesus throughout the Gospel, further light can be thrown on each of the groups.

2.2 Sequential Development

Each pericope, that entails a woman or women, will be treated separately to introduce the women, as the text first reveals them, in their encounter with Jesus. This will

¹⁷ Marguerat and Bourquin propose three levels: protagonists who have the major roles, agents who help the plot along and walk-ons who are background figures. Marguerat and Bourquin, *How to Read Bible Stories*, 60.

¹⁸ Darr, *On Character Building*, 45.

¹⁹ In the vast majority of cases, the Pharisees are not seen as individuals but have group traits throughout. There are however exceptions to this in Luke's Gospel, Simon the Pharisee being the most obvious case.

avoid homogenising the women and allow for differences to emerge. However, a sequential reading will also accumulate information about the women and aim to find patterns as the Gospel narrative progresses.

This sequential reading²⁰ takes notice of Darr's admonition that, if the narrative is not read in the correct order, there is a danger of distortion of the characters from the intended picture. "It is essential that we be cognizant at all times of the degree to which a character or a character group has been constructed at each point along the text continuum."²¹ This means taking both sequence and accumulation into account.²² If the narrative is read out of sequence, then the information can be manipulated and produce a distorted picture of the characters, as readers may 'read back' into the narrative, rather than reading it as it happens. Darr's use of sequential, cumulative reading can be seen in his study of the Pharisees in Luke as he shows their inability to perceive Jesus and his message.²³ His study can be contrasted with Gowler who, using a socio-narratological approach, deals with individual pericopes and does not read in sequence and therefore does not carry the accumulated view of the Pharisees in the Gospel into his reading of Acts.²⁴ Having completed the sequential reading, a retrospective view of the whole work can then be taken which, in light of the cumulative effect of the reading, may modify the significance of what has been read.

²⁰ Iser sees sequential reading as a dynamic process and explains: "One might simplify by saying that each intentional sentence correlative opens up a particular horizon, which is modified, if not completely changed, by succeeding sentences. While these expectations arouse interest in what is to come, the subsequent modification of them will also have a retrospective effect on what has already been read. This may now take on a different significance from that which it had at the moment of reading." Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of communication in prose fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1974), 278.

²¹ Darr, *On Character Building*, 42.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., 65-126.

²⁴ Gowler, *Host, Guest, Enemy and Friend*, 177-297.

2.3 Synkrisis

Characters will also be studied in their interactions and relationship with other characters and, in particular, the male-female pairings will be examined. A synkrisis will be made between relevant male/female characters as they arise, to further illuminate their characterisation. The synkrisis, which are instigated by the implied author, will give further insights to implied readers as they progress through the Gospel.

Aletti defines synkrisis as:

La *synkrisis* consiste à comparer systématiquement des personnages, des actions ou des événements, en montrant leurs points communs, mais aussi leurs différences, la supériorité de l'un sur l'autre etc.²⁵

Macnamara emphasises that “the art of synkrisis is as much about contrasting difference as elucidating similarities.”²⁶

Synkrisis was a common rhetorical device in Greco-Roman writing at the time of Luke and, therefore, his implied reader would be familiar with it. In explaining the theory of synkrisis, Aelius Theon in the *Progymnasmata*, stresses that it should be comparisons of people or things that have similarities. “Comparison should be of likes and where we are in doubt which should be preferred because of no evident superiority of one to the other.”²⁷

Plutarch is a good example of a writer who makes use of synkrisis in his work. “*Parallel Lives* by Plutarch provides numerous examples of rhetorical use of comparison in Hellenistic biographical introductions.”²⁸ Having already discussed the characters in the

²⁵ Jean Noël Aletti, *Vocabulaire Raisonné de l'Exégèse Biblique: les mots, les approches, les auteurs* (Paris: Cerf, 2013), 85.

²⁶ Macnamara, *My Chosen Instrument*, 426.

²⁷ George A. Kennedy, *Progymnasmata: Greek textbooks of prose composition and rhetoric* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2003), 53.

²⁸ Andres Garcia Serrano, *The Presentation in the Temple: The narrative function of Lk 2:22-39 in Luke-Acts* (Rome: Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2012), 72.

narrative, he uses synkrisis to examine them through a different lens, which then invites readers to come to their own conclusions.²⁹

While Luke may not have had formal training in rhetoric, it is evident that he has studied some of the exercises in the *Progymnasmata* or is familiar with Greco-Roman biographies.³⁰ This can be seen in the synkrisis in chapters 1-4 of the Gospel: the annunciations to Zechariah (1:5-25) and Mary (1:26-38), the prayers of Mary (1:46-56) and Zechariah (1:67-79), the parallelism of Simeon and Anna (2:22-38) and the comparison of Jesus and John the Baptist. Jesus and John are compared through their annunciations, birth stories, namings and beginnings of public ministry.³¹ They are also contrasted as while John is called a prophet (1:76), Jesus is called the Son of the Most High (1:32); John's birth is described very simply (1:57) and Jesus' birth is accompanied by choirs of angels (2:8-14); John calls himself a forerunner to Jesus (3:16) while there is a theophany at Jesus' baptism (3:22). The practice of synkrisis continues in the male/female parallels that exist throughout the Gospel. However, their importance is more than Tannehill's view that Luke is proposing in his Gospel that "women's experience is an equal means of access to Jesus' message."³² As is evident in *Parallel Lives*, they throw light on one another and also draw readers into examining further the characters of the narrative.

²⁹ Timothy E. Duff, *Plutarch's Lives: Exploring virtue and vice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 286.

³⁰ Sean A. Adams, "Luke and *Progymnasmata* : Rhetorical handbooks, rhetorical sophistication and genre selection," in *Ancient Education and Early Christianity*, ed. A. W. Pitts and M. R. Hauge, LNTS 533 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 137-154, 152.

³¹ Brown deals with parallels in Luke 1-2 while O'Fearghail makes the synkrisis between Jesus and John in Luke 1-4. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 250-253. Fearghus O'Fearghail, *The Introduction to Luke-Acts: A study of the role of Luke 1, 1-4, 44 in the composition of Luke's two-volume work* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1988).

³² Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts vol 1*, 135. Kopas concurs with this saying it shows Jesus understanding of equality between men and women. Jane Kopas, "Jesus and Women: Luke's Gospel," *ThTo* 43 (1986): 192-202, 192.

Examples of comparison can be found in the Old Testament, Moses and Joshua; Moses and Elijah; Elijah and Elisha.³³ Like Greco-Roman synkrisis, much can be learned from the comparisons between the prophets.

In this Gospel, explicit synkrisis are instigated by the narrator, Jesus or another character. If they are implicit, then the implied author organises them in such a way that common elements are sufficient in number, specificity and proximity to justify their use. In the Gospel, Jesus instigates these explicitly with regard to Simon the Pharisee and the anointing woman (7:44) and Martha and Mary (10: 41-42). Implicit examples include pericopes like the cures of the man with the unclean spirit (4:31-37) and Simon's mother-in-law (4:38-39) where proximity, similar use of language and the extratext of the story of the widow of Zarephath (I Kgs 17:17-24 LXX) all point to a synkrisis. Therefore, in this study, synkrisis will be developed either between relevant pericopes (usually adjacent or else linked thematically or lexically), or else between characters within the same passage.

2.4 The Implied Readers

The sequential reading, envisaged in this study, requires the participation of Luke's implied readers of the first century. The implied reader is the reader that can be deciphered from indices in the text which assume certain competencies, but also a certain lack of knowledge, the ability to fill in gaps with the provision of extra information, so that he/she can actualise the text, which becomes a literary work through "the convergence of text and

³³ Taking Moses and Joshua as an example, both are called God's Servant (Exod 3:7-11; Josh 1:5-6), God parts the water for both of them (Exod 14:21-22; Josh 3:17) and both experienced God's messengers (Exod 3:5; Josh 5:15). Contrasts include: during the time of Moses, God gives them the manna in the desert, which ceases when Joshua leads them to the promised land (Exod 16:30-32; Josh 5:12) and, while Moses leads them to the promised land, it is Joshua who leads them into it (Deut 34:4; Josh 1:2).

reader.”³⁴ This convergence involves the presentation of the text in its written form, the transfer of this text through time and space to the readers and the interpretation of the text by the readers to actualise the narrative as a completed piece of work. For the purpose of this study, this interaction between the reader and the text will be crucial.

Constructing the implied reader is a complicated process. S/he is a construct of the reader-critic and Darr believes that “to some degree the reader is always my reader, a projection of my own experience of reading the text.”³⁵ It follows, therefore, that the reader is a “heuristic hybrid,”³⁶ created, on the one hand, in the image of the literary critic and , on the other hand, “an approximation of the intended reader”³⁷ of the implied author. While the ‘real reader’ of this study is a European middle-class woman, who views the text with a feminist hermeneutic, her focus will be to read the Gospel along with Darr’s implied reader, i.e. a first-time reader of the first century. Her aim will be to be as unbiased as possible, while recognising that no reader is completely objective. In this study, the implied reader is envisioned by the implied author and is therefore an ideal reader, who can actualise far more possibilities than an historical, first-time reader.

Therefore, as an active participant in the narrative, Iser describes the many ‘moves,’ made by readers in this process, as follows: “We look forward, we look back, we decide, we change our decisions, we form expectations, we are shocked by their non-fulfilment, we question, we muse, we accept, we reject; this is the dynamic process of recreation.”³⁸

Rhoads says that readers are involved in

³⁴ Iser, *The Implied Reader*, 275.

³⁵ Darr, *On Character Building*, 25.

³⁶ John A. Darr, “Narrator as Character: Mapping a Reader-Oriented Approach to Narration in Luke-Acts,” *Semeia* 65 (1993): 43-60, 48.

³⁷ Bennema, *A Theory of Character*, 68.

³⁸ Iser, *The Implied Reader*, 288.

filling gaps, identifying with characters, being held in suspense, anticipating later parts of the story, recalling earlier parts of the story, being drawn in by the narrator's asides and irony, having emotions aroused, having expectations raised and revised, experiencing resolution (or the lack of it) and so on.³⁹

Readers are also challenged to look at things in a new way, by placing something that is very familiar in an unfamiliar setting. "This process of defamiliarization compels the reader to evaluate norms, values and traditions in a new light."⁴⁰

The narrative process is found in the interaction between readers and the text but, since this cannot happen in a vacuum, the extratext (store of background information) available to readers must be taken into account.⁴¹ This study will make use of Darr's understanding of the extratext of Luke's implied readers, that is:

He or she will not have a knowledge of Mark, Q or Paul's letters, but will have heard about Jesus and the Christian movement. Furthermore he or she will be familiar with general Hellenistic literary and social conventions and have a specific knowledge of the LXX. I also assume that the reader has never before read Luke-Acts.⁴²

Also, with regard to the world in which readers live:

The reader is a member of the late first-century Mediterranean world and lives by the cultural scripts and social norms of that world. She or he knows basic historical, political, geographical, and ethnic facts about the Roman Empire.⁴³

Even though the term 'reader' is used here, it is used to describe the person who 'receives' the text, through either reading or listening. While approximately 10% of Roman citizens could read, in the Greco-Roman world, "everywhere women, the poor,

³⁹ Rhoads, Dewey and Michie, *Mark as Story*, 137.

⁴⁰ Darr, *Herod the Fox*, 53.

⁴¹ Darr defines extratext as "the repertoire of shared conventions and canonical works that exists in any literate society." Darr, *Herod the Fox*, 53.

⁴² Darr states that Luke-Acts gives definite pointers to the type of extratext that the implied reader had available to him: a good knowledge of the LXX, basic information about Greek and Roman social conventions and basic information about Jesus' life and death. *Ibid.*, 63.

⁴³ Darr, "Narrator as Character," 48.

small farmers and ordinary folk were ordinarily illiterate.”⁴⁴ The members of the early Jesus movement were drawn from a variety of social classes and the majority would have listened to rather than read the Gospels. In the Jewish context, Millard argues that more men than average may have been able to read, as there was a tradition of education for men, so that they could read the Scriptures in the synagogue on the Sabbath. He points to examples in the synoptic gospels where, when Jesus speaks to those who had a familiarity with the Scriptures like the Pharisees (Mt 12:3,5; 19:4; Mk 2:25; Lk 6:3), the Sadducees (Mt 22:31; Mk 12:26) and to the priests and scribes in the Temple (Mt 21:16, 42; Mk 12:10), he asks them if they have ‘read’ that particular section of Scripture. On the other hand, when speaking to a general crowd at the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus begins many of his teachings by quoting from the Law and saying “you have heard that it was said” (Mt 5:21, 27, 33, 38, 43).⁴⁵ Since the implied reader of this study is not gender-specific, or from any particular class, then it will be taken that the implied reader may be either listening to or reading the text. When relevant, the study will also use Gowler’s cultural scripts, which is how he categorises much of the extratext of the narrative. They include “Honour/Shame; Patron/Client; Contract/Limited Good; Purity Rules; and Kinship/*οἰκία*.”⁴⁶

Most commentators place the writing of the Gospel of Luke in the late first century, quite likely between 85 and 90 C.E.⁴⁷ This is based on its use of the Gospel of Mark, which places it later than that Gospel and its detailed descriptions of the siege of a city,

⁴⁴ William V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 22.

⁴⁵ Allan Millard, *Reading and Writing in the time of Jesus* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 157-158.

⁴⁶ Gowler, *Host, Guest, Enemy and Friend*.

⁴⁷ Etienne Charpentier, *How to Read the New Testament*, trans. John Bowden (Paris: Cerf, 1981), 11; Stephen L. Harris, *Understanding The Bible*, 7th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2007), 356; Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, SP (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 2; Robert C. Tannehill, *Luke*, ANTC (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 26.

place it after the siege of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple (19:43-44; 21:20).⁴⁸ Therefore, it can be presumed that the extratext of its implied readers includes many of the happenings not only in Palestine but also in the Roman Empire up to 80 C.E. Within Luke-Acts itself, two revolts are mentioned in Acts 5:36-37, the first led by Theudas and the second by Judas the Galilean against the census that was imposed to raise Roman taxation.⁴⁹ Also, the expulsion of Jews from Rome by Claudius (49 C.E.) is noted with regard to Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:2). Furthermore, readers would have been very aware of the siege of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple (70 C.E.) as well as the siege at Massada (74 C.E.), where the whole community committed suicide rather than surrender to Rome.⁵⁰ In the greater Roman Empire, they would also have heard of the various pogroms against the Jews: in Jamnia in 38 C.E. and in Alexandria in 41 C.E.,⁵¹ again in Alexandria where a further 50,000 Jews were killed in the late sixties,⁵² the killings orchestrated by Nero in 64 C.E. in Rome⁵³ and the riots and murders of Jews in Antioch led by Antiochus in 66-67 C.E. and again four years later.⁵⁴ Since the first disciples of Jesus were considered by the broader Gentile population as another Jewish sect, then the fraught state of affairs for Jews in the first century Roman Empire would have had a considerable impact on the early members of the Jesus movement.

⁴⁸ This date is disputed by some commentators who consider that Luke was a travelling companion of Paul and since there is no mention of the death of Paul in Acts this presupposes an earlier date (pre 64 CE). Others consider the tone of the Gospel to imply a more established church, later than most of the persecution, and so place it early to mid second century.

⁴⁹ There appears to be some confusion at times in Luke's dating versus Josephus.

⁵⁰ Josephus, *Jewish War* 7, <https://www.ccel.org/j/josephus/works/JOSEPHUS.HTM>.

⁵¹ Philo of Alexandria, *Legatio ad Gaium XXX, In Flaccum*, www.earlyjewishwritings.com/text/philo/book40.html.

⁵² Josephus, *Jewish War* 2, <https://www.ccel.org/j/josephus/works/JOSEPHUS.HTM>.

⁵³ Richard J. Cassidy, *Christians and Roman Rule in the New Testament: New perspectives* (New York: Crossroad, 2001), 15.

⁵⁴ Raymond E. Brown and John P. Meier, *Antioch and Rome: New Testament cradles of Catholic Christianity* (New York: Paulist, 1983), 32.

Since the narrative process is an interaction between the text, the reader and the extratext, readers discover, through the reading process, that the text is not holistic, as the formalists believe, but “is full of gaps, indeterminacies, tensions, inconsistencies, and ambiguities.”⁵⁵ To form a narrative whole, these gaps must be filled by readers. This involves “correlating discrete elements of the text—actions, incidents, perspectives, commentary, characters and settings.”⁵⁶ The extratext must also be incorporated into this. Iser sees this ‘filling in of gaps’ as an essential part of the dynamics of reading.

It is only through inevitable omissions that a story gains its dynamism. Thus whenever the flow is interrupted and we are led off in unexpected directions, the opportunity is given to us to bring into play our own faculty for establishing connections—for filling in the gaps left by the text itself.⁵⁷

In brief, implied readers will actualise the text, in conjunction with the cultural and scriptural extratext that is available to them, to arrive at the completed narrative.

2.5 The Importance of the Preface in this Methodology

The Gospel of Luke is different to other gospel narratives, as the writer begins with a preface, in which he addresses his readers, and explains precisely why he is writing his Gospel (1:1-4). This type of preface is not usually found in Greek or Roman historiography but in the prefaces to working handbooks and teaching manuals of a variety of technical subjects.⁵⁸ The readers of these books were artisans, tradesmen and businessmen and women who exchanged goods and services with one another regularly,⁵⁹ in other words, something more akin to modern middle class rather than people at the

⁵⁵ Darr, “Narrator as Character,” 50.

⁵⁶ Darr, *Herod the Fox*, 52.

⁵⁷ Iser, *The Implied Reader*, 280.

⁵⁸ Loveday C. Alexander, “Formal Elements and Genre,” in *Jesus and the Heritage of Israel*, ed. David P. Moessner (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1999), 1: 9-26.

⁵⁹ Vernon K. Robbins, “The Claims of the Prologues and Greco-Roman Rhetoric,” in Moessner, *Jesus and the Heritage of Israel*, 63-83.

higher echelons of Mediterranean society. Therefore, it would be widely recognisable as a preface and as a means for hearers to access the subsequent narrative.

The preface states that the writer has made a conscious decision to write this work (ἔδοξε καὶ μοι) and addresses it directly to a particular individual, Theophilus, using second person singular pronouns. He may be one particular ‘lover of God’ or may be representative of his implied readers. The writer has decided to write an orderly account (ἀνατάξασθαι the verb ‘to arrange in proper order’) and has followed everything carefully/accurately/fully⁶⁰ (ἀκριβῶς) and in order/step by step/in a logical sequence⁶¹ (καθεξῆς). With this in mind, Darr recommends that readers should begin this carefully researched, logical piece of work

at the prologue (an auspicious introduction indeed) and work through the story to its end with Paul in Rome. Earlier evidence strongly conditions a reader's reception of later evidence, so special attention must be accorded the prologue and the first two chapters of Luke.⁶²

Of course, since this study confines itself to the Gospel, Acts will not be considered.

However, since all of the women in the adult life of Jesus (beginning at Luke 4:14) are being considered, the remainder of the first four chapters must also be taken into account. The primacy effect of the prominent women, in the Infancy Narrative, influences the depiction of all women later in the Gospel and readers are schooled to compare the later responses with the model responses of faith of Elizabeth, Mary and Anna.⁶³ Secondly, as a result of the number of male/female synkrisis that appear in these earlier chapters, readers

⁶⁰ Balch argues that ‘fully’ is the best translation as the writer proposes that he is going to write a more complete account than those who went before him. David L Balch, “ἀκριβῶς . . . γράψαι (Luke 1:3),” in Moessner, *Jesus and the Heritage of Israel*, 229-250.

⁶¹ By stressing the sequential meaning of καθεξῆς Moessner endorses the reading process. See “The Appeal and Power of Poetics (Luke 1:1-4),” in Moessner, *Jesus and the Heritage of Israel*, 84-126.

⁶² Darr, “Narrator as Character.”

⁶³ This element of witness is dealt with in great detail by Coleridge: Coleridge, *The Birth of the Lukan Narrative*.

are schooled to compare male and female individuals in the same or proximate pericopes when they appear in the rest of the Gospel.

Readers have already encountered the Jesus tradition (Luke 1:1) and are therefore believers, but it is likely that their background is as Hellenistic Jews or God-fearers. The Hellenistic Jews lived in the Greco-Roman world outside of Palestine, spoke Greek and imported some ideas and practices from the Hellenistic world into their practice of Judaism.⁶⁴ God-fearers were Gentiles who accepted some aspects of Judaism, like some form of belief in the God of Israel, observance of the Sabbath or attendance at synagogue prayer. In the Hellenistic world in which both groups lived, there was quite an amount of interaction between Jews and those people on the periphery of the Jewish religion and so they were familiar with Jewish religion and practice.⁶⁵

The preface also states that Luke's readers have been instructed about the events that have taken place (Luke 1:4). So in this orderly account, "the Evangelist definitely wanted to portray the deeds and teachings of Jesus as the pattern for the acts and instructions of the apostolic church."⁶⁶ In the Greco-Roman world, it would have been quite usual for followers or disciples to pass on these teachings and record them for posterity.⁶⁷ Readers also know that this account has been handed on by eyewitnesses (*αὐτόπτης*) and that it is not the first account that has been passed on, either orally or in written form, and they may even have heard of some of those earlier accounts. It is

⁶⁴ This does not deny the fact that many Jews within Palestine also spoke Greek and were influenced by Hellenism.

⁶⁵ Shaye J. Cohen, *From Maccabees to the Mishnah*, 2nd ed. (London: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 34.

⁶⁶ Charles H. Talbert, *Literary Patterns, Theological Themes and the Genre of Luke-Acts* (Atlanta: SBL Press; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1974), 98.

⁶⁷ Alexander, "Formal Elements and Genre," in Moessner, *Jesus and the Heritage of Israel*, 9-26.

assumed, therefore, that they have much familiarity with the general Jesus tradition but not specific knowledge of other gospels.

2.6 Summary of Methodology

To summarise, the field of study is the women characters who encounter Jesus in his adult ministry. The pericopes include a diversity of these women, both individual and groups, whose relationship with Jesus varies from simply being observed to being in dialogue with him. By reading along with the implied reader in a sequential manner and by comparing and contrasting them with the men (in invited synkrisis), the aim will be to build a cumulative picture of the patterns of responses of the women to Jesus and, in so doing, also see what this reveals about Jesus.

The analytical approach in each pericope will include the following:

- A sequential reading of the pericope, assembling all the information relevant to the woman character (as revealed by showing/telling, extratext)
- An analysis of the character in her interaction with other characters and in particular, Jesus
- A synkrisis of the male-female pairings
- Finally, a summary based on the cumulative reading of the female characters and their relationship with Jesus to show what that reveals about Jesus, what the women anticipate about him and how they reflect his ministry

This reading will be done with the implied reader who comes to the pericope equipped with extratext and prior context, preformed by information from within the text to this point.

This allows the reader to have two different levels of communication, assessing characters

within the story (with the narrator), or from an outside vantage point with the additional information that the implied reader possesses.

Chapter 3: Introduction to the Overall Exegesis

For the purpose of this work, Jesus' adult ministry will be taken as beginning at 4:14. However before this, he has already been baptised, validated by the Father and filled with the Holy Spirit (3:21-22). He has also spent forty days in the wilderness, where he has resisted the temptations of the devil (4:1-13). So, already empowered, he emerges in public.

Readers have already read, or more likely listened to, the first three chapters of the Gospel and have these as background as they begin to look at Jesus' adult ministry. They have met the strong women characters in the Infancy Narrative, namely Elizabeth, Mary and Anna. Elizabeth is the first to proclaim that Jesus is Lord, even before he is born (1:43), Mary agrees to participate in God's work when requested by the angel Gabriel (1:38) and when Anna meets Jesus in the Temple, she speaks about him to all who are "looking for the redemption of Jerusalem" (2:38). These women form a backdrop for the women characters that emerge in the sequential reading.

The first person noted to converse with Jesus in the Gospel is Mary when he is found in the Temple (2:46-52). At first, it seems to be a very human interaction as the parents find their lost child. Mary tells Jesus that she and his father (*ὁ πατήρ σου*) have been anxious and worried about him. In his response, Jesus prepares not only Mary and Joseph but readers as well for his future role. "*οὐκ ᾔδειτε ὅτι ἐν τοῖς τοῦ πατρὸς μου δεῖ εἶναι με;*" can imply that he must be in his father's house or about his father's business. Secondly, 'father' now takes on a far more complex meaning as it applies not to his earthly

father, but to his heavenly Father.¹ A male/female synkrisis can also be made here. Every time that they are referred to together, Mary and Joseph are called his parents rather than by their individual names (2:41 and 43). However while there is ambiguity about the term *πατήρ*, Mary is clearly described as *ἡ μήτηρ αὐτοῦ* both by herself and by the narrator. There is no ambiguity about the fact that she is Jesus' mother. Her reaction is to "ponder" all of these things in her heart (2:51) and, as readers move on to Jesus' adult ministry, they are also invited to ponder these things.

3.1 The male-female pairings of the Infancy Narrative

The Infancy Narrative has already schooled readers in Luke's use of male-female pairings. Mary and Zechariah both receive annunciations from the angel Gabriel (1:8-23; 1:26-38) about the birth of their sons and both pray in response to God's goodness to them (1:46-55; 1:67-79). However their responses are different: Zechariah doubts, while Mary accepts the angel's message and agrees to the request.

Furthermore, there is a comparison between Elizabeth and her husband, Zechariah. Zechariah doubts the message of the angel, while Elizabeth accepts her pregnancy saying, "This is what the Lord has done for me when he looked favorably on me" (1:25). She is also the first person to give her son his name and it is only after this that Zechariah declares that he will be called John. Readers see echoes of Genesis 18 when Abraham and Sarah were also advanced in years (*προβαίνω*) when they received a visit from the Lord, who told them that they would have a son. However in a male-female reversal, Elizabeth resembles Abraham rather than Sarah in her strength of faith. This story also echoes the story of

¹ François Bovon, *Luke 1*, Hermeneia, trans. Christine M. Thomas (Philadelphia: Fortress, 2002), 114.

Samuel where it is his mother rather than his father who makes the decision that he will serve the Lord for the rest of his life (1 Sam 1:11).

Simeon and Anna are both prophets in the Temple waiting for the coming of the Messiah. Both react to the news, Simeon by addressing Mary who, as well as being named, is called both parent and mother in this pericope (2:29-32) and Anna, by proclaiming the news to everyone she meets (2:38).

So, as readers continue their sequential reading of the Gospel, they have already encountered many women characters and have also been schooled to recognise the male/female pairings that appear and suggest synkrisis. Furthermore, the characters in the Infancy Narrative and in particular several women (Elizabeth, Mary and Anna), shed much light on Jesus and his future mission. This alerts readers to be attentive to what they might learn from the women that they meet as they progress through the Gospel.

3.2 Jesus glorified by all

The first description of Jesus' ministry is a summary account.² He is filled with the power of the Spirit and a report about him has spread throughout the region (4:14).³ He was teaching in their synagogues and that teaching led to him being glorified by everyone (4:15). The verb *δοξάζω* had already been used when the shepherds, having visited Jesus in Bethlehem, returned to the fields glorifying God because of what they had seen and heard (*οἷς ἤκουσαν καὶ εἶδον*) (2:20).⁴ Readers now notice that this same verb is used here but this

² Summaries will be discussed in section 7.1.

³ *φήμη* "does not mean only 'reports of him' but also 'renown' or 'fame.'" See Bovon, *Luke 1*, 151.

⁴ "For Luke, glorifying God is a response to what eyes have seen and ears heard." Peter Doble, *The Paradox of Salvation: Luke's theology of the Cross* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 27.

time, it says that the people were glorifying or praising Jesus (δοξαζόμενος ὑπὸ πάντων), thus publicly recognising him as God's agent.

3.3 Jesus' mission statement at Nazareth

With this background, Jesus goes to the synagogue at Nazareth where he outlines his mission statement (4:16-30). He says that he has been anointed “to bring good news to the poor . . . to proclaim release (ἄφεσις) to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free (ἄφεσις)” (4:18). It is not the first time that readers have heard this message of liberation and release in the gospel. Using a similar theme, Mary has already proclaimed in her prayer that the Lord “has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly” and “has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty” (1:52-53). Zechariah, filled with the Holy Spirit, has prophesied that his own son will prepare the way of the Lord and, by using ἄφεσις links the forgiveness of sins (“give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness [ἄφεσις] of their sins” [1:77]) with the release of the oppressed (4:18). So, as Jesus embarks on his ministry, readers realise that he has come with a message of release for the poor and the oppressed and a message of forgiveness that shows the tender mercy of God.

Part 1: The Galilean Ministry

Chapter 4: Exegesis of Luke 4:38-39 (Cure of Simon's mother-in-law)

4.1 A sequential reading of the pericope

The first woman to encounter Jesus in his adult ministry is Simon's mother-in-law (4:38-39). The narrator describes how Jesus goes to Simon's house, where he has probably been invited for the main meal of the day which would take place after the Sabbath service.¹ There is no mention of a request for healing before Jesus comes to the house and, in fact, there is no mention of Simon's mother-in-law until Jesus is in the house.

While the healing of the woman is the second miracle recounted in the gospel, it is the first one where the person is identified as an individual (even if that is only in relation to her son-in-law). This is the first mention of someone called Simon in the Gospel and it is also the first time that someone has been named in the Gospel without any explanation of who s/he is.² However, readers who according to the preface have not only had contact with the Christian community but have already been "instructed in its teachings (use of *κατηχέω* as verb of instruction with *λόγος* [1:4])³" (1:4), are able to 'fill in the gaps' and

¹ I. Howard Marshall, *Commentary on Luke*, NIGTC (Exeter: Paternoster, 1978), 194.

² While they are very minor textual variants, D includes *καὶ Ἀνδραεὺ* and *βο^{ms}* mentions *Πετροῦ* in verse 38. Given the fact that Jesus goes to Simon's house, these variants suggest that the Simon that is mentioned is Simon Peter. Eberhard and Erwin Nestle, *Novum Testamentum Graece* 28th Edition. ed. by Barbara and Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini and Bruce M. Metzger, (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012), 195.

³ BDAG, 534.

recognise Simon from the role he plays in the early church.⁴ While Simon is a common name, Simon Peter is the best known Simon in the early church and the miracle takes place in Capernaum, known as Simon's home town. Furthermore, since Luke has not yet described the call of Simon Peter, it is fitting to refer to him as Simon here.

This pericope takes place in the private arena of a house (*οἰκία*) as the action has moved from the synagogue. The movement from the synagogue to the house, from the public space to the private, could be described as almost immediate. Readers will have noticed that there have already been signs of antagonism towards Jesus in the synagogue, when the demon expressed opposition at Capernaum (4:34) and when Jesus was rejected by the people in the synagogue in Nazareth and driven out of the town (4:29). The house however is a place of hospitality even though there is no mention of the householders, Simon and his wife, being present.⁵ Definitions for *οἰκία*, stress the actual physical space occupied. "Quant au terme *οἰκία*, il a chez Luc le sens de bâtiment, soit au sens de construction . . . soit au sens d'espace d'habitation."⁶ So readers are directed away from the synagogue to the physical space of a domestic dwelling. As to the size of the house, Arlandson considers that Simon's trade as a fisherman "would be considered no higher than

⁴ The following commentators all presume that 'Simon' refers to Simon Peter. Bovon, *Luke 1*, 163. Bovon does not doubt that it is Peter but says that since the disciples have not been called, this is the reason that Luke does not introduce him as Simon Peter here; Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 225; Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 85. On the other hand, Nolland is not certain that people will know who Simon is and may not connect him with Peter. John Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1989), 211.

⁵ Dictionary definitions seem to imply that the word *οἰκία* often refers to a smaller dwelling than an *οἶκος*. The lexicon defines *οἰκία* as "a building or place where one dwells - 'house, home, dwelling, residence'" while an *οἶκος* is described as "a building consisting of one or more rooms and normally serving as a dwelling place; it also includes certain public buildings, for example, a Temple ('house, Temple, sanctuary.')." L&N 7.3.

⁶ Pierre-Yves Brandt and Alessandra Lukinovich, "Oikos et oikia chez Marc comparé à Matthieu et Luc," *Bib* 78 (1997): 525-533, 529; De Vos concurs with this in his discussion of Acts. "Luke employs this term (*οἰκία*) primarily for the physical building and only secondarily for the household unit." Craig Steven De Vos, "The Significance of the Change from oikos to oikia in Luke's Account of the Philippian Gaoler (Acts 16.30-4)," *NTS* 41 (1995): 292-296, 296.

a village peasant” and it follows therefore that his house would be quite small.⁷ Freyne places the fishermen on a higher level on the social scale “among the more economically mobile of the village culture, not the products of the urban or rural poor.”⁸ This meaning is more consistent with the description of the fishermen when Simon signals to their partners (μέτοχοις)⁹ in the other boat to come and help them (5:7), thus implying that the fishermen own their own boats. So the house may be the slightly bigger house of an artisan rather than a peasant.

Simon’s mother-in-law is given a prominent place in verse 38 as πενθερά is sandwiched between two mentions of Σίμων. She is introduced as someone who is seriously ill¹⁰ with a high fever.¹¹ There is some dispute about whether or not the term πυρετός μέγας has a specific medical meaning.¹² However, the term πυρετός definitely means a “fever, high temperature or feverish heat,” which seems to imply an acute illness that has affected Simon’s mother-in-law quite suddenly.¹³ This may explain why the request for healing is made when Jesus arrives in the house and not before. The seriousness of the illness also intensifies the effect of the healing for readers as well as the woman’s response.

⁷ James Malcolm Arlandson, *Women, Class and Society in Early Christianity: Models from Luke-Acts* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 143.

⁸ Sean Freyne, *Galilee, Jesus and the Gospels* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1988), 241. See also Sean Freyne, *Jesus: A Jewish Galilean* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2004), 52.

⁹ BDAG describes μέτοχος as a business partner. L & N defines it as one who shares with someone else as an associate in an enterprise or undertaking

¹⁰ The verb συνέχω implies that she is held captive or tormented by the illness.

¹¹ The adjective μέγας emphasises this.

¹² Marshall quoting Galen believes that it was a term in medical usage. Marshall, *Commentary on Luke*, 195. However Cadbury states that Galen and Alexander of Aphrodisias are drawing from a common source namely Archigenes and therefore there is only a single source for this idea and so there is no proof that the term was in common usage. Henry J. Cadbury, “Lexical Notes on Luke-Acts. II: Recent arguments for medical language,” *JBL* (1926):190-209, 195.

¹³ Barbara Friberg, Timothy Friberg and Neva F. Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, Baker’s Greek New Testament Library (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000) Electronic edition.

The narrator seems to stand at a distance as he ‘shows’ Jesus’ response to the request. Jesus reacts immediately by standing over the woman¹⁴ or, in this particular situation, it would be more correct to say bends over her.¹⁵ “Ἐπάνω followed by the genitive means *above in point of situation*.”¹⁶ This ‘standing over’ or overshadowing of the woman by Jesus, as he uses the power of God from on high, reminds readers of Mary when she was told that God’s power would overshadow her at the Annunciation (1:35). Readers, remembering that Jesus gave the example of the widow of Zarephath at the synagogue in Nazareth (Luke 4:26), are reminded again of this episode with Elijah (1 Kgs 17:21), when he bent over that widow’s son and breathed life into him in a gesture that is very similar to the gesture used by Jesus here to cure Simon’s mother-in-law. There is a very great difference as Elijah had to cry out to the Lord and lie on the child repeatedly, while the healing here is much more immediate and authoritative, impressing on the reader that Jesus is not only a prophet like Elijah, but much more.

Jesus completes the cure by rebuking (ἐπιτιμάω) the fever, and unusual term for healing.¹⁷ The narrator has already used ἐπιτιμάω in the previous pericope, when he describes the exorcism in the synagogue, where Jesus rebukes the unclean spirit and orders him to leave the man (4:35) and the demon responds first by resisting and throwing the man down, but then by coming out of him without harming him. The similarity, between the descriptions of the cure of the fever and the defeat of the unclean spirit, echoes the temptation scene where Jesus also defeated the devil (4:1-13). Readers, by using this

¹⁴ ἐπιστας ἐπάνω αὐτῆς is used only once in Luke’s Gospel.

¹⁵ Bovon, *Luke 1*, 163.

¹⁶ J. Duncan M. Derrett, “Getting on top of a Demon (Luke 4:39),” *EvQ* 2 (1993): 99-109, 101.

¹⁷ This term is used by Luke for the casting out of demons and unclean spirits but never for the healing of any other diseases. Derrett proposes that by curing his mother-in-law, Jesus “frees Peter to join his mission.” Derrett, “Getting on top of a Demon,” 101.

description to fill in the gaps, can get a much fuller picture of the actual cure of Simon's mother-in-law. Jesus has authority over both demons and illness and so, is equipped to carry out the mission of release that he had announced in Nazareth. When the fever releases¹⁸ Simon's mother-in-law, she responds immediately with service (διακονέω). This is a further reminder of the Elijah story where the woman ministered to Elijah before her son was healed (1 Kgs 17: 10-16).

The woman had a very severe illness and was in a near death situation. The description of Jesus standing over her to rebuke the illness, in the manner of an exorcism, manifests God's power to bring new life to her. By employing the aorist active participle of the verb ἀνίστημι, both for Jesus' leaving the synagogue (4:38) and now for the woman's recovery (4:39), the woman is subtly associated with Jesus. Moreover, readers, instructed in the Jesus tradition, might well recognise the use of this resurrection verb. This journey from near death to new life anticipates the paschal mystery. The woman's reaction of service further epitomises Jesus ministry and provides a witness for implied readers.

The woman is also the first person to respond to Jesus by service and, not just to Jesus, but to the others (αὐτοίς¹⁹) as well.²⁰ Her service (διακονέω) is probably to serve or

¹⁸ The allied noun, ἄφεσις, has already been used by Jesus in his mission statement to speak of the release of captives and the liberation of the oppressed (4:18) and before that by Zechariah when he prophesied the forgiveness of sins (1:77).

¹⁹ A minor manuscript D gives the following variant for verse 39: παραχρημα ὥστε ἀναστᾶσαν αὐτὴν διακονεῖν. This variant implies that the woman serves 'him' (Jesus) rather than 'them' and therefore changes the focus of the ministry. However, the thrust of the narrative and the verses that immediately follow verse 39 both point to a more inclusive reading where 'them' makes more sense and the woman cooperates with Jesus in his ministry rather than ministering to him alone.

²⁰ Turid Karlsen Seim, "The Gospel of Luke," in *Searching the Scriptures: a Feminist commentary Vol II*, ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (London: SCM, 1995), 728-740, 740.

wait on tables in this household situation where she is extending hospitality.²¹ Readers are conscious of diverse forms of service which have already appeared in Luke's gospel.²²

This service probably involved preparing and serving a meal for those present.²³ Seim explains further:

the extent to which the women served at table when the household entertained guests varied depending on religious norms, ideals of propriety, and cultural and social location. While women did have the responsibility for the preparation of the food, they did not always serve at table, because they then had to appear in front of strangers.²⁴

Because of the lack of slaves or servants to serve the meal in what would be considered a traditional Galilean household, the woman would have fulfilled that role here. Other commentators believe that the woman is liberated as a result of her healing and so steps outside conventional roles, by serving a rabbi and "ignoring the Sabbath restrictions preventing her from serving and helping others."²⁵ This response to Jesus is extended to others also. She is not the householder/ the hostess, but since the narrative makes no mention of both her son-in-law and daughter, she becomes the central figure in the household. She is the person who epitomises the service. Simon's mother-in-law's service to Jesus and the others reminds readers of the response to God of the women that they have already encountered in the Gospel (Mary and Anna). Mary, having called herself a slave of

²¹ The lexicon defines the verb as "(1) generally, of services of any kind *serve*; (2) of supplying with life's necessities *support, take care of, minister to*; (3) of table service *wait on, serve*; (4) of religious service relating the physical needs of believers *serve as deacon, perform duties of deacon*." Friberg, Friberg and Miller, *Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*.

²² The eyewitnesses who have handed on the first accounts of the gospel are called 'servants of the word' (*υπηρετης*) a general word for servant or helper (1:2). Zechariah is involved in priestly service in the Temple (*λειτουργια*) when the angel of the Lord appears to him (1:23). The verb *λατρευω* which means to serve by carrying out religious duties is used by Zechariah when he praises God who has delivered his people from their enemies so that they can serve God without fear (1:74) and also of Anna who is described as serving God day and night in the Temple (2:37).

²³ Seim, *The Double Message*, 60.

²⁴ Seim, "The Gospel of Luke," 740.

²⁵ Witherington, *Women in the Ministry of Jesus*, 67.

God (1:38), goes at once to visit and support Elizabeth once the angel tells her that Elizabeth is pregnant and Anna, who has been serving God in the Temple, reacts to her encounter with Jesus and his parents in the Temple by proclamation (2:37-38).

There is no specific description of who the others are. When he first arrived at the house, ‘they’ beseeched Jesus about the woman. So they are obviously people who have been impressed by his teaching or the exorcism that has just taken place in the synagogue. The woman now serves both Jesus and these people. Via says that the “others” consisted of Jesus, Simon and the disciples that he had chosen at this stage²⁶ but since there is no mention of anyone being called in the narrative previous to this, Corley believes that the men include only Jesus and Simon.²⁷ Confining the group to a very exclusive group of only two or three seems to contradict the inclusiveness that Jesus has implied in his mission statement at Nazareth. Since the action takes place in the home of Simon, readers are likely to fill in the gap and presume that he, even though he is never mentioned, has extended hospitality to Jesus and his companions. Whether he is actually physically present or not when Jesus comes to the house, it is obvious that Simon’s mother-in-law plays a key role in extending that hospitality.

As evening arrives, Jesus “laid his hands on each of them and was curing them” (4:40). This verb *θεραπεύω* does not just signify ‘to cure’ but also ‘to serve.’²⁸ In this context it is used by Philo and also in 1 Esdras 1:4.²⁹ Luke also uses it with the same meaning in Acts 17:25. It is now seen that the woman’s serving foreshadows Jesus’ service

²⁶ Jane E. Via, “Women, the Discipleship of Service and the Early Christian Ritual Meal in the Gospel of Luke,” *St. Luke’s Journal of Theology* 29 (1985): 37-60, 38.

²⁷ Kathleen E. Corley, *Private Women, Public Meals: Social conflict and women in the synoptic tradition* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 120.

²⁸ “To render service or homage, serve a divinity” “to heal, restore,” BDAG, 453.

²⁹ BDAG, 453.

later that day. By juxtaposing *θεραπεύω* and *διακονέω*, the implied author shows the woman also collaborating with Jesus in his work of healing and serving others. The use of the imperfect for both of those verbs shows the continuation of the ministry throughout the day. The emphasis has moved from the authoritative figure of Jesus healing both the woman and the possessed man in the synagogue (4:31-37) through the power of God, to the servant leader who is joined by the woman in that service.

4.2 An analysis of the female character in her interaction with other characters

4.2.1 Simon's mother-in-law and Jesus

Jesus is the main character to interact with Simon's mother-in-law. While he responds immediately to the entreaty for help, the initial interaction with the woman is very impersonal. His focus is very much on the fever, which is personified so that it has character-like traits and in fact, Jesus has more direct communication with it than he has with the woman. The narrator describes Jesus as addressing the fever and rebuking it in the same way that he rebukes the unclean spirit in the exorcism that has taken place immediately before this. He distinguishes between the fever and the woman to emphasise that it is the fever, not the woman that must be expelled. The result is that the fever 'releases' the woman.

The woman responds to Jesus, not by any verbal communication, but by service (*διακονέω*). In this she imitates Jesus' action in the synagogue, where he has ministered to the man with the unclean spirit, before he came to Simon's house to continue his ministry by healing the woman. This also prefigures the *διακονία* that continues throughout the day as they work side by side; she ministers to them while Jesus heals them placing his hand on

each. So, as well as the woman acting as hostess, it is even more noticeable that Jesus also behaves as host. The sick are brought to him in the house and he heals them, thus showing the hospitality of God.

The crucial point is that those who do receive him find that he brings them into a much wider sphere of hospitality: the “hospitality of God.” The One who comes as visitor and guest in fact becomes *host* and offers a hospitality in which human beings and, potentially, the entire world, can become truly human, be at home, can *know* salvation in the depths of their hearts.³⁰

At this stage there is no mention of Jesus having called any disciples to follow him and so, Simon’s mother-in-law is the first person, male or female, who is reported as functioning as a disciple i.e. who responds to her encounter with Jesus by ministering alongside him. Seim confines this ministering to service at table but still sees it as a response to Jesus’ benefaction.³¹

4.2.2 Simon’s mother-in-law and the crowd

The woman does not ask Jesus for healing. Rather, it is the group character, “they,” that shows concern and beseeches (ἐρωτάω) Jesus about her. Nothing is said about them; they could be new disciples, Simon and/or some of his family or some local people from Capernaum. Readers presume that they have come from the synagogue, have already experienced Jesus’ power to heal and therefore anticipate a positive response. They “ask” or it might be more correct to say “beseech” or “entreat” Jesus with regard to the woman.³² The woman, in response to her healing, will serve Jesus, but also them. This response becomes even more noticeable as the day progresses and more people come for healing “as

³⁰ Brendan Byrne, *The Hospitality of God: A reading of Luke’s Gospel* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1989), 4.

³¹ Seim, “The Gospel of Luke,” 739.

³² Reid states that they are imploring Jesus to do something about her because of “ἐρωτάω being used with the accusative pronoun + περι+ genitive.” Reid, *Choosing the Better Part*, 97.

the sun was setting” (4:40). So despite its size, the house, which is already a place of hospitality where Jesus has been welcomed, opens up to become a public place of healing where Simon’s mother-in-law and Jesus act as hosts and welcome all those who ask to be healed. By the end of this pericope, the crowd is not only amazed by Jesus and his power but has also been given an example of how to serve in return.

The crowd grows in number. When ‘they’ are first mentioned (4:38), it seems to be a small group that has accompanied Jesus from the synagogue to the private setting of Simon’s house. They are the people who show concern for the woman and witness her healing. Later in the day, “as the sun was setting” after the Sabbath, the small crowd has grown to all who have heard about him and are bringing their sick to be healed (4:40). They are also there as witnesses, not only to the healings, but to the woman’s response to them in what is a much more public setting than earlier in the day.

4.3 A synkrisis of the male-female pairings

A fruitful synkrisis may be made between the cure of Simon’s mother-in-law and the exorcism (4:33-36) that immediately precedes it. It can be justified as the two passages are situated next to one another, both take place on the Sabbath and both use the language of exorcism.

Both incidents take place on the Sabbath, but this is a non-necessary element in both pericopes as there is no query about whether it is permissible to heal on the Sabbath or not.³³ Both are also examples of the ministry to the oppressed that Jesus has proclaimed in the synagogue in Nazareth. The man is possessed by an unclean spirit and the woman is

³³ J. David Woodington, "Charity and Deliverance from Death in the Accounts of Tabitha and Cornelius," *CBQ* 79 (2017): 634-650, 634.

being controlled or held captive by a serious illness. Arlandson places both of them in the category of ‘unclean and degraded’ because of their afflictions.³⁴ So, both of them fulfil the criteria for release that Jesus has set out in his mission statement as they exemplify “liberations of those captive to spiritual and physical sickness.”³⁵ There are a number of similarities in language: the use of the same verb ἐπιτιμάω in the stories to rebuke both the fever and the unclean demon and the adjective μέγας to describe the loudness of the spirit’s voice as well as the seriousness of the fever.³⁶ What is even more noticeable, however, is the description of both miracles. While one is an exorcism and the other is a physical healing, the actual miracles are described in a similar manner since Luke often sees physical illness as demonic and so treats it as similar to possession by unclean spirits.³⁷ Jesus is an imposing figure in both instances: he does not lay hands on either person and the importance of his word is emphasised in the way he speaks with “authority and power” (4:36). Jesus’ communication is not with the two people who are afflicted, but with the demon and the fever. Both are rebuked in exactly the same way and both leave the person immediately.

There are also several differences between the two episodes. One takes place in the synagogue while the other is situated in a house. There are already the beginnings of resistance to Jesus in synagogues (4:28, 4:34), while the house is a place of welcome. The demon recognizes Jesus and shouts out that he is the “Holy One of God” and Jesus has to order him to be silent. Once the demon is rebuked, he throws the man on the ground and

³⁴ Arlandson, *Women, Class and Society in Early Christianity*, 115.

³⁵ Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 85.

³⁶ Marshall, *Commentary on Luke*, 194.

³⁷ Both Green and Marshall argue that Luke believes that all illness (both physical and mental) has a demonic source and that the people in both cases are in need of release. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 221; Marshall, *Commentary on Luke*, 195.

leaves him. Nothing further is heard about the man's reaction and no one knows whether he becomes a follower of Jesus or returns to his home unchanged by the experience.

However, readers carry the awareness that Jesus is the 'Holy One of God' and see the healing of the woman through that lens. While the woman remains silent throughout her healing/exorcism, her reaction is reported afterwards. While nothing further is heard of the man, she responds to Jesus immediately by ministering, possibly to reciprocate for her healing, or to show her faith in Jesus and respond as a disciple. Unlike the story of the exorcism, she responds by action rather than by proclaiming who Jesus is.

While crowds are present in both episodes, they react differently. The crowd in the synagogue has already been astounded (*ἐκπλήσσω*) by Jesus' teaching even before the exorcism. They are onlookers at the exorcism and react, not to the man with the unclean spirit, but with amazement (*θάμβος*) at what Jesus has done. A smaller group reappears in the next section and beseeches Jesus to help the woman. More than likely this crowd includes some of those who were amazed at the exorcism in the synagogue earlier in the day, and, while they saw the man's lack of reaction at that stage, they are now shown how to react to Jesus' healing in the woman's response. Later at sunset, when the crowd grows and others who are in need of healing are brought along, they see how the woman cooperates with Jesus in his healing ministry.

At this early stage in the Gospel, the synkrisis already points readers to Jesus' power and authority as he performs miracles of healing and exorcism. The woman responds to her healing with service, a decision that is verified by Jesus' later ministry to those who come. The healed woman is a double sign. She is a visible manifestation of the power of Jesus' healing and also a model of service.

4.4 Summary

Many commentators dismiss Simon's mother-in-law as inconsequential and see her role as passive. Reid, for example, describes the woman as "nameless and voiceless."³⁸ However, following Jesus' mission statement in Nazareth, she is one of the first of the oppressed to be liberated just as he promised. Even though she is not the first person to be released from affliction by Jesus, she is the first person who is reported as responding to him and is the first model of discipleship in his adult ministry. Her response is the prototype of the ministry that has already been announced by Jesus in Nazareth and modelled in Capernaum through his healing ministry. She is also the first person to collaborate with Jesus by imitating him and ministering to others, initially by reaching out to those in her immediate household, and later in the day by acting as assistant host to Jesus as he welcomes all those who come to be healed. While she does not say anything, she demonstrates her faith in Jesus by her action.

When Jesus is encountered first in this pericope he heals by his word, and the emphasis is on his authority to rebuke the illness (and that of the possessed man in the synagogue), which is a clear example of the power of God. The healed woman is a visible sign of this power. However, when the woman reacts to her healing by serving, this anticipates Jesus' actions later in the day and is endorsed by him as he continues his healing ministry alongside the woman, thus showing servant leadership and the hospitality of God as he reaches out to those in need. The manifestation of God's power in the bringing of the woman from near death to life foreshadows, for readers, Jesus' coming through death to new life.

³⁸ Reid, *Choosing the Better Part*, 97.

Chapter 5: Exegesis of Luke 7:11-17 (The Widow's Son)

Since the healing of Simon's mother-in-law (4:38-39), Jesus has become very well known in Galilee. He has continued to teach and perform miracles and word is spreading about him throughout the region, as crowds gather in awe of what he is doing and teaching (5:15, 26; 6:17-19; 7:9). He begins to gather a band of disciples (5:1-11, 27-31; 6:12-16), while at the same time opposition to him grows and he has had a number of clashes with the Pharisees, particularly with regard to observance of the Law (5:30; 6:1-5, 6-11). Implied readers, who have been following the women in the Gospel, have to wait until now for the emergence of the next woman in the Gospel as the story of the Widow's Son unfolds.

5.1 A sequential reading of the pericope

Jesus goes to a town called Nain and, as the pericope begins, the focus is very much on him. While the narrator says that the disciples and a large crowd went with him (*συμπορεύομαι*), they are presented more as an audience than participants in the action.

The action takes place at the gate of the town. The word gate (*πύλη*) is only mentioned once in this Gospel, but readers are aware of its importance as a meeting place where the elders gather (Prov 31:23) and resolve lawsuits (Isa 29:21) as well as dispensing justice (Amos 5:15). The justice that Amos describes is not judicial and legalistic, but linked very much with the mercy of God. Readers will recall that important events like the arrangement of Boaz' marriage to Ruth and the resolving of possible objections to the

marriage by a relative, with a closer claim to exercise a quasi-Levirate obligation, also took place at the gate of the town (Ruth 4:11).

The gate also however marks the boundary of the town -“the dangerous marginal zone between areas of human habitation.”¹ It is at the walls of the town that sieges took place, like those of Samaria (1 Kgs 6:24-30) and Jerusalem (2 Kgs 24:10). Burials also take place in this area outside the walls of the town.² So, it is in this boundary area that the woman, in her distress, meets Jesus.

Jesus and his entourage meet a group emerging from the town. The description begins with the emphatic ἰδοὺ opening the scene up to the reader’s vision: a man who has died is being carried out of the town, with his mother and a large crowd accompanying her. The mother is given a full description: the dead boy is her only son (μονογενῆς υἱὸς τῆ μητρὶ αὐτοῦ), and she is a widow. Readers will immediately fill in the gap in relation to the woman and understand the trauma and grief that the woman has already experienced as she arrives at this stage of burying her son. They will also realise that, not only is she losing the personal relationship with her son, but also her sole source of economic support.

When first century readers hear the term widow, it brings a number of contrasting images to mind. The first and most commonly held view is of the widow as poor and vulnerable (there is nothing in this pericope to class the widow as wealthy). As a widow in these circumstances, the woman “was without voice in society, she had no one to speak for her.”³ Tannehill argues that one of the reasons for Luke’s particular interest in widows is because he wants to show outreach to people who are oppressed and badly treated. In

¹ Bovon, *Luke 1*, 271.

² Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, 322.

³ Seim, *The Double Message*, 232.

particular, widows are likely to be economically dependent in a patriarchal society.⁴ Now that she is without her only son, there is the strong possibility that she will become destitute.

Proposing a different view, Bauckham argues that widows were entitled to their *kettuba*⁵ or if they renounced that, they had the right to live in their husband's house and be supported there by his heirs.⁶ Stanford maintains that widows, like all poor women, would have been expected to work and so would manage to provide for themselves.⁷ So, even without her son, the woman should not be placed into the category of being destitute. However, his comparison with the widow of Zarephath, whom he considers as not destitute when she meets Elijah, weakens his case.⁸ She was actually gathering sticks to cook a final meal for her son before they both died of hunger.

Even if readers accept that the widow is now in a very vulnerable position, they are also conversant with the demands of the Septuagint to care for widows (Deut 10:17-18).⁹ Not only does God love the widow and orphan, God also demands that people support them (Deut 14:28-29; 24:19-21).¹⁰ They are also expected not to victimise widows (Deut 24:17),¹¹ and if they do, God will punish them for that mistreatment (Exod 22:21-23).¹²

⁴ Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts Vol 1*, 136.

⁵ Specific financial protection for a wife in the event of the death of her husband.

⁶ Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women: Studies of the named women in the Gospels* (London: T&T Clark, 2002), 129.

⁷ Thomas J. F. Stanford, *Luke's People: The men and women who met Jesus and the apostles* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014), 244.

⁸ The widow tells Elijah that she is going to prepare a final meal for herself and her son before they will both die of starvation. *Ibid.*, 253.

⁹ "For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them with food and clothing" (Deut 10:17-18).

¹⁰ For example, every third year people are required to share out the full tithe of their produce to widows as well as strangers, orphans and Levites (Deut 14:28-29). They must also leave some sheaves in the fields, olives on the trees and grapes in the vineyards for widows, orphans and aliens to glean at harvest-time (Deut 24:19-21).

¹¹ For example, by taking a garment as collateral for a loan (Deut 24:17).

While aware of the vulnerability of widows, readers have already encountered a much more positive perspective on widowhood earlier in this gospel. Anna, the widow who is also described as a prophetess, is paired with Simeon in the Temple at the time of Jesus' presentation. She "is presented as a figure of wisdom and maturity" whose life has reached completion because of her encounter with Jesus.¹³ As a reaction to this meeting, she proclaimed the good news publicly because, even though her speech is not recounted in this episode, she is described as a prophet proclaiming the redemption (λύτρωσις) of Jerusalem to all she encounters. Readers see her as an example of the *ānāwīm* or poor ones, "who could not trust in their own strength but had to rely in utter confidence on God: the lowly, the poor, the sick, the downtrodden, the *widows*, the *old people* and the orphans."¹⁴ Even though the widow here is depicted in tragic circumstances, there is also a semblance of hope; she is not completely alone as she has the support of her community as she buries her son (ὄχλος τῆς πόλεως ἰκανὸς ἦν σὺν αὐτῇ). This group is described in a very similar manner to the group with Jesus. There is a large, combined audience assembled.

The action now moves from a panoramic view of what is happening to a close up of the main protagonist, Jesus, and his outreach to the woman. It also moves from the narrator to direct speech by Jesus, here designated as the Lord (7:13). When he sees the woman, he has compassion for her and speaks directly to her telling her not to weep. This one sentence brings together the power of Jesus as Lord as well as his humanity, as he

¹² "You will not ill-treat widows or orphans; if you ill-treat them in any way and they make an appeal to me for help, I shall certainly hear their appeal, my anger will be roused and I shall put you to the sword; then your own wives will be widows and your own children orphans (Exod 22:21-23).

¹³ The use of multiples of seven and twelve in her age and in the outline of her life emphasises this. According to Serrano, "the number seven is a well-known expression of abundance. The number twelve expresses perfection." Andres Garcia Serrano, "Anna's Characterization in Luke 2:36-38: A case of conceptual illusion?" *CBQ* 76 (2014): 464-480, 470.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 469. Italics are author's emphasis.

empathises with the woman in her distress. While the vocative (κύριε) of the noun has been used previously to address Jesus, it is the first time in his adult ministry that he has been described as Lord by the narrator. This term is not new to readers as they have already encountered it in the Infancy Narrative, where it is used primarily for the Lord God, but begins to include the Lord Jesus. Even more importantly, in the LXX, κύριος is used for the Lord God YHWH. When readers learn for the first time that Mary is actually pregnant (1:42), Elizabeth follows immediately by declaring that Mary is the mother of the κύριος (1:43). “It is in fact as κύριος that Luke first brings Jesus into the human realm.”¹⁵ Rowe makes the point that at this very first mention of Jesus, “God’s life is now bound up with Jesus’ life to such a great extent and with such intensity that they share the name/title κύριος.”¹⁶ In this pericope, the implied author uses the term κύριος to show his own Christology, which emphasises that the title of prophet is not sufficiently christological to describe Jesus.¹⁷ Here, while the crowd will call Jesus a great prophet, the use of κύριος prepares readers to engage the text in a particular way, conscious of Jesus’ divinity and his status as Lord.

Along with his power, the Lord’s humanity and empathy are also emphasised. The narrator says that Jesus has compassion on the woman by the use of the verb σπλαγγίζομαι.¹⁸ The related noun σπλάγγον (used only in the plural) literally means “the inner parts of the body as well as the intestines”¹⁹ and, in a more figurative way, can also be translated as deep compassion. To get a sense of the depth of feeling that readers

¹⁵ C. Kavin Rowe, *Early Narrative Christology: The Lord in the Gospel of Luke* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006), 43.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 48.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 120.

¹⁸ “to feel compassion for, to have great affection for, love, compassion”. L&N, Electronic Edition.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

recognize when reading this word, it is probably best described in English as something like a ‘gut-wrenching’ sense of compassion that the Lord feels for the woman and her situation. Menken, having done a numerical study of the words in this pericope, has established that the verb *σπλαγγίζομαι* is positioned exactly in the centre of the story.²⁰ He states that “These numerical structures suggest, I think, that in telling this story Luke wants to present Jesus as the compassionate benefactor of the mother rather than a performer of mighty acts”²¹ Readers have already encountered *σπλάγγνα* in Zechariah’s prayer (1:78), where he has combined it with *ἔλεος* “demonstrating God's compassion *mercy, loving kindness, faithfulness,*”²² and thus linking the compassion of Jesus with the mercy of God. This divine compassion can be found from the earliest mentions in Genesis right throughout the Old Testament when it is seen clearly as an attribute of God (Gen 24:12; Exod 20:6 etc).

The Lord’s compassion for the woman is shown by his speaking directly to her and telling her not to weep (*μὴ κλαῖε*). This recalls the sermon when Jesus says: "Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh" (6:21). For readers, this beatitude is a sign of hope for the woman and creates a sense of anticipation as in the synagogue in Nazareth. Jesus promised to bring release to the oppressed and readers now expect him to carry out that promise.

The Lord then moves forward and touches the bier. By so doing, he is making himself ritually unclean. “Those who touch the dead body of any human being shall be unclean seven days” (Num 19:11). This is the second time that readers have met the verb

²⁰ The implied reader may not notice that this is the exact centre of the story, but its positioning here still highlights its importance at a key moment in the encounter between Jesus and the woman.

²¹ Martinus J. J. Menken, “The position of *splanchnizesthai* and *splanchna* in the Gospel of Luke,” *NovT* 30 (1988): 107-114, 111.

²² Friberg, Friberg and Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, Electronic edition, 9002.

ἀπτω in this Gospel as earlier, Jesus touched the leper, who was also ritually unclean, to heal him (5:13). However, it is important to note that he is not making himself morally unclean because “ritual impurity is generally not sinful, it is often unavoidable and at times is even required (as in the case of burial).”²³ By touching the impurity, Jesus removes the causes, leprosy (5:13) and death (7:14), and restores purity, another example of the reversal theme in Luke’s Gospel. In the context of the compassion that Jesus shows in this pericope, approaching the young man and touching the bier is much more a sign of his empathy for the widow than any expression of conflict with the purity laws.

While the Lord touches the bier to stop it and focus on the young man, he is focusing on death, but using the power of his word to overcome that death. This anticipates his own death, also that of an only son, when, through the power of God, he will also overcome that death. He then moves on to speak directly to the dead man; the use of νεανίσκος is a hint that he sees life in the young man. Readers are already familiar with the verb ἐγείρω, which has been used in Jesus’ healing ministry when he cured the paralytic (5:24) and the man with the withered hand (6:8). Here, however, the verb takes on a resurrection meaning and readers realise that as well as meaning ‘to wake up,’ it can also be a call to resurrection (7:14). The dead man (νεκρός) reacts by sitting up and speaking; the use of νεκρός in juxtaposition with the earlier νεανίσκος reinforcing the fact that the young man has been resuscitated. The concept of resurrection is also evident in ἀνακαθίζω. “In the word ἀνακαθίζω (“sat up”) the attentive reader hears the ἀνα- (“up” or “again”). “He sat up” signifies his “awakening”; “he began” means to begin a new life.”²⁴ In verse 14, Jesus

²³ Jonathan Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 16.

²⁴ Bovon, *Luke 1*, 273.

commands the young man to get up and this is manifestly fulfilled in verse 15. He not only sits up, but also begins to speak. Jesus' power over death has led to the young man's resuscitation.

Now that the young man is raised, the spotlight returns to the communication between Jesus and the woman; "*she* was a widow, the crowd was with *her*; Jesus saw *her*; he had compassion on *her*, spoke to *her*, and finally, gave the dead man brought back to life to *her*."²⁵ By giving the son back to his mother (7:15), Jesus restores the mother-son relationship that has been ruptured by the young man's death. Jesus is now turning her tears into laughter just as he has promised when he told her not to weep (7:13). The importance of Jesus' encounter with the woman can be seen in the *inclusio* that the meeting forms around the resuscitation of the young man. Yet the focus continues to be on Jesus and his actions and there is no mention of the woman's reaction.

When, for the first time in the Gospel, the people react by calling Jesus a great prophet, readers are reminded of the episode at the synagogue in Nazareth where Jesus is treated as a rejected prophet when he preaches on the prophets (Elijah and Elisha), compares himself to them and is then driven out of the town by the people. Brodie proposes that this theme of prophecy which is "foundational to the Elijah/Elisha narrative"²⁶ is also foundational to Luke's Gospel. With this in mind, readers again find echoes of the story of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath (1Kgs 17:10-24) here.²⁷ Jesus has referred to the widow in his mission statement in the synagogue in Nazareth (4:26) and there were echoes of the story in the manner of healing of Simon's mother-in-law (4:38-

²⁵ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 289. Italics are author's emphasis.

²⁶ Thomas L. Brodie, *The Crucial Bridge: the Elijah/Elisha narrative as an interpretive synthesis of Genesis-Kings and a literary model for the gospels* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 83.

²⁷ There is also an echo of 2 Kgs 4:18-37 when Elisha brings the son of a widow back to life.

39). It is even more closely recalled here. In the following table, from a verbal point of view the first two quotes are very similar and the second pair are exactly the same:

Καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ ἐξῆς ἐπορεύθη εἰς πόλιν καλουμένην Ναϊν . . . ὡς δὲ ἤγγισεν τῇ πύλῃ τῆς πόλεως, . . . καὶ αὐτὴ ἦν χήρα (7:11-12).	Καὶ ἀνέστη καὶ ἐπορεύθη εἰς Σαρεπτα εἰς τὸν πυλῶνα τῆς πόλεως καὶ ἰδοὺ ἐκεῖ γυνὴ χήρα (1 Kgs 17:10).
καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτὸν τῇ μητρὶ αὐτοῦ (7:15)	καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτὸν τῇ μητρὶ αὐτοῦ (1 Kgs 17:23)

Jesus' encounter with the widow of Nain and Elijah's first encounter with the widow of Zarephath both take place at the gate of the city. In the highpoint of the stories, by drawing on the power of God, Jesus and Elijah bring the young men back to life. After this, the young man in Nain speaks and the boy in Zarephath cries out (*ἀναβοάω*) and then both sons are returned to their mothers by Jesus and Elijah. It is obvious however that Jesus is using the power of God in a much more direct and straightforward way, while Elijah pleads with the Lord and at first even blames God for killing her son (1 Kgs 17:20).

While readers notice all of these similarities, they also realise that Jesus is much greater than Elijah. While the son of the widow of Zarephath has just died, the son of the woman in Nain has been dead for some time and is about to be buried. Unlike the widow of Zarephath who blames Elijah for her son's death, the widow at Nain does not ask for help and does not need to ask as Jesus notices the situation and takes the initiative. Jesus, however, raises the young man simply by his word while Elijah, in a much more elaborate description, stretches himself on the child three times, calls on the Lord and pleads for the child's life. God brings the person back to life in both circumstances, but Elijah needed to pray for help while Jesus because of his relationship with the Father, recalled by the use of

κύριος (7:13), cures him simply by his word. So, while Elijah and Jesus are considered great prophets, in these pericopes, the narrator correctly identifies Jesus as ‘Lord,’ thus linking him much more intimately with God.

As well as calling Jesus a great prophet, the crowd also reacts with awe (φόβος) by glorifying God and saying that “God has looked favourably on his people” (NRSV). This translation of ἐπισκέπτομαι does not convey the full meaning which is better translated as “to visit for the purpose of bringing salvation.”²⁸ Having already met the term in the opening verse of the Benedictus when Zachariah proclaimed “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them”(1:68), readers realize that God is visiting his people to set them free through the saving work of Jesus and so they react by glorifying God.

Readers have already encountered the verb δοξάζω (to glorify) when the shepherds, having visited Jesus in Bethlehem, returned to the fields glorifying God because of what they had seen and heard (2:20). They next encountered it when the report spread that Jesus was teaching in their synagogues and that teaching had led to him being glorified by everyone (4:15). So while δοξάζω is usually used in relation to God, here “it signifies a *worshipping response* by people who have recognized God’s presence at work in Jesus.”²⁹ Having encountered δοξάζω yet again during the healing of the paralytic, readers note the similarity in the description of the reaction of the crowd there and again now at Nain.

²⁸ F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker, *Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament, Second Edition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983). Electronic Edition.

²⁹ Doble, *The Paradox of Salvation*, 25. Author’s emphasis in italics.

καὶ ἔκστασις ἔλαβεν ἅπαντας καὶ ἐδόξαζον τὸν θεὸν καὶ ἐπλήσθησαν φόβου λέγοντες ὅτι εἶδομεν παράδοξα σήμερον (5:26).	ἔλαβεν δὲ φόβος πάντας καὶ ἐδόξαζον τὸν θεὸν λέγοντες ὅτι προφήτης μέγας ἠγέρθη ἐν ἡμῖν καὶ ὅτι ἐπεσκέψατο ὁ θεὸς τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ (7:16).
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The term, which is normally used about God, and has only been used once about Jesus up to this, is now intentionally referring to Jesus.

The phrase thus acts as a Lukan signal for those moments when God's purposes, revealed in scripture, to save his people - purposes expressed also in Jesus' programme outlined in the Nazareth sermon - are being fulfilled in Jesus' activity.³⁰

5.2 An analysis of the female character in her interaction with other characters

In this pericope the woman interacts with two characters, Jesus and the crowd.

There is no description of the interaction between her and the other character, her son. Even when he is resuscitated and Jesus gives him back to his mother, there is no description of her reaction. There is no description, either, of the joy of the son at being brought back to life. As a character, he is simply a walk-on³¹ playing a minor role in the development of the plot which concentrates on the interaction between Jesus and the woman. Readers, understanding the grief of the woman at the death of her only son and the obvious joy at his return to life, fill in the gap in the interaction between mother and son.

5.2.1 The woman and Jesus

The main person that the woman interacts with is Jesus, but she is very passive in that interaction. She does not ask for help or make any contact, either verbally or non-

³⁰ Doble, *The Paradox of Salvation*, 26.

³¹ "Walk-on: a simple character, playing a passive or quasi-passive (background) role in the narrative." Marguerat and Bourquin, *How to Read Bible Stories*, 60.

verbally, with him. She does, however, draw a response from him in a very affective way. When Jesus sees her situation, he is moved with compassion and reacts immediately. When he hears her crying he addresses her, telling her not to weep and then heals her son and gives him back to her. All the while he focuses on the woman rather than on her son. This gratuitous act of compassion is not based on the faith or piety of the woman, but is an expression of God's mercy for the poor, which was already emphasised by Jesus in his mission statement (4:18).³²

The woman for her part, while she does not speak in the exchange, draws a very strong reaction from Jesus. Thanks to her need, readers see Jesus' humanity and emotions in a way that has not been seen up to now in the Gospel.

Furthermore, the raising of her son and the restoration to life of the young man and the return of life to the woman, who would have been destitute and alone without her son's support, are signs of the new life that Jesus will bring through his resurrection.

5.2.2 The woman and the crowd

When the crowd is mentioned first, it is as a support to the mother in her bereavement, accompanying the woman in the funeral procession as it leaves the town for the burial. There is also another crowd accompanying Jesus. Both crowds first meet at the gate of Nain, one crowd with Jesus who is bringing healing and life and going into the city, the other group with the funeral procession leaving the city to bury the young man. As the action continues, both crowds become an audience to what is happening. They see Jesus drawn into the situation when he sees the woman's tears, his touching the bier so that he can stop all movement to focus on the young man who has died, his raising of the young

³² MiJa Wi, *The Path to Salvation in Luke's Gospel: What must we do?* (London: T&T Clark, 2016), 101.

man by the power of his word and the return of the young man to his mother in what is seen as a prophetic action. Once the young man is resuscitated, he begins to speak (λαλέω) and immediately after that, the crowd glorifies God. The proximity of the two reactions links them in readers' minds leading to the presumption that the young man's speech is in praise of God. Readers are not told if the woman joins the crowd in glorifying God, but the likelihood is that she does.

The crowd, which has gone from being an audience to the miracle to reacting to it by glorifying God and recognising Jesus as a prophet, now takes another step and proclaims what has happened (ὁ λόγος οὔτος) throughout Judea and the countryside, in other words far and wide, in a similar manner to the crowd following Jesus' earlier healings (4:14; 4:37; 5:15). Even more than that, they proclaim that Jesus is a great prophet and glorify God who has visited his people through Jesus. Readers, however, perceive this understanding as falling short of who Jesus truly is, one who is revealed by the narrator to be the Lord (7:13).

5.3 A synkrisis of the male-female pairings

This resuscitation takes place immediately after the cure of the centurion's servant and, in another Lukan male/female pairing, there is a synkrisis between the centurion and the widow. With regard to proximity, the passages are next to one another. There are also sufficient specific details to warrant a synkrisis: both characters are outsiders, both are grieving the death or near death of a young person they love and both also have echoes of the Elijah/Elisha cycle.

The centurion and the woman are people who would be considered among the oppressed or outsiders that Jesus has promised to set free in his mission statement in Nazareth.

Unique to Luke, this widow's story has her paired with a very wealthy and honoured (vv.4-5) Gentile centurion. She and the ethnically inferior centurion receive benefit from Jesus. . . Indeed, the woman is treated equally, though an expendable; and the centurion (with his slave) is treated equally, though a Gentile.³³

The quote here captures the complex character of the centurion, privileged in one sense and also a representative of the oppressive occupying power, but in salvation terms, one who is excluded. This is the prevailing emphasis within the narrative. However, he is also favourable to the local Jewish people. In recognition of his humble position, the centurion says that he is not worthy to have Jesus come into his house (7:6). While both people are considered marginalized, they are not completely alone and have the support of their local community. The elders of the community speak to Jesus on behalf of the centurion (7:3-5) and a large crowd supports the widow in her bereavement.

While both encounters take place in a public area, the Jewish elders meet Jesus as he enters the town and the funeral procession takes place just outside the gate, both are centred on households, that of the woman and that of the centurion. They both involve someone within the household that the person holds dear: the slave (δοῦλος) of the centurion who is also called παῖς μου a term that is used for a child as well as a servant and whom he describes as ἔντιμος (honoured respected esteemed)³⁴ and the only son of the woman (υἱός). Both of them are in an extreme situation, the slave is on the point of death (ἤμελλεν τελευτᾶν) and even more seriously, the son has already died (τεθνηκώς). While

³³ Arlandson, *Women, Class and Society in Early Christianity*, 198.

³⁴ Friberg, Friberg and Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, Electronic edition.

neither of the stories focuses on the person to be healed but on the centurion and the woman, both miracles restore life to their households and families.

The term *κύριος* is used of Jesus in both pericopes, in the centurion's speech, relayed by his friends (7:6) and by the narrator, to describe Jesus in the story of the widow's son (7:13). Both situations are associated with faith. The centurion calls Jesus 'Lord' and while it could be argued that this is only a polite form of address, "the linking of such a profound recognition of Jesus' authority with the centurion's own sense of unworthiness suggests that more is intended."³⁵ Shortly after this, Jesus commends the centurion's faith. "The centurion represents those who will respond in faith to Jesus and recognise him as *κύριος*."³⁶ In the widow's son episode, it is the crowd that speaks out and glorifies God as a result of the resuscitation. The centurion shows a better understanding of Jesus, by his use of the term 'Lord,' than the crowd does as they call him 'a great prophet,' which is a lesser appellation than 'Lord.' The authority of Jesus is recognized in both stories as well. The centurion compares his own authority, as a centurion commanding soldiers, with Jesus' authority under God. "Because Jesus is set under God's authority and acknowledges that authority, he can command with divine authority in healing."³⁷ Similarly, the crowd reacts with awe in the other pericope and announces that God has visited his people.

Both miracles have obvious echoes of the Elijah/Elisha cycles, the centurion's servant of the healing of Naaman the leper (2 Kgs 5:1-14) and the widow's son of the story of the widow of Zarephath (I Kgs 17:10-24) This also has the effect of linking both narratives to the synagogue in Nazareth, as Jesus referred to both Naaman and the widow of Zarephath in his programmatic statement.

³⁵ Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, 317.

³⁶ Rowe, *Early Narrative Christology*, 117.

³⁷ Tannehill, *Luke*, 125.

There are also some differences between the two pericopes. The centurion asks for Jesus' help and speaks with Jesus first through the elders and later through his friends. The woman is a very passive figure and, even though she does not request help, Jesus is drawn to her in her distress. While both the centurion and the woman are considered disadvantaged in some way, the centurion has been a benefactor to the local community and therefore is recommended to Jesus as an honourable person deserving of his help.³⁸ No one recommends the woman. The centurion and the woman are described very differently in their respective pericopes. The centurion, who never actually appears in the scene, is a very strong character. His request for help, his expression of his unworthiness and his faith are all centre-stage here. For part of the scene he behaves like the main protagonist and the character, Jesus, reacts to him rather than the other way around. The woman is very much a background character who is presumably receptive to Jesus' outreach to her, but there is no record of any response to that help. Jesus is the protagonist and the whole focus is on him. Jesus responds to the centurion by commending his faith, while his interaction with the widow is on a much more affective level as he shows compassion for her and tells her not to weep.

Each pericope ends differently. In the story of the centurion's servant, Jesus makes no mention of healing the man, but commends the faith of the centurion. When the emissaries return to the house, they find that the servant has recovered, and readers understand that the faith of the centurion has led to that cure. With respect to the widow, readers observe that the resuscitation of the young man has happened because of an outpouring of compassion on the part of Jesus. The summary in 7:16-17 speaks of God

³⁸ Halvor Moxnes, "Patron-Client Relations and the New Community," in *The Social World of Luke-Acts*, ed. Jerome H. Neyrey (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 241-270, 252.

visiting his people through the power of Jesus that has just been seen in both miracles and John the Baptist continues this theme by asking Jesus if he is the one who is to come. So at the end of these episodes, readers are coming to a better understanding of Jesus' mission and are also more aware of how people respond to him in faith.

This synkrisis shows two different responses of Jesus. Jesus responds to the centurion's faith and his public request for help and recommends that faith to all who are listening to him. His response to the mother is more emotional and visceral and is an outreach to the poor and marginalised that he had foretold in the synagogue at Nazareth (4:18). In both situations, his power as Lord is very clearly demonstrated to readers. Through the synkrisis, readers carry the image of faith in Jesus as Lord, seen so clearly in the story of the centurion, into the episode at Nain. While the crowd at Nain consider Jesus a prophet and are amazed at God visiting his people (7:16), readers have a higher understanding and realise that he is Lord. They recall when this title is applied to Jesus in the Infancy Narrative and remember his status as Son. Furthermore, the paired accounts of the raised boy and the son remind them that Jesus, who is also an only Son, will lose his life and rise to new life. This, along with the mention of Lord, foreshadows for readers, Jesus' own death and resurrection.

5.4 Summary

While the resuscitation of the widow's son is primarily an example of the dead being raised, Jesus' response to the woman in a certain sense also "liberates her from the effects of death."³⁹ The woman, one of the marginalised, has been saved by the return of

³⁹ Dowling, *Taking away the Pound*, 145.

her son to life. This conferring of new life on both the woman and her son anticipate Jesus' coming through death to new life in the paschal mystery.

The widow is the second woman to encounter Jesus in his adult ministry. Like Simon's mother-in-law, she is not reported as speaking, even though readers implicitly learn from Jesus, that she is crying when he approaches her. She does not ask for help, and unlike Simon's mother-in-law, no one asks for help for her either. She has been described as a "silent receiver"⁴⁰ or a "passive recipient."⁴¹ Unlike Simon's mother-in-law, who responds with service, nothing is said about her response either. While the centurion is commended for his faith, the emphasis here is on the crowd's response to Jesus. Presumably the woman, because of the resuscitation of her son, will glorify God like her entourage. Readers, however, respond with faith.

The woman plays a very important role in this pericope. In contrast to Tannehill who suggests that "the narrator avoids attributing emotions to Jesus,"⁴² she draws out an immediate, affective response from Jesus that has not yet been seen in the Gospel. Once Jesus sees her, he is moved with compassion and reacts by both word and action. His response, to the woman's distress, is to raise her son. In this compassionate reaction, Jesus shows not only his humanity (the use of *σπλαγχνίζομαι* and *μή κλαῖε* are examples of this [7:13]) but also God's mercy, and he does this completely unbidden when he sees the woman. Reid says that it is "her silence that brings Jesus to compassion."⁴³ That silence is not however the conclusion of this pericope. Having seen the return of life, literally to the young man and figuratively to his mother, the crowd recognise that God has visited his

⁴⁰ Seim, *The Double Message*, 132.

⁴¹ Dowling, *Taking away the Pound*, 145.

⁴² Tannehill, *Luke*, 128.

⁴³ Reid, *Choosing the Better Part*, 106.

people and respond by glorifying God and spreading the word. So, as a result of Jesus' encounter with this woman, readers are shown the very complex combination of compassion and glory that is seen in Jesus. The compassion is evidence not only of the humanity of Jesus, but also the compassion of God and the glory shows not only the glory and authority of God, but its expression in Jesus through his power to heal. Moreover, because of their knowledge of the Infancy Narrative, when readers hear Jesus being described as Lord once again in this pericope, they realise the shortcomings of the response of the crowd who continue to view him as a prophet.

Chapter 6: Exegesis of Luke 7: 36-50 (The Woman who anointed Jesus)

After the resurrection of the young man (7:11-17), Jesus has a very important meeting with the disciples of John the Baptist where, in reply to their question as to whether he is the “one who is to come” (7:20), he confirms in his reply (7:22) that he is now living out the mission statement that he announced in the synagogue in Nazareth (4:16-30). He positions himself on the side of the marginalised when he describes himself as a “friend of tax collectors and sinners” (7:34) and readers are given further insight when, in an aside, the narrator commends those same tax collectors while criticising the Pharisees and lawyers who “rejected God’s purpose for themselves” (7:30).

6.1 A sequential reading of the pericope

The pericope begins with Jesus’ acceptance of an invitation from a Pharisee to dine at his house. When Jesus arrives at the Pharisee’s house, he reclines at table. The aorist passive *κατεκλίθη* describes someone reclining in the Greek manner with his feet pointing away from the table. This is probably a festive banquet, as reclining at table only took place at important events in Palestine at that time.¹ The verb *κατάκειμαι* in the next verse is a reminder of the last time that Jesus reclined at table, which was in the house of Levi, the tax collector, and the negative reaction that he got by dining with a so-called sinner (5:30-32).

The repetition of the term ‘Pharisee’ three times (7:36-37) alerts readers to its importance in this pericope. Luke’s first mention of Pharisees describes them as taking a

¹ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke*, AB (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), 688.

great interest in Jesus, as they have come from all over the country to see him (5:17).

However, all of the encounters have involved criticism. The Pharisees accused Jesus of blasphemy when he told the paralytic that his sins were forgiven (5:21); they objected when he attended the banquet in the home of Levi, the tax collector (5:30), and his disciples were criticized for eating and drinking while the disciples of John and the Pharisees fasted and prayed (5:33).

Jesus' observance of the Sabbath was another problem for the Pharisees. When some of them objected as his disciples plucked corn to eat on the Sabbath (6:1), Jesus responded by referring to Scripture and reminded them that David had allowed his followers to eat the bread reserved for the priests because they were hungry (1 Sam 21:1-6). He went on to tell them that "the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath," thus designating "Jesus as God's authorized agent to determine what was appropriate on the Sabbath."² Jesus followed that by curing the man with the withered hand (6:7) to confirm by an action what he had already stated by his word. So, readers have the expectation that Pharisees are very antagonistic towards Jesus and this is reiterated even more by the narrator, when he criticises them for refusing to be baptized by John the Baptist (7:30). In so doing, they are rejecting the purpose of God for themselves, while the tax collectors and sinners acknowledge the justice of God.

Despite this negative view, the circumstances here are different as this is the first time that the focus is on an individual Pharisee rather than the Pharisees as a group. He has invited Jesus to a meal at his home, which shows that he is offering hospitality to Jesus and has "sufficient trust in Jesus' ritual purity to share a meal with him."³ Also, despite the fact

² Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 254.

³ *Ibid.*, 308.

that there have been many instances of Jesus associating with tax collectors and sinners and receiving a negative reaction from Pharisees because of this, here he willingly accepts an invitation from this particular Pharisee to dine with him. Since this Pharisee wants to encounter Jesus, he may also be open to following him. Furthermore, entering the house of the Pharisee is a positive move on Jesus' part, as houses are places where he has been welcomed where he has performed many cures⁴ and where he has associated with the marginalised.⁵ The encounter is likely to result in some salvific act or word and the question arises as to how the Pharisee will respond.

When Jesus arrives at the house, it is presumed that the Pharisee is there, but the narrator does not mention him. As this scene begins, only Jesus is described as taking his place at the table and he has no interaction with any other character. The woman appears suddenly.⁶ However, her arrival is not accidental. The use of the verb ἐπιγινώσκω shows that the woman has 'learned about'⁷ Jesus before she comes to the house. In the urban setting (ἐν τῇ πόλει) she has heard about Jesus being invited, but is the only person noted by the narrator who follows up on this by coming to the house. She does not have any trouble getting into the house. In fact there is no mention of her arrival and some commentators argue that she is already a member of the household.⁸ It is far more likely that she has come into the house because "the doors of homes in a Palestinian village would be open

⁴ It was in Simon's house that his mother-in-law was cured ((4:38) and Jesus performed many more cures and exorcisms later that day and also the friends of the paralytic lowered him down through the roof of a house so that he could be cured and also forgiven of his sins (5:19).

⁵ Having been called by Jesus, Levi the tax collector prepared a great banquet for him in his home (5:29).

⁶ Bovon states that "the unexpected nature of her presence is signalled by the beloved καὶ ἰδοὺ." Bovon, *Luke 1*, 293.

⁷ Adelbert Denaux and Rita Corstjens, *The Vocabulary of Luke: an alphabetical presentation and a survey of characteristic and noteworthy words and word groups in Luke's gospel*, BTS (Leuven: Peeters, 2009), 236.

⁸ Teresa J. Hornsby, "The woman is a Sinner/The Sinner is a Woman," in Levine and Bickerstaff, *A Feminist Companion to Luke*, 121-132, 127.

with anyone welcome to come in.”⁹ She has prepared for this visit by buying and bringing along an alabaster jar of ointment.

The woman is described as a *γυνή ἥτις ἦν ἐν τῇ πόλει ἀμαρτωλός*, literally, ‘a woman who was in the city a sinner.’ The order of *ἥτις ἦν ἐν τῇ πόλει* is changed to *ἐν τῇ πόλει ἥτις ἦν* in a number of manuscripts.¹⁰ In both cases *γυνή* and *ἀμαρτωλός* are in the nominative case and *ἐν τῇ πόλει* is still positioned between them, thus linking all three. However, in the majority reading, the emphasis is on the woman as a sinner in the city while in the minority variant *ἐν τῇ πόλει* could be considered the setting for where the woman lives and places less emphasis on the possibility of her being a public sinner. Both however recognise that she was a sinner. While the imperfect is normal in historic narration, the verb *ἦν* could also imply that she ‘used to be’ a sinner rather than she was one at the time of entering the Pharisee’s house.¹¹

The use of the word ‘sinner’ is a reminder of all the mentions of ‘sinner’ up to this. Other than Simon Peter’s description of himself as a sinner (5:8), the other seven mentions of the word to this point in the narrative are all in the plural and all apply to sinners as a marginalised group (5:30, 5:32, 6:32, 6:33, 6:34 [2], 7:34). The Pharisees question Jesus about his willingness to eat with tax collectors and sinners at Levi’s banquet (5:30) and Jesus replies that he has come “to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance” (5:32). However the concept of sin and sinner is much more complex as, at this stage in the narrative, Jesus has redefined it and sinners are now depicted

⁹ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 309.

¹⁰ A, K, P, W, Γ, Δ, Θ, Ψ, 33, 565, 579, 892, 1424

¹¹ Barbara E. Reid, “Do You See This Woman? A liberative look at Luke 7:36-50 and strategies for reading other lukan stories against the grain,” in Levine and Bickerstaff, *A Feminist Companion to Luke*, 106-120, 113.

in relation to him. Sinners are those whose sinfulness Jesus sees, whose recognition of sinfulness he triggers, whose recognition of sinfulness he invites, whose sins he forgives in response to faith in him; they are the ones from among whom he forms his disciples. Finally those who reject Jesus' message towards them become sinners.¹²

So from the outset the woman, as a sinner, is associated with the groups who are ostracised by people like the Pharisees, but welcomed by Jesus.¹³

By placing ἐν τῇ πόλει before ἀμαρτωλός, Bovon¹⁴ and Corley¹⁵ both believe that Luke is clear that the woman is a prostitute while Kilgallen's view is that, because of the positioning of ἐν τῇ πόλει in the sentence, the implication is that she is considered by the people of the city to be a sinner.¹⁶ The variant lessens the emphasis on her as a prostitute or public sinner. Fitzmyer holds that there is nothing concrete in the text to convince him that the woman's sin is sexual in nature.¹⁷ The word 'prostitute' (πόρνη) is not used here and is only used once in Luke's Gospel in the parable of the prodigal son (15:11-32). Reid wonders why the question about the type of sinner is asked as no one asks about Peter's sin when he calls himself a sinner (5:8).¹⁸ Against Reid, the narrator calls the woman a sinner and qualifies it by stating that it is ἐν τῇ πόλει while in 5:8 Peter speaks only about himself. Even though virtually every commentator wonders about the woman's sin and the majority see it as sexual in nature, the text only indicates that it is publicly known but it could be of

¹² Slawomir Szredka, "Luke's Portrayal of Sinners Rhetoric of Direct and Indirect References to Sinfulness in Luke 5:1-6:11" (PhD diss., Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 2015), 153. Italics are author's emphasis.

¹³ Readers have questions in their minds as to how the Pharisee and sinner will respond when they meet them in the pericope. "The reader is made to wonder: how will this particular Pharisee and sinner respond? Who will join in the dancing or the weeping? And, as the sayings foreshadow, will this Pharisee reject the call to participate and in so doing cut himself off from God's purposes?" Kylie Crabbe, "A Sinner and a Pharisee: Challenge at Simon's table in Luke 7:36-50," *Pacifica* 24, (2011): 247-266, 256.

¹⁴ Bovon, *Luke 1*, 293.

¹⁵ Kathleen E. Corley, "The Anointing of Jesus in the Synoptic Tradition: An argument for authenticity," *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 1 (2003): 61-72, 70.

¹⁶ John J. Kilgallen, "Forgiveness of Sins (Luke 7:36-50)," *NovT* 40 (1998): 105-116, 106.

¹⁷ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 689.

¹⁸ Reid, "Do You See This Woman?" 113.

any type, sexual or otherwise. However, rather than focusing on the nature of the sin, it is much more important to realise that every time sin has been mentioned up to this, it is linked with the possibility of forgiveness, initially in the case of John the Baptist and then, in the story of Jesus' forgiveness and healing of the paralytic (5:17-26).

There is no physical description of the woman but a detailed description of what she is carrying, namely an alabaster container of perfumed oil. This container is much more expensive than the usual glass flask and the oil is also very costly. So, the woman may be quite wealthy as she is willing to lavish a large amount of money on the perfume as an expression of her attitude to Jesus. Readers are reminded of other wealthy people who are also marginalised: the Gentile centurion who, even though he is in a position of authority, recognises Jesus as the master and Levi, who gladly abandons his tax collecting to follow Jesus. As well as losing his income, he also gives a large banquet for Jesus and, like the woman, is willing to share his wealth as a reaction to his encounter with Jesus. Once they are freed of sin, they are able to detach themselves from their riches. A message is emerging for wealthy followers that wealth is for sharing. It is also possible that the woman may not be wealthy but is willing to spend all that she has to demonstrate her love for Jesus, a reminder to readers that Jesus too will give everything, even his own life, to express his love in his forthcoming passion.

In verse 38, the narrator focuses totally on the woman. The first description of her explains that she has already stood behind Jesus. Now, in cinematic terms, the focus moves from the broad picture to zoom in and focus on Jesus' feet (*τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ* is used three times in the sentence to highlight her humble attitude) where the woman places herself. Her action recalls Simon Peter who fell down at the knees of Jesus, when he was

proclaiming that he was a sinful man (5:8). The woman is described as weeping and bathing his feet with her tears. Throughout, there is no sound other than that of the woman's weeping. Then the motion slows down by the use of three imperfect verbs that state that she was drying his feet, was kissing them and was anointing them in a very deliberate manner. In some manuscripts¹⁹ the aorist ἐξέμαξεν replaces the imperfect ἐξέμασεν. In this scenario, the drying with her hair is completed before the kissing and anointing which are stressed more, as they are the continuous motions at the end of the description. While this highlights the last two actions, it disturbs the rhythm of the text which moves very slowly because of use of the three imperfect verbs to describe the woman's behaviour. Resseguie correctly suggests that "the text's paratactic construction accentuates the lavish individuality of each action."²⁰

The fact that the woman uses her hair to dry Jesus' feet can be read in a number of different ways. When the woman loosens her hair it can be seen as erotic, according to Jewish sensibilities,²¹ or it can also be a sign of grief, devotion or supplication. It is more likely that the first century reader, seeing the tears of the woman and her obvious unpretentiousness, would read it in this way.²² Even more fundamentally, the description of the drying with the hair is almost ritualistic and the intensity of the action elicits empathy, on the part of readers, for a woman who is obviously loving and caring in her actions. There is no mention whatsoever of Jesus' reaction. The narrator focuses solely on the action of the woman.

¹⁹ p³, Ⲁ A, D, L, W, Ψ, 33, 565, 579, 892, 1424

²⁰ James L. Resseguie, "Luke 7: 36-50: Making the familiar seem strange," *Int* 46 (1992): 285-290, 286.

²¹ Bovon, *Luke 1*, 295.

²² Charles H. Cosgrove, "A Woman's Unbound Hair in the Greco-Roman World, with Special Reference to the Story of the "Sinful Woman" in Luke 7:36-50," *JBL* 124 (2005): 675-692, 688.

The focus changes once again and, for the first time, the presence of the Pharisee is noted. There is also yet another reminder that he is the host who invited Jesus to dine with him. The verb ἐρωτάω²³ in verse 36 suggested that it was a request to Jesus while καλέω²⁴ here is used specifically “to request the presence of someone at a social gathering,” thus emphasising that the Pharisee, as host, has invited Jesus to dine with him. While the woman is described through her actions, readers can see into the Pharisee’s mind to read his inner thoughts where he criticises both the woman and Jesus. However, he is not interested in the woman in herself but only in Jesus’ reaction to her. He confirms that she is a sinner, but uses the present tense of εἰμί to show that he believes that she continues to be one. Her anointing of Jesus seems to have had no effect on the Pharisee’s attitude to her, and he does not remark on why she is there. While Jesus has been invited to dine at the house, the lack of surprise on Simon’s part could mean that she too was invited or was a regular visitor to the house. His ruminating on the fact that Jesus should have known who was touching him centres on Jesus. Yet when readers hear the verb ἅπτω they are reminded of the other places where this is used. In each case, Jesus touches people as part of the healing process and, furthermore, the crowd reach out to him to request that healing because they know that power goes out from him (6:19).²⁵ So by anointing Jesus, the woman is doing more than trying to touch him; she is seeking to connect with that same power or wants to be healed in some way.

²³ BDAG, 395.

²⁴ BDAG, 503.

²⁵ The healing of the leper (5:13); “And all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them” (6:19); The raising of the widow’s son at Nain (7:14).

The Pharisee first wished to see if Jesus was truly a prophet and he may have been interested in following him.²⁶ Now, however, since Jesus associates with the woman who, as far as the Pharisee is concerned, is a known sinner, then, in the Pharisee's mind, he cannot be a prophet because prophets can see into the hearts of people. Contrasting views of Jesus as a prophet have already been seen. He was rejected as a prophet in the synagogue in Nazareth (4:28), while the crowd in Nain glorified God because of their encounter with him when he raised the widow's son and considered him a great prophet (7:16). Now in an ironic turn of events Jesus, who can see into hearts, speaks to the Pharisee to overturn his preconceptions. He takes over from the narrator and takes centre stage as he speaks directly to the Pharisee in a personal way by calling him by name. The name 'Simon' contrasts this man with Simon Peter who has fallen at Jesus' feet and called himself a sinner before leaving everything to follow Jesus. While Simon the Pharisee criticises Jesus, it is a woman who was a sinner who falls at Jesus' feet in Simon's house. Jesus' language is very direct: "Simon, I have something to say to you." Simon, who was unable to identify Jesus as a prophet, addresses him as teacher and invites him to speak, thus recognising what has been an essential role of Jesus up to this in the Gospel and putting himself into a listening role.²⁷

Jesus now tells a parable about two debtors whose debts are both cancelled even though one owes far more than the other. The vocabulary recalls the debt remission language that Isaiah used for Israel's deliverance from sin,²⁸ which was also quoted by

²⁶ Robert C. Tannehill, "Should we love Simon the Pharisee? Hermeneutical reflections on the Pharisees in Luke," *CurTM* 21, (1994): 424-433, 431.

²⁷ Despite the fact that Jesus has been teaching especially in the synagogues and that most of his miracles have taken place in the context of that teaching, it is the first time in the gospel that Jesus has been addressed as teacher.

²⁸ Anthony Giambrone, *Sacramental Charity, Creditor Christology, and the Economy of Salvation in Luke's Gospel* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 70.

Jesus in the synagogue in Nazareth when he began his ministry (4:16-30). Structurally this parable is positioned at the centre of this particular pericope and it therefore makes forgiveness its central concept.

- 7.36 Jesus is guest at the house of a Pharisee.
- 7.37 A woman enters the house as a sinner.
- 7.38 The woman wets, kisses and 'anoints' Jesus.
- 7.39 The Pharisee asks himself whether Jesus is really a prophet.
- 7.40 MINI-PARABLE OF THE TWO DEBTORS
- 7.41 Jesus asks the Pharisee: 'who will love the master more?'
- 7.44-46 Simon had not cleansed, kissed or anointed Jesus.
- 7.47-48 A woman leaves the house forgiven.
- 7.49 The other guests at the house of the Pharisee marvel at Jesus.
- 7.50 A concluding priestly blessing for the woman.²⁹

The verb used for 'to cancel' is *χαρίζομαι* which shows the graciousness of the moneylender who carries out this very unusual act of cancelling a debt,³⁰ a reminder again to readers of the generosity of the woman.

Having finished the parable, Jesus addresses a direct question to Simon. "Now which of them will love him more?" (7:42). The word *ἀγαπάω* as well as meaning 'to love' is often used in Aramaic and Hebrew as an expression of gratitude and this makes more sense when referring to the two debtors.³¹ Giambone's understanding considers that *ἀγαπάω* signifies 'to love' and focuses on the 'loving one' who forgives the debt since "Lukan loving is distinctly weighted towards charitable expressions of aid."³² Simon

²⁹ Van Til proposes that the woman's anointing of Jesus' feet replicates the pouring of oil as a sin offering at the foot of the altar in the Temple. In this way she is replacing the Temple cult with Jesus as the one who can forgive sin and that Temple sacrifice is now being replaced by table fellowship to which all are invited and welcome, women as well as men, Gentiles as well as Jews. Kent A. Van Til, "Three anointings and one offering: The sinful woman in Luke 7:36-50," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 15 (2006), 73-82, 78

³⁰ The verb signifies "to give freely as a favour, to give graciously, to cancel a sum of money that is owed, to show oneself gracious by forgiving wrongdoing, forgive, pardon," *BDAG*, 1078.

³¹ Bovon, *Luke 1*, 295; Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 127; Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 690.

³² Giambone, *Sacramental Charity*, 107.

grudgingly answers Jesus. The hesitancy implied in ὑπολαμβάνω shows that he understands, but is not comfortable with the message of Jesus' parable.³³

While Jesus continues to speak to Simon, the focus of the scene has changed. Jesus turns towards the woman, but does not speak to her.³⁴ Jesus addresses his comments to Simon and asks him if he 'sees' the woman, implying that maybe Simon has not really seen the woman at all. The fact that Jesus has turned to her shows that he, on the other hand, has seen her. Then he compares the treatment that he has received from Simon with that of the woman. A process of defamiliarization ensues when readers are now made aware of the irony of Simon's invitation to Jesus, who has not been welcomed as an honoured guest.³⁵ It is only now that they perceive Simon's behaviour in stark contrast with that of the woman as it is she who has behaved as host, not Simon. Furthermore, by modifying the plot so that it is not told in chronological order, readers see Simon's lack of respect for Jesus through the lens of the woman's treatment of him.³⁶ To highlight this even more, it is Jesus himself who compares the treatment in his conversation with Simon.

²⁹ Denaux and Corstjens, *The vocabulary of Luke*, 621. This proposes "to suppose." BDAG also includes translations that show more certainty: "to assume, think, believe, be of the opinion, suppose" 1038.

³⁴ The previous time that the verb στρέφω was used was when Jesus consciously turned to the crowd to tell them of the great faith of the centurion (7:9).

³⁵ "Defamiliarization occurs for, example, when a context is deformed, or a reader is entrapped by a premature judgement that turns out to be false. It works when a point of view is demolished, or an expected outcome is overturned. The technique of defamiliarization jolts the reader from the lethargy of the habitual, compelling the reader to see familiar norms and values that have thus far been taken for granted in a different way." James L. Resseguie, "The Woman who Crashed Simon's Party" in Frank Dicken and Julia Snyder, *Characters and Characterization in Luke-Acts*, 7-22, 10.

³⁶ "The order of the material in a plot creates expectations in the reader- a primacy effect- that is fulfilled, modified, or even shattered by what comes later in the narrative- the recency effect." Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament*, 210.

Original description of the woman's actions by narrator	Jesus' description of the woman's actions	Jesus' description of Simon's actions
κλαίουσα τοῖς δάκρυσιν ἤρξατο βρέχειν τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ καὶ ταῖς θριξίν τῆς κεφαλῆς αὐτῆς ἐξέμασεν (7:38)	αὕτη δὲ τοῖς δάκρυσιν ἔβρεξέν μου τοὺς πόδας καὶ ταῖς θριξίν αὐτῆς ἐξέμαξεν (7:44)	ὔδωρ μοι ἐπὶ πόδας οὐκ ἔδωκας. (7:44)
καὶ κατεφίλει τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ (7:38)	αὕτη δὲ ἀφ' ἧς εἰσῆλθον οὐ διέλιπεν καταφιλοῦσά μου τοὺς πόδας (7:45)	φίλημά μοι οὐκ ἔδωκας. (7:45)
καὶ ἤλειπεν τῷ μύρῳ. (7:38)	αὕτη δὲ μύρῳ ἤλειπεν τοὺς πόδας μου (7:46)	ἐλαίῳ τὴν κεφαλὴν μου οὐκ ἤλειψας. (7:46)

Using very similar language to the original description, Jesus repeats the description of his treatment by the woman. The placing of *αὕτη* at the beginning of each phrase in his description emphasises the woman's role. Much more sparse language describes the treatment by the Pharisee. Ressugie further notes that "by placing the missing acts of hospitality at the beginning of the clause (water, kiss, and oil), Simon's lack of a proper welcome becomes even more glaring."³⁷ The acts of hospitality are also compared. The woman's are far more profuse than would have been expected of a host, while Simon does not even offer the bare minimum. He does not even give Jesus water, greet him with a kiss or anoint his head.

Still addressing Simon, Jesus then goes on to explain that the woman's many sins have been forgiven. Readers are left with a gap in the narrative as to when or why she was forgiven. Jipp argues that the forgiveness takes place during the woman's attendance at the meal. "It is the woman's hospitality to Jesus, functioning as a sign of welcoming love to Jesus as the embodied visit from God, which elicits his favor in bestowing the divine

³⁷ Resseguie, "The Woman who Crashed Simon's Party," 17.

benefit of forgiveness.”³⁸ Likewise, Giambrone posits that Luke’s view of redemptive charity means that by performing an act of charity, the woman “might even anticipate and procure forgiveness.”³⁹ However, a careful reading of verse 47 disagrees with this. The verb ἀφίημι is in the perfect passive and, like the healing of the paralytic in 5:20, the implied subject who does the forgiving in this context is God.⁴⁰ Once again, like the story of the paralytic and the reaction of the people in Nain (7:16) when they glorified God because of the action of Jesus, the power of Jesus is linked inexorably with the power of God, but Jesus is not described as forgiving the woman but simply proclaiming the woman’s forgiven state. When the woman was forgiven, depends very much on the meaning of the conjunction ὅτι (hence or because) (7:47).

Taking the fact that the perfect tense is used to describe the forgiveness of her sins and also the meaning of the parable about the showing of great love, it seems that ‘hence’ is more correct and the woman comes to minister to Jesus as a forgiven sinner.⁴¹

This interpretation makes an important theological point: “divine forgiveness is not dependent on a person’s demonstrations of love; the remittance of sin is prior . . . The whole point of this episode is that she has already been forgiven and is not seen by Jesus as a sinner.”⁴² The verb ἀφίημι, as well as meaning to remit or pardon, also indicates release from legal or moral obligation or consequence (in a loan for example) and is therefore a

³⁸ Joshua W. Jipp, *Divine Visitations and Hospitality to Strangers in Luke-Acts: An interpretation of the Malta episode in Acts 28:1-10* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 181.

³⁹ Giambrone, *Sacramental Charity*, 99.

⁴⁰ Marshall, *Commentary on Luke*, 313.

⁴¹ Talbert holds that “the woman’s love is viewed as the evidence of her forgiveness.” Talbert, *Reading Luke*, 90. Also see Marshall, *Commentary on Luke*, 306; Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 128. Kilgallen links it with the previous section on John the Baptist where those who responded with repentance knew that it would lead to forgiveness of sin. Kilgallen, “Forgiveness of Sins,” 105-116.

⁴² Reid, *Choosing the Better Part*, 114.

reminder of the parable that Jesus has just told.⁴³ The verb *χαρίζομαι*, used in the short parable, is a synonym of *ἀφίημι*.⁴⁴ This theme of release recalls the programmatic discourse in the synagogue of Nazareth (4:18 [2]) and the release from fever and sin respectively in the healings of Simon's mother-in-law (4:39) and of the paralytic (5:20 [2], 23, 24).

Throughout the whole of this scene, while Jesus turns towards the woman and praises her, his dialogue is with Simon in an effort to teach him to change his ways. The woman seems to be treated like a 'walking parable' in the exchange between the two of them and, by turning to the woman, Jesus reinforces his message to Simon. In her treatment of Jesus, she has expressed the love that is a result of the forgiveness that she has received. When Jesus compares her behaviour with that of Simon, Jesus leaves an implied and yet uncomfortable question for Simon to quantify his respective love. As is typical of parables, they are polyvalent, and it is left to Simon to make sense of the message for himself.⁴⁵

Jesus finally addresses the woman and focuses completely on her as he repeats what he has already explained to Simon: "– your sins are forgiven" (7:48). It corroborates what has already happened (7:47) and is "a confirmation of what has already taken place, and brings to the woman the personal assurance of God's dealing with her through Jesus."⁴⁶ As is obvious from her behaviour and Jesus' parable, she has come to the house already forgiven and has expressed this by her love. Jesus publicly confirms this, not only to the

⁴³ *BDAG*, 156

⁴⁴ *L&N*, 57.223.

⁴⁵ Parables have a "surplus of meaning" and "have a capacity to refigure reality and to bring about a transformative new understanding of God, world and self." Gregory J. Laughery, "Reading Jesus' parables according to J. D. Crossan and P. Ricoeur": <http://www.livingspirituality.org> originally published in *ETL*, pages 5-65, 9.

⁴⁶ Marshall, *Commentary on Luke*, 314.

woman, but also to Simon and the others in attendance at the meal. Jesus, through his recounting of the parable and then his conversation with Simon with regard to the woman, demonstrates the forgiveness, that he has already shown when he healed the paralytic (5:17-26).

The last ‘character’ to appear in the pericope is now seen. Just like the previous pericopes, a group of people is present to witness what is happening and to comment on it. ‘Those who were at table with him’ wonder who Jesus is since he can forgive sins. These people are probably Pharisees, as they are dining in the home of a Pharisee, and, like Simon, are interested in Jesus rather than the woman.

The last verse returns once again to Jesus and the woman. Since he is the most reliable character in the pericope, even though he only speaks two sentences to the woman, what he says is very important. He has already told her that her sins are forgiven and now he tells her that her faith has saved her. Readers have already met this concept when Zechariah made the link between salvation and forgiveness of sins when he said that John would “give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins” (1:77). This concept is reinforced in the section immediately before this when it is the marginalised who have accepted John’s baptism of repentance. Finally, the woman is told to “go in peace,” a call to “fellowship”⁴⁷ and a “restoration to wholeness, including (even if not limited to) restoration to the full social intercourse from which she has been excluded.”⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Bovon, *Luke 1*, 298.

⁴⁸ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 314.

6.2 An analysis of the female character in her interaction with other characters

6.2.1 The woman and Jesus

The first interaction, in this pericope, is between Jesus and the woman. While Jesus has been invited to the house, it is not mentioned that the woman has been invited, but she arrives in the knowledge that she will find him there (7:37). Jesus is reclining at table and she stands behind him before bending down to wash and anoint his feet (7:38). Despite the fact that he is the invited guest, she is the character who initiates the action rather than Jesus. She arrives unexpectedly at the Pharisee's house and completely unbidden performs the anointing. She remains silent throughout and her attitude to Jesus is expressed solely through her unambiguously loving and tender actions. Both the narrator's and Simon's descriptions of her as a sinner sow doubts in the minds of readers, who can see her behaviour in two different ways. It is gratuitous service (especially with regard to the washing and anointing of feet), which is more than what would be expected of a host towards a guest, more than what would be expected of a slave towards an honoured guest or member of a family and also more than what would be expected of a disciple towards a rabbi.⁴⁹ It can also be seen as disreputable as she is not related to Jesus and, by placing herself at his feet and anointing them, she is carrying out a very intimate action. Jesus accepts the attention, but at this early stage he does not speak to her and there is no report of his reaction.

⁴⁹ Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John (I-XII)*, AB (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 44.

Even though the second scene of this pericope focuses on the interaction between Jesus and Simon, the woman plays a key role. At a pivotal moment, Jesus turns to the woman while still speaking to Simon (7:44). He requests that Simon see her, calls her a woman rather than a sinner and, by commenting on her treatment of him and by comparing it with that of Simon, validates what she has done (7:44-46). Even though no words are exchanged, the discussion of the woman's action dominates the whole scene.

While the speech up to this has gone from Simon's internal monologue to the dialogue between Jesus and Simon, the third scene shifts back to Jesus and the woman, but here Jesus addresses her directly. She is now the centre of attention and Simon fades into the background. Jesus reiterates that she is forgiven, commends her faith and sends her forth as one who is saved (7:48-50). She goes from being the woman who is known as a sinner at the beginning of the encounter to the woman who serves Jesus and is acknowledged by him as forgiven in the end.

6.2.2 The woman and the crowd

There is virtually no interaction between the woman and the crowd. They are the people who have been invited to dine with the Pharisee and are probably also Pharisees. Their only interaction with the woman is after Jesus has announced that her sins are forgiven when they wonder how Jesus can do this. Their focus is on Jesus rather than the woman. They seem less antagonistic towards Jesus and his power to forgive sins than they were in the case of the paralytic, but the similarity in language recalls the hostility of the earlier episode (5:21; 7:49).

6.3 A synkrisis of the male-female pairings

In this particular pericope, a synkrisis is established between two characters internal to the pericope, namely, the woman and Simon the Pharisee. Jesus explicitly suggests the comparison when he asks Simon if he can see this woman (7:44).

Prior to this incident, both characters have already decided that they want to meet Jesus and both encounter him in the context of a meal. From their demeanour, it is obvious that both of them have previous knowledge of Jesus. Simon is open to the possibility that he is a prophet and wants to find out more about this.⁵⁰ The woman, hearing that he is there, goes out and buys an expensive jar of ointment and comes to the house seeking to meet him. For both of them, their focus is on Jesus and not on anyone else present; the woman focuses exclusively on him as she carries out the anointing, and she does not interact with the Pharisee or any of the other guests during the entire time. Likewise, the first mention of Simon actually being present is when he asks himself if Jesus is a prophet. Both communicate with Jesus but in very different ways. The woman, firstly, does it by her actions in anointing Jesus and later is spoken to by Jesus, but there is no record of her speech. Simon first speaks to himself about Jesus (internal monologue), before entering into a dialogue with Jesus that centres on the concept of forgiveness when Jesus uses the woman as an example of how to respond.

In the context of this story, both Simon and the woman behave as hosts but in very different ways. Simon is the official host as he has invited Jesus to dine with him (7:36), and to emphasise this, the narrator reiterates it by qualifying Simon as “the Pharisee who invited him” (7:39). This invitation implies that Simon is open to listening to Jesus and the

⁵⁰ Tannehill, “Should we love Simon the Pharisee?” 431.

fact that he thought that he was a prophet also confirms this.⁵¹ On first reading, it seems that Simon treats Jesus with respect by using the term διδάσκαλος to address him and by having a dialogue with him in the manner of a host/guest. This impression is overturned, however, when readers discover that Jesus has not been welcomed as an honoured guest and it is highlighted even more when it is Jesus himself who criticises Simon for not treating him with the most basic courtesy.⁵² While Simon is described as host, it is the woman who carries out the duties of a host in the most lavish manner. Simon's lack of respect for Jesus is even more noticeable through the lens of the woman's generous hospitality.

Simon is called a Pharisee three times and the woman is called a sinner twice in the pericope and the repetition of these terms reminds readers that these two groups have been regularly contrasted in the Gospel. Pharisees consider themselves upholders of the Law and promote that Law as the correct way of following God. They criticise Jesus for not following it to the letter as well as associating with tax collectors and sinners. Sinners are the ones who have received John's baptism of repentance and associate joyfully with Jesus. A theme of reversal runs through the contrast between these two groups. The Pharisees, who are the insiders where the law is concerned, are the outsiders in Jesus' group (7:30). On the other hand, the sinners, the outsiders in society, are welcomed by Jesus (5:32).

Most of all, in the sinful woman we recognize again a member of the outcast poor, rejected by the religious elite as an untouchable, but like the poor throughout this gospel, showing by her acts of hospitality that she accepts the prophet Jesus.⁵³

She does not call Jesus 'prophet' at any stage, but her behaviour reminds readers of the treatment of prophets by women in the LXX. The widow of Zarephath gave Elijah food

⁵¹ Tannehill, "Should we love Simon the Pharisee?" 431.

⁵² Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 129.

⁵³ Ibid.

even though she and her son had virtually nothing to eat (1 Kgs 17:8-16) and the Shunammite woman not only offered Elisha a meal as he passed by, but built a room for him on the roof so that he could stay whenever he wanted (2 Kgs 3:8-10). The Pharisee, on the other hand, who has invited Jesus because he considers him a prophet, shows, by his lack of hospitality and by his internal monologue, that he rejects him. Jesus' reaction to Simon and the woman reinforce his teaching on hospitality that has already been modelled by him with Simon's mother-in-law (4:40).

In verse 47, Jesus asks the question of Simon: "Do you see this woman?" and that question can also be asked of both Simon and the woman in relation to Jesus. The woman shows that she really 'sees' Jesus and responds with love because she understands that she is forgiven. While she says nothing, she indicates it by her actions in anointing Jesus. She could also be considered a listener as when she comes to know (7:37) that Jesus will be present, she reacts accordingly. The Pharisee, on the other hand, thinks that he 'sees' Jesus but fails to understand what the interaction of Jesus and the woman signifies. While the Pharisee only sees the woman as a sinner, Jesus sees her as one who exhibits great love in her response to him. The woman goes in peace with her faith confirmed. Readers are left wondering if the incident has had any effect on Simon and if he has become a follower of Jesus. By posing the question if they 'see' the woman, readers are also asked to see the implications of love and forgiveness that are emphasised in the pericope.

6.4 Summary

This woman is far more pro-active than the two earlier women who meet Jesus. She first learns about Jesus' visit, prepares for it, has the courage to approach him, despite the fact that she is considered a public sinner in the city, and finally anoints him. By anointing

his feet, she is not afraid to assume the position of the lowliest, someone considered even less than a slave. Readers are first surprised that there is no reaction from Jesus but then when Jesus finally reacts, it is obvious that the woman has already experienced his forgiveness and has already been transformed because of her contact with him.

Like the women in the two previous passages, she is also one of the oppressed who is set free (4:18). The first woman was possessed by her illness (4:38-39), the second had just lost her only son and was also a widow and was therefore going to find herself in very difficult circumstances (7:11-17). This woman was even more of an outsider as, not only was she described as a sinner, but was seen as a public sinner. The setting in the house of a Pharisee, where she would not be welcome, emphasises this even more.

Like the other two women, this woman does not speak. However, she takes the initiative and reaches out to Jesus, while other people asked for help for Simon's mother-in-law and the widow was supported by a crowd in her distress. Where she is concerned, the only comment from others is the criticism of Jesus for associating with a sinner. She is the most alone, and yet she comes closest to Jesus.

There are a number of similarities between the story of Simon's mother-in-law and the woman who anointed Jesus. The verb ἀφίημι is used in both stories, to show that Simon's mother-in-law is released from the fever that has oppressed her (4:39) and to explain that the woman's many sins have been forgiven (7:47). Therefore both are freed to follow Jesus, who has already proclaimed that the oppressed will go free in his programmatic statement in the synagogue in Nazareth (4:18). Simon's mother-in-law expresses this by immediately getting up and ministering to Jesus and the others who are present. While the word διακονία is never used about the woman who anoints Jesus, her

behaviour shows her ministering to him. Her actions reveal her understanding of Jesus as the one who forgives sin and she responds with an outpouring of love. Like Simon's mother-in-law (4:39), she responds with action and replaces the hospitality that was lacking in Simon the Pharisee's treatment of Jesus. The point can be made that apart from Jesus, the woman is the most important person at the table because she is the example of true discipleship in the pericope.⁵⁴

This pericope shows Jesus actively implementing his mission statement to release the oppressed (4:16-30). While the parable of the two debtors confirms the forgiveness that he extends to the woman, he follows that by making it very clear that divine forgiveness is not dependent on love or gratitude, but is offered as a free gift. The whole tenor of the pericope also shows Jesus' deep respect and outreach to the woman. His acceptance of the anointing, his description of her behaviour in comparison with that of Simon the Pharisee and his commendation of the woman's faith all point to his outreach to the marginalised.

The programmatic statement (4:16-19) is a mission of release, which Jesus reveals in his explanation of the woman's actions. God's salvation and the forgiveness of sin are revealed by Jesus' word and this is heralded by the woman's actions and faith. At Nain, the crowd sees Jesus as a prophet, but the narrator directs readers to his title as Lord. Here the woman points to Jesus' closeness to God by her extravagant anointing on his feet, rather than his head and so symbolises that even the lowest part of Jesus' body is worthy of the highest honour. This is even more evident in the implied author's modification of ordering of the plot so that Simon's lack of hospitality can be seen through the lens of the woman's extravagance.

⁵⁴ Jennifer A. English, "Which Woman? Reimagining the woman who anoints Jesus in Luke 7:36-50," *CurTM* 39 (2012), 435-441. 436.

Chapter 7: Exegesis of Luke 8:1-3 (The Women who accompany Jesus)

This is the first time that the previous episode about a woman leads immediately into the next one. Readers therefore carry the image of someone who was considered an outsider but, as a result of Jesus' forgiveness, showed great love and responded to that love by ministering to Jesus. As they approach this section, they are more open to encountering the different women, from various backgrounds and their responses to Jesus.

7.1 A sequential reading of the pericope

This short pericope begins with Jesus' preaching and teaching and follows that with a list of those who were with him (some named, some unnamed). It is one of the summary passages that are common in Luke's Gospel and especially the Acts of the Apostles.¹

A summary may be defined as a relatively independent and concise narrative statement that describes a prolonged situation or portrays an event as happening repeatedly within an indefinite period of time.²

The aim of the summaries is to provide general descriptions and elaborations of the various events and happenings in the narrative and so, give readers the impression that these individual events are merely examples of much more common happenings.³ It presents events in a very concise way, but also gives "the impression of an extended and open-ended duration."⁴

¹ See 4:14-15, 31-32, 40-41, 44; 5:15-16; 6:17-19; 8:1-3; 9:6; 13:22; 19:47-48; 21:3-38.

² Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 110.

³ Maria Ancía Co, "The Major Summaries in Acts: Acts 2, 42-47; 4, 32-35; 5, 12-16: Linguistic and literary relationship," *ETL* 68 (1992), 49-85, 55.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 57.

Therefore, by presenting this particular pericope as a summary, the implied author signifies that this gathering of men and women, who travel with Jesus, is a regular practice and has been happening for a considerable amount of time.

In this summary, the first part of the sentence focuses on Jesus.

8:1	
<p>Καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ καθεξῆς καὶ αὐτὸς διώδευεν κατὰ πόλιν καὶ κώμην κηρύσσων καὶ εὐαγγελιζόμενος τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ</p>	<p>And it happened that after this he was travelling through cities and villages proclaiming and preaching the good news of the Kingdom of God</p>

Once again like earlier summary passages, it deals with Jesus' proclamation of the good news of the kingdom of God.⁵ The use of the verb *διωδεύω* emphasises the thoroughness of this work.⁶ This is further emphasised by the distributive use of *κατά* with the accusative to show Jesus journeying throughout the cities and villages.⁷ While the imperfect is the typical tense of summaries, its use here also highlights the duration and continuity of this work. Jesus' teaching is summarised in the two present participles to proclaim and to bring good news of the kingdom of God (8:1). It is worth noting that the two earlier summaries enclose the stories of the first healings, those of the demoniac and of Simon's mother-in-law, thus linking the preaching with the healing and showing that the kingdom of God is manifested through both (4:14-15, 43-44).

⁵ See 4:14-15, 43-44.

⁶ *Διωδεύω*: "to travel around through an area, with the implication of both extensive and thorough movement throughout an area." This verb is also used by Luke in Acts 17:1 as Paul and Silas continue their missionary journey from Philippi to Thessalonica. L&N: 15.21.

⁷ F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, trans. Robert W. Funk (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 120.

8:1(b), 2-3

καὶ οἱ δώδεκα σὺν αὐτῷ, καὶ γυναῖκες τινες αἵ ἦσαν τεθεραπευμένοι ἀπὸ πνευμάτων πονηρῶν καὶ ἀσθενειῶν, Μαρία ἡ καλουμένη Μαγδαληνή, ἀφ' ἧς δαιμόνια ἑπτὰ ἐξεληλύθει, ³ καὶ Ἰωάννα γυνὴ Χουζᾶ ἐπιτρόπου Ἡρώδου καὶ Σουσάννα καὶ ἕτεραι πολλαί, αἵτινες διηκόνουν αὐτοῖς ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων αὐταῖς.	and the Twelve with him, and certain women who were healed from evil spirits and diseases, Mary called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had come out, and Joanna wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna and other women, who were serving them out of their resources.
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The sentence then continues to list those who are travelling with Jesus (σύν implying association⁸). There are the twelve, certain women; Mary called Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna and, finally, certain other women (8:2-3). All of these nouns are in the nominative case and while it mentions the twelve with him by the use of σύν, almost all of the others are linked individually to this phrase by καί. The exception to this is Mary called Magdalene who is linked with the women who have been cured of evil spirits and infirmities. ‘Certain women’ can be taken as part of the same noun phrase as ‘the twelve’ and ‘Mary called Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna and certain others’ represent a noun phrase that is nominative in apposition to it (8:2-3).⁹ So, the structure of the sentence shows that all of those listed are σύν or ‘associated with’ Jesus. The twelve are mentioned first but that would be as expected as readers have already encountered them (6:13-16) when they were

⁸ Bovon makes the point that by using σύν rather than μετα, Luke is saying that the group are not yet “co-workers of Jesus but companions.” Bovon, *Luke 1*, 300. Denaux and Corstjens state that if he had used μετα Luke would imply that “the person was assured of God’s or Jesus’ helpful presence,” 397. Therefore by using σύν Luke is placing the group at more of a distance than by using μετα. Denaux, Corstjens and Mardaga, *The Vocabulary of Luke*, 582. Miller sees the use of σύν as placing the women with the twelve who travelled with Jesus. Amanda C. Miller, “Cut from the same Cloth: a study of female patrons in Luke-Acts and the Roman Empire,” *RevExp* 114 (2017): 203-210, 206.

⁹ Martin M. Culy, Mikael C. Parsons and Joshua J. Stigall, *Luke A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010), 255; Seim makes the same point because “grammatically the connection is made by means of a paratactic juxtaposition of the women and the twelve.” Seim, *The Double Message*, 30.

chosen (ἐκλέγομαι) by Jesus, called by name individually and given the new title apostles (ἀποστόλος [6:13]). Now, however, for the first time a group of women is linked with this group, and three of these women are named. There is also the possibility that some of the other women who have encountered Jesus up to this may be among the unnamed women here. This is particularly likely with regard to the woman who anointed Jesus as she appeared in the section immediately before this. Both men and women are together in the group, travelling with Jesus, seeing his ministry in action and learning how to behave as disciples.¹⁰

When three women are named individually, it highlights once again Luke's use of male-female pairings. Having paired the twelve and certain women, he now specifically names three women who can be compared with the three men, who have been singled out from among the twelve when they were called by Jesus (5:1-11).¹¹ The first among the twelve, about whom most information is given, is Simon Peter and he is the one who falls on his knees before Jesus as he calls him 'Lord.' He follows this by telling Jesus to go away from him as he is a sinful man (5:8). Alongside this, Mary of Magdala is the first woman mentioned and seven demons have gone out from her (8:2). She is ranked first among the women and the seriousness of her illness or possession and cure are emphasised. There is less information about James and John (they leave their boats and family to follow Jesus [5:11]) and as a parallel to this, both Joanna and Susanna are named along with further information about Joanna. Also, the name Joanna is the feminine version of John, thus making a comparison between the two of them.¹²

¹⁰ Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 112.

¹¹ Bovon, *Luke 1*, 300.

¹² Kimberly Penner, "The Work of Wealthy Women: Female discipleship in Luke 8:1-3" (M.A. diss., University of Waterloo and Conrad Grebel University College, 2011), 83.

The first group of women mentioned are described as “certain women who were healed from evil spirits and diseases.” The use of the passive of the perfect participle for the healing allows for the healing to be attributed to the power of God, but since Jesus has already been described as healing people from evil spirits (7:21) and from infirmities (5:15), readers attribute the healing as occurring through him. The combination of being cured from evil spirits and infirmities has already appeared a number of times in the summaries, after the healing of Simon’s mother-in-law (4:40-41), the choosing of the twelve (6:18) and in the discussion with the messengers of John the Baptist (7:21). This summary of exorcisms and healings includes women released from evil spirits, but there is no mention of the evil spirits being connected with punishment for sin.¹³ Luke does not distinguish between the various types of illness and so being cured of evil spirits at that time could be an unexplained physical healing or healing from some sort of “deviance.”¹⁴ A few manuscripts, both Alexandrian and Western (κ, Θ, it), make that distinction by replacing πονηρός with ἀκάθαρτος, therefore replacing ‘evil’ with what is ritually impure (8:2).¹⁵ It is also quite likely that these women were on the fringes of society because of their illnesses.¹⁶ So a cure reintegrates them into the community.¹⁷ These women are visible manifestations of Jesus’ mission of release as they accompany him through Galilee.

¹³ “Dans tous ces cas il est d’ailleurs intéressant de constater que les femmes ne sont pas affligées de maux par Dieu en punition pour leurs péchés, mais quelles ont eu la mauvaise fortune d’être accablées par un esprit mauvais, voire plusieurs dans le cas de Marie de Magdala.” Sylvie Paquette, “Les femmes disciples dans L’évangile de Luc” (PhD diss., Université de Montréal, 2008), 30

¹⁴ Dowling, *Taking away the Pound*, 151.

¹⁵ Πονηρός: “Of the *evil spirit* that contends with the Holy Spirit for a place in the human soul” (BDAG, 851). ἀκάθαρτος: “impure, unclean, pertaining to moral impurity” BDAG, 34.

Klawans suggests that this type of defilement is caused by “natural and largely unavoidable bodily functions” and is not moral impurity and therefore not related to sin. Jonathan Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), viii.

¹⁶ Reid, *Choosing the Better Part*, 146.

The first of the named women, Mary, is “called Magdalene” in this pericope. Most commentators see this as meaning that she has come from a town called Magdala, a name that derives from the word ‘tower.’¹⁸ A number of sites with the word ‘tower’ in their names are suggested in Galilee but there is no certainty as to which one is connected with Mary.¹⁹ Another possibility is that her name is a nickname due to her height given to her by Jesus or other members of his followers. It follows a pattern that can be seen for many of the other disciples: “Simon whom he called Peter” (6:14), “Simon called the Zealot” (6:15) and “Judas called Iscariot” (22:3).²⁰ By giving Mary an epithet like the others, it suggests that she is a member of Jesus’ close disciples.²¹ Furthermore, by calling her ‘Mary, the tower’ or the ‘tall person’ it suggests a comparison with the leader of the male disciples ‘Peter, the rock.’ Since Mary is not described in relation to a man, either husband or father (a polite way of addressing a woman in antiquity), it implies that she is either single or widowed and would therefore be more at liberty to follow Jesus as he travels from place to place. She is also described as someone from whom seven demons had gone out, the pluperfect implying that the action was completed in the past. Once again readers, who are aware of the preceding summaries that recount Jesus’ many cures and exorcisms, fill in the gap and surmise that the healer was Jesus. Furthermore, she is the only woman, of those who have been healed, who is named. Her illness and healing are of a very serious

¹⁷ “Lorsqu’il les libère d’esprits mauvais et de démons, Jésus les libère de leur impureté, les rend aptes à reprendre une place dans la communauté civile et religieuse, quelle que soit cette place.” Paquette, “Les femmes disciples,” 31.

¹⁸ Bovon, *Luke 1*, 301; Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 131; Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, 366; Michael Wolter, *The Gospel According to Luke Volume I (Luke 1-9:50)*, trans. Wayne Coppins and Christoph Heilig (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press; Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 330.

¹⁹ Chilton suggests that Magdala is a fishing town that was situated approximately three and a half miles north of Tiberias and that it had strong links with the newly built ‘Roman’ town, built on a cemetery and therefore unclean in the eyes of the local Jews. Bruce Chilton, *Mary Magdalene: a biography* (New York: Doubleday, 2005), 16.

²⁰ Joan E. Taylor, “Missing Magdala and the Name of Mary ‘Magdalene,’” *PEQ* 146 (2014): 205-223, 206.

²¹ Taylor, “Missing Magdala,” 222.

nature, and the use of the number seven, which symbolises completeness in Semitic tradition, emphasises both the extent of her illness and her cure.²² The power of the kingdom of God, that Jesus is proclaiming and that is manifest in him, has brought her from a living death to new life.

Quite a lot of information is given about Joanna, especially when compared with the very limited information that is given about most of the twelve. She is the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward. An *ἐπίτροπος* can be anything from a steward or foreman to a highly placed official and therefore a man of great wealth and power.²³ Chuza and Joanna would have been part of Herod's court. While it would be very unusual for a married woman to have the freedom to follow a rabbi or preacher, in what was a very Romanised court it would have been acceptable for a wealthy woman to have been a patron of a rabbi or holy man.²⁴ Joanna is clearly called a 'wife' in this pericope. Yet despite this, some commentators still argue that she was probably widowed or divorced or she may have left Herod's court from time to time to follow Jesus.²⁵ What is obvious though is that, by being a known follower of Jesus, Joanna puts herself in a very precarious position. She has come from the court of Herod, who has already imprisoned John the Baptist (3:20), and she is a follower of Jesus, who by criticising those who dress in fine robes and live in rich palaces (7:25), is in fact criticising Herod himself and his court. On the other hand, among the ordinary Galileans who were forced to pay high taxes to Herod, a member of his court would have "engendered social suspicion and even contempt in the contemporary Jewish

²² "In Semitic interpretation, the number seven is linked with the character of totality so that, regarding the description of Mary Magdalene, the number seven points to the fact that there could be no worse state of corruption. It should be noted that if the number seven indicates the extent of her possession, it also indicates the extent of her cure." Dowling, *Taking away the Pound*, 150.

²³ Chuza was probably a very senior official in Herod's court. Penner, "The Work of Wealthy Women," 86.

²⁴ Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 162.

²⁵ Spencer, *Salty Wives, Spirited Mothers, and Savvy Widows*, 144.

context, in other words a kind of dubious tax-collector status.”²⁶ So even though she is wealthy and is probably a sponsor of the group, she could also be considered a marginalised member of Jesus’ entourage by those who surround Herod on the one hand and by the ordinary people who suffer under his rule on the other.

The third woman to be named is Susanna but nothing at all is said of her. It may be that she is well known and does not require an introduction. Her name may recall for readers the Susanna in the LXX. Susanna is an educated woman who obeys the Law of Moses and is willing to be put to death rather than disobey that law and have sexual relations with the two elders (Sus 22-23).²⁷ While she shows great courage, she is not believed but is saved through the intervention of Daniel. She is portrayed as the daughter of one man and the wife of another.²⁸ Readers, however, might see her as a type of Jesus, because like him, she was innocent as she was about to go to her death.²⁹ The three named women come from three very different backgrounds: a woman who has been cured of the most serious illness and probably ostracised since she is described as having been possessed by seven demons, a woman from the ruling elite and a woman whose name suggests propriety and innocence. They are now described as travelling with Jesus and the twelve as part of the same community.

Immediately after this, a second grouping of women is mentioned, still in the nominative case and still joined to the other subjects by *καί*. This group is qualified by the adjective *πολύς* (‘many’) implying a much larger group. This group was travelling with

²⁶ Greg W. Forbes and Scott D. Harrower, *Raised from Obscurity* (Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 2015), 86; Reid, *Choosing the Better Part*, 146.

²⁷ The International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies, Inc. *A New English Translation of the Septuagint* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

²⁸ Jennifer A. Glancy, “The accused: Susanna and her readers,” *JSOT* (1993): 103-116.

²⁹ Catherine Brown Tkacz, “Women as types of Christ: Susanna and Jephthah’s daughter,” *Greg* 85 (2004): 278-311, 281.

Jesus, but was not necessarily among those who were healed.³⁰ Having already established that all the women are associated with Jesus along with the twelve, it is now said that women provide for them (αὐτοῖς masculine which can apply to both the males and females) out of their (αὐταῖς feminine) resources. De Boer gives two possible understandings of this phrase.

The sentence, having four subjects- Jesus, the Twelve, some named women, many others unnamed - could be divided in two parts: Jesus and the twelve on the one hand and the named and unnamed women on the other. This would imply that all the women provide for all the men. The sentence can also be interpreted as an inclusion: providing the frame are Jesus and the unnamed women, each with their own active verbs; enclosed are the Twelve and the named women, who have no active verbs of their own but are said to be ‘with him’. The unnamed women in this configuration provide for Jesus and the Twelve as well as for Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna.³¹

According to the first interpretation, all of the women served Jesus and the twelve but it is equally valid to take the second interpretation that some of the women served Jesus, the twelve and the other women. That second interpretation allows for a variety of roles for the women, as well as a similar role for some of the women and the men. A key consideration is “that the last clause (“who provided for them out of their resources”) is not the principal thing said about the women.”³² It is in fact a relative clause subordinate to ἔτεροι πολλαί.

In the list of people in the sentence, the twelve are mentioned first, thus giving them priority, but it is Jesus alone who preaches and teaches and the group of both men and women are with him, learning from him, but not yet actively sharing in his preaching ministry.

³⁰ Ricci, *Mary Magdalene and many others*, 127. Bieberstein argues that there are two different groups of women, those who have been healed and those who supported them financially. Bieberstein, *Verschwiegene Jüngerinnen-vergesenene Zeuginnen*, 38.

³¹ Esther A. De Boer, “The Lukan Mary Magdalene and Other Women following Jesus,” in Levine and Bickerstaff, *A Feminist Companion to Luke*, 140-160, 144.

³² Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 112.

The women, or at least some of them, have a specific role within the group. They were ministering or serving out of their own resources or possessions. There is also no restriction on the resources. All are available.

En présentant les femmes comme il le fait en 8, 3, Luc en fait donc des disciples exemplaires pour l'ensemble de la communauté, encore plus si on considère que ce patronage de femmes au sein du mouvement Jésus n'a pas résisté au crible des critères d'historicité.³³

The women are a mixture of single, widowed and married women, but all provide. While Joanna comes from the household of Herod, there is nothing to say that all the women are wealthy but neither are they all destitute. “At a basic level, then, the women materially aided the Jesus group with whatever ‘belonged to them,’ however meagre or munificent.”³⁴ This stretched from the patronage of wealthy women, like Joanna, to the *kettuba*³⁵ of a divorced or widowed woman, to the basic resources of the poorer women. Readers, having just followed the story of the woman who anointed Jesus where they saw largesse and generosity, now understand this pericope from that same generous perspective. Similar to the previous scene where the woman bought an extravagant alabaster jar of perfume, then broke it open, meaning that it could not be used again, and proceeded to anoint Jesus with actions that were far more lavish than normal hospitality (7:37-38), so here readers presume that the women will provide with largesse out of their own resources. Like Jesus, they are willing to give with generosity.

³³ Paquette, “Les femmes disciples,” 151.

³⁴ Spencer, *Salty Wives, Spirited Mothers, and Savvy Widows*, 121. Sim agrees that the women came from different backgrounds but they pooled whatever resources they had to support the community. David C. Sim, “The Women followers of Jesus,” *HeyJ* XXX (1989): 51-62, 53.

³⁵ “The *ketubah* restates the fundamental conditions that are imposed by the Torah upon the husband, such as providing his wife with food, clothing, and conjugal rights, which are inseparable from marriage. It includes the husband's guarantees to pay a certain sum in the event of divorce, and inheritance rights obligatory upon his heirs in case he dies before his wife.” The *ketubah* contract was first formalised in the first century BCE by the Sanhedrin. http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/465168/jewish/The-Marriage-Contract-Ketubah.htm

This *διακονία* involves expenditure of resources and providing of ongoing material support to Jesus and the group around him in any way they can, while travelling with him as he preaches and spreads the good news. The use of the verbs *θεραπεύω* associated with Jesus and *διακονεω* associated with the women link their work of caring or service. The practical care of the women is related to the healing care of Jesus, as seen previously in the reaction of Simon's mother-in-law to her cure. The fact that *θεραπεύω* is used in the passive, to describe the women being cured of evil spirits and infirmities, also links Jesus as agent of the healing with the divine action of God (8:2). Schaberg considers that women are carrying out work that is subordinate to the work of the twelve³⁶ while Bieberstein suggests that even though the women are not part of the disciples, there is a tacit link between them and the community of followers.³⁷ However, it is stated in the summary that the women have been listening and are now acting on the word of God, with many of them having specific work within the community. The twelve (and the women) have been described as following Jesus and listening to his teaching, but some of the women, rather than the twelve, are described as having moved to another stage which consists of acting on that teaching by providing for the community.³⁸

The women's *διακονία* here is broader than the service of Simon's mother-in-law, which was mainly household and table service. This broader understanding can be seen in Luke's use of *διακονία/διακονέω* in both the Gospel and Acts. The different possibilities

³⁶ Schaberg calls it "a nonreciprocated role of service or support of the males of the movement." Schaberg, "Luke," 275-292, 287; Witherington concurs with this and says that "these women <did not> abandon their traditional roles in regard to preparing food, serving, and so on. Rather, it gave these roles new significance and importance, for now they could be used to serve the master and the family." He holds that only the twelve were chosen as preachers. Ben Witherington III, "On the Road with Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, and Other Disciples – Luke 8.1-3," in Levine and Bickerstaff, *A Feminist Companion to Luke*, 133-139, 138.

³⁷ Bieberstein, *Verschwiegene Jüngerinnen-vergesenene Zeuginnen*, 74.

³⁸ "8:1-3 thus parades these women (and not the twelve) as persons who both hear and act on the word of God (8:21; cf. 6:46-49)." Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 320.

include service at table (4:39; 10:40; 12:37), providing resources (8:3; Acts 6:1) and delivering a service (Acts 6:4; Acts 19:22).³⁹ Collins recommends that the emphasis should be on the motivation for the work rather than the type of work involved and therefore *διακονία* should not be seen primarily as a benevolent action on behalf of someone, but a sending “on behalf of the person or authority who mandated the activity.”⁴⁰ Therefore, readers should see it as focusing on service of God, the one who has commissioned the action, rather than on any particular service.⁴¹ So the women, whether serving at table or providing out of their own resources, are all motivated as followers of Jesus.

When discussing the women providing out of their resources, the main manuscripts favour *ἀπτοῖς*, meaning that they are providing for the whole group travelling with Jesus. A number of texts however favour *ἀπτω* (for him), implying that the women are supporting Jesus rather than the whole group.⁴² This changes the meaning substantially from

³⁹ In recent years, thanks to the seminal work of John N. Collins, the understanding of the concept of *διακονία* has broadened from the idea of service to include the idea of someone being sent to carry out a task or perform a role. John N. Collins, *Diakonia: Re-Interpreting the Ancient Sources*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press) 1990. This change is reflected in the third edition of the BDAG Lexicon where the definition now emphasises mediation or the sending of someone as an emissary to perform an office or service. “(1) service rendered in an intermediary capacity, mediation, assignment: mediation of this public obligation, (2) performance of a service, (3) functioning in the interest of a larger public, service, office of the prophets and apostles (4) rendering of specific assistance, aid, support; send someone something for support (5) an administrative function, service as attendant, aide, or assistant (English ‘deacon’).” BDAG, 229-231.

⁴⁰ John N. Collins, “A Monocultural Usage: *Διακον*-words in Classical Hellenistic and Patristic Sources,” *J/C* 66 (2012), 287-309: 301.

⁴¹ Gooder gives Collins’ example of the variety of service from Acts 6:1-4 where the seven men are chosen to organise the *διακονία*. While *διακονία* appears in both verses 2 and 4, verse 2 appears to be about waiting at table while verse 4 is about spreading the word. What is essential though is that both refer to the carrying out of a commissioned task. Paula Gooder, “Diakonia in the New Testament: A Dialogue with John N. Collins,” *Ecclesiology* 3 (2006): 33-56, 42.

⁴² \aleph A L Ψ f^1 33. 565. 579. 892. 1424. / 844. / 2211. Nestle Aland, 211.

‘ministering to them’ to ‘ministering to him.’⁴³ Most commentators recognise the reading *αὐτοῖς*, which is more in keeping with the broader sense of service that has already been evident in the earlier sections of this gospel, where scenes of healing, service and hospitality are more communal (4:40-44; 5:15; 5:17-26; 5:29; 6:18-19; 7:11-17).

There is no description of the women being called to follow Jesus as in the case of the male disciples (5:1-11; 27). Some of them have been cured of evil spirits and infirmities and so respond by following Jesus with gratitude.⁴⁴ This is not however to repay a debt as has been clearly demonstrated in the previous parable told by Jesus (7:41-43) and in the response of the woman of that same pericope (7:36-50). Jesus’ love and forgiveness are freely given without any need for the reciprocation that was so much part of the worldview where patrons provided favours and clients were expected to reciprocate.⁴⁵ The women are, instead, following Jesus’ example. “His graciousness toward these women is not repaid by their benefactions; rather, his graciousness is mirrored in theirs.”⁴⁶ The other women have obviously encountered Jesus through his preaching and teaching, as well as through his healing actions, and the fact that Luke specifically mentions their presence here implies that they are now a large established group among the disciples.

⁴³ Seim supports the use of *αὐτοῖς* and believes that *αὐτῷ* was only used to harmonise it with Mark 15:41. Seim, *The Double Message*, 63; Bovon, in agreeing with this, suggests that the change to *αὐτῷ* is Christological and he sees it as a correction of the original text dating from about the second century where it was “an expression of reverence for Christ.” Bovon, *Luke 1*, 301, n.29.

Ricci and Karris favour the use of *αὐτῷ*, Ricci commenting that the Christological element is already very much in evidence in Luke in verse 49 of the previous pericope when it is associated with forgiveness. Ricci, *Mary Magdalene and many others*, 157; Karris, “Women and Discipleship in Luke,” 28.

⁴⁴ Schaberg, “Luke,” 287.

⁴⁵ “Clients in this system know that their relation to patrons is highly unequal; patrons have much higher status and greater power and resources. Patrons provide their favors and help in exchange for items of a qualitatively different sort: material for immaterial, good for honor and praise, force for status support, and the like.” John J. Pilch and Bruce J. Malina, eds., *Handbook of Biblical Social Values* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 136.

⁴⁶ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 319.

7.2 An analysis of the female characters in their interaction with other characters

7.2.1 The Women and Jesus

In this summary passage, the interaction described is between the women as a group and Jesus, rather than between the individual named women and Jesus. They travel, along with the twelve, with Jesus as he proclaims the good news of the Kingdom of God. They have come to him in different ways, some have heard reports about him, some have heard him preach, some have seen him heal and some have themselves been healed from “evil spirits and infirmities” (8:2). Those who have been healed provide a response to the question of John the Baptist when he asked if Jesus was the one who is to come (7:20). The time has come and their role now is one of discipleship, as they learn from Jesus. The women are active in their response to Jesus, some by listening and following and some by serving Jesus and the rest of the group out of their own resources. In this they manifest the service and healing ministry of Jesus (4:40). Some including Mary Magdalene having been healed by Jesus, respond with gratitude.

We have also seen how the Christological motivation in the case of the women is found implicitly in the experience of healing. It is Jesus’ action on their behalf, his servant exercise of power that makes them become serving persons who follow him.⁴⁷

The other women, who minister out of their own resources, respond with gratuitous service, like the woman who anointed Jesus (7:36-50).

7.3 A synkrisis of the male-female pairings

This is another episode where a synkrisis is made between characters within the pericope, namely the twelve and the women. By putting them together in the same

⁴⁷ Seim, *The Double Message*, 85.

sentence, the narrator explicitly links them as they journey with Jesus in the role of disciples.

The narrator begins by listing the people, both men and women, who are with Jesus as he spreads the good news. “Luke in 8:1-3 *describes* the people who are constantly with Jesus. Luke does not *prescribe* how men and women are to behave in gender-specified discipleship roles.”⁴⁸ By naming the men as “the twelve,” there is a link to 6:12-16 where they are previously mentioned, called and named. While it is the first time that the women are mentioned, the use of both perfect and pluperfect tenses suggests that they have been part of the group for some considerable time. Both groups journey with Jesus (σὺν αὐτῷ) in a listening situation as he preaches the good news of the Kingdom of God.

Being ‘with Jesus’ connotes discipleship – an implication immediately borne out by the identification of Jesus’ companions as “the twelve” and as women who embody the meaning of discipleship for Luke.⁴⁹

In the story of the call of the male disciples, Peter is named and called first and Mary called Magdalene is named similarly among the women. In the case of the men, James and John, along with Peter, leave everything to follow Jesus (5:11). In like manner, Joanna and Susanna are named immediately after Mary and they too have left their homes to follow Jesus as he ministers. While Jesus calls the men as apostles, the women, who come from a greater variety of backgrounds, also leave their homes to follow him.

The more traditional reading of this section has gender-specified roles where the men travel with Jesus and learn from him while the women serve them out of their own

⁴⁸ De Boer, “The Lukan Mary Magdalene and Other Women following Jesus,” 142. Italics are author’s emphasis.

⁴⁹ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 317.

resources.⁵⁰ However, a broader reading has all of them learning from him while some of the women minister to the whole group. Some commentators also argue that the men follow Jesus because they are called while the women follow out of gratitude for their healing.⁵¹ This may apply to some of the women, but others follow presumably because of a report about Jesus or an encounter with him and his teaching. Readers are already very familiar with reports spreading about Jesus and crowds gathering to hear him.⁵² These women are, however, far more resilient than the crowds as they commit to follow him and take on a peripatetic lifestyle. Many of the women, as well as the men, have experienced a miracle or transformation that prompts them to follow Jesus, the men the miraculous catch of fish (5:1-11) and the women their cure from evil spirits and infirmities (8:2).

After having caught the largest number of fish in their lives, <the men> give up everything and follow him. The miracle changes their lives totally, and they become disciples of Jesus. The portrait of the women in 8:2-3 includes the same components: the wondrous experience and the consequent departure to follow Jesus.⁵³

Where the remainder of the women are concerned, readers must fill in the gap and allow for a wide variety of roles.⁵⁴ It is already evident at this stage in the Gospel as the crowds grow that people (and the women are included here) are following Jesus because of his teaching and evangelising as well as the miracles that he performs.

⁵⁰ Witherington, "On the Road with Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, and Other Disciples," 138; Schaberg, "Luke," 287; Dowling, *Taking away the Pound*, 154; According to Seim, the women are excluded from actual positions of leadership but demonstrate the new type of service leadership advocated by Jesus. Seim, *The Double Message*, 96.

⁵¹ Bovon, *Luke 1*, 299; Witherington, "On the Road with Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, and Other Disciples," 135.

⁵² 4:14, 37, 40-42; 5:1, 15, 26; 6: 17-19; 7:9, 11, 17, 24.

⁵³ Seim, *The Double Message*, 40.

⁵⁴ "Such a distinction allows for multiple, diversified roles among women: they may be viewed both/either as patrons and/or clients, benefactors and /or recipients." Spencer, *Salty Wives, Spirited Mothers, and Savvy Widows*, 120.

7.4 Summary

The women of this section have a much broader role than heretofore. They have encountered Jesus either through reports of his preaching and healing, through listening to his word or through being healed. They have followed him in a very radical way by journeying with him as disciples. Many of them then commit their own resources to support Jesus and those who are with him, both male and female. “The women wait on each other as well as on Jesus and the Twelve and model *the mutual service* that the entire company is called to enact.”⁵⁵ The *διακονία* of Simon’s mother-in-law, when she ministered to Jesus and others and then worked alongside him as he carried out his healing, is extended here to a much broader form of mutual service when the women serve, not just in a house setting, but as they journey with Jesus in his ministry. Like the anointing woman (7:36-50) who served Jesus with lavish generosity, these women have placed their resources at the service of Jesus and his followers.

The widow of 7:11-17, who drew out such compassionate empathy from Jesus when he saw her in the funeral procession of her only son, is now replaced by women, representing single, married and widows, who having heard his message or been healed, actively serve the Lord and the others in his entourage.

As a summary, this pericope provides a broader view of the story as opposed to the other passages which cover specific incidents.⁵⁶ It shows the pattern of ministry that is developing throughout the gospel. Women as well as men are regular members of Jesus’ company and are following him as disciples as he journeys on his ministry.

⁵⁵ Spencer, *Salty Wives, Spirited Mothers, and Savvy Widows*, 120.

⁵⁶ A summary is included in part of the story of Simon’s mother-in-law when she welcomes people as Jesus heals them (4:40-41).

At this stage in the Gospel, Jesus alone is the teacher and he shares the good news of the Kingdom of God. All of those with him, both men and women, listen to him and learn from him as they follow him. There are differences in some of the work of the men and women disciples as they respond to Jesus, the women being more likely to imitate Jesus' example of healing service through their *διακονία*, but all are called to follow him. This *διακονία* is a costly service, which uses up their resources.

The intimations of Jesus' future death and resurrection as Son (of God), observed in the earlier pericopes through the illness and recovery of Simon's mother-in-law and the resuscitation of the widow of Nain's son, are shown here. The description of the healing of Mary Magdalene from what is the most serious of illnesses, since seven demons have gone out of her, signals her journey from death to new life and once again anticipates Jesus' paschal journey. Finally, it is also hinted at in the inclusion of a Susanna, a prominent figure of the innocent sufferer in the LXX.

Chapter 8: Exegesis of Luke 8:19-21 (The True Kindred of Jesus)

In the sequential reading, this pericope follows the Parable of the Sower (8:4-15) and the description of the twelve and the women who follow Jesus (8:1-3). Having described the groups of men and women who are following him, the focus now changes to learning how to follow Jesus by listening to his word and acting accordingly.

8.1 A sequential reading of the pericope

This short section begins with the information that Jesus' mother and his ἀδελφοί have arrived to see him. The singular of παραγίνομαι is used, thus signifying that the two subjects, μήτηρ and ἀδελφοί, are being treated as one unit.¹ The combination of μήτηρ and ἀδελφοί is repeated three times in the pericope, with slight variations and each time used by a different speaker.

Verse		Speaker
8:19	ἡ μήτηρ καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοὶ αὐτοῦ	Narrator
8:20	ἡ μήτηρ σου καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοὶ σου	'Someone' Use of passive ἀπηγγέλη δὲ αὐτῷ (8:20)
8:21	μήτηρ μου καὶ ἀδελφοί μου	Jesus

The narrator is the first to mention them and the generic terms of μήτηρ and ἀδελφοί are used rather than personal names. The most important shift is the change of the source of the information from narrator, to anonymous speaker to Jesus himself. This explains the

¹ Culy, Parsons and Stigall, *Luke: A Handbook on the Greek text*, 267.

shift from “his,” to “your” to “my.” There is a climax with the speech of Jesus coming in third place, but also affirming close proximity. The only woman explicitly mentioned is the mother outside, but there are probably women among the crowd since Jesus speaks of mother, and ἀδελφοί often covers both genders.

Readers, however, are familiar with the mother of Jesus from the Infancy Narrative. The title is used much less frequently than her name, Mary, which usually occurs in more mundane circumstances (1:27, 30, 34, 39, 46, 56; 2:5, 16, 34), the exceptions being when she agrees to the angels request (1:38) and ponders on the shepherds words (2:19). On the other hand, the term ‘mother’ is used less but often in particularly significant situations. The first mention of mother, referencing Mary, is in the highly significant “mother of the Lord,” which describes her special role (1:43). Her blessedness is because she believes that the Lord’s word spoken to her will be fulfilled (1:45). Simeon in the Temple, addresses Jesus’ mother, Mary, predicting suffering for her son and for her (2:34-35). Lastly, at the finding in the Temple, the name Mary no longer occurs and it is his “mother” who questions his behaviour (2:48) and who “treasures all these things in her heart” (2:51). The mother is closely associated with Jesus and the Lord and she responds with belief, remembers and keeps God’s word and actions (ῥῆμα can signify either word or event). Readers have such a range of expectations of how one who bears the title mother might respond to Jesus.

The mother is present along with the ἀδελφοί of Jesus. Readers are already familiar with Jesus’ repeated use of the term ἀδελφός to teach about relationships (6:41-42 [4]), when he warns his disciples to take the log out of their own eye before they notice the speck in their brother’s. This generic use of ἀδελφοί applies to both men and women as

there are surely women in the crowds and, by implication, can refer to both brothers and sisters. In many of the scenes where it is used, it refers to members of the same community rather than any kind of blood relationship. This type of fictive kinship was not something new for the readers of the Gospel as in second Temple Judaism it was often used to apply to those in the same associations.² Much has been written about whether these brothers/brothers and sisters are blood brothers of Jesus, Joseph's children from a previous marriage or cousins of Jesus.³ For the purpose of this study, these nuances are not important and ἀδελφοί will be considered as close family of Jesus or intimates perhaps.

The family group is anxious to meet with Jesus, but they are unable to because of the crowd. In first century Palestine, families lived in close kinship groups, which could consist of the father, as head of the household, mother, eldest son and his family, unmarried sons and daughters, other relatives and servants or slaves. Other married sons and their families would also have lived in proximity to them. The household did not only share physical space but also had very close family bonds and shared a sense of loyalty to the family and to the honour of the family.⁴ The fact that they cannot reach Jesus and communicate with him would upset those close ties.

² Daniel K.. Darko, "'Kinship' in Discipleship: the 'Father' image of God and disciples as 'brothers' in Matthew's Sermon on the Mount," in *Exploring Biblical Kinship Festschrift in honour of John J. Pilch*, CBQMS 55 ed. Joan C. Campbell (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2016), 239-255, 242.

³ Meier argues: "While not deciding the doctrinal issue or claiming to be an infallible guide, historical-critical exegesis does suggest that the whole question of the brothers and sisters of Jesus is so obscure and ambiguous that it enjoys at best a remote and unclear relation to the foundation of Christian faith and the foundational truths that flow from it." J. P. Meier, "The Brothers and Sisters of Jesus in Ecumenical Perspective," *CBQ* 54 (1992): 1-28, 27; Bauckham does not come to any definite conclusion about the precise relationship of the ἀδελφοί with Jesus. Richard Bauckham, "The Brothers and Sisters of Jesus: An epiphanian response to John P. Meier," *CBQ* 56 (1994): 686-700; Bovon and Tannehill both believe that they are the biological family of Jesus. Bovon, *Luke 1*, 316; Tannehill, *Luke*, 143.

⁴ Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament: World insights from cultural anthropology*, rev. ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 122.

From the beginning of Jesus' ministry, crowds have gathered around him. While they want to hear his teaching or be healed, their understanding of who he is develops as the Gospel progresses. Readers understand that the crowd, because of their encounters with Jesus, glorify God and realise that God is visiting his people (7:16).⁵

Jesus receives a message (ἀπηγγέλη δὲ αὐτῷ) that his mother and brothers and sisters are standing outside and want to see him. The aorist passive gives no indication as to the identity of the speaker, but it is obviously a member of his present entourage rather than a family member. This further distances Jesus from his biological family (ἡ μήτηρ σου καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοί σου [8:20]). The anonymous speaker's direct speech is reported, rather than that of the family. The distance is also made very clear by the use of ἵστημι and ἔξω: they are standing outside, unable to move inside and not part of the inner circle that is with Jesus. Those inside the house, his group of disciples, are now emerging as his household rather than his biological family. Furthermore, while Jesus is expressly told that his mother and kin are outside and want to see him, he responds not to them but instead to those around him. There is no description of the reaction of the family, but in first century Palestine, it would have been most unusual to ignore their request. Jesus does not invite them in or go out to meet them, nor however does he send them away, but uses their presence to trigger a lesson about his new definition of kinship in the family of faith.⁶ This broader definition also happens in the case of his mother, who has been called by her name in the Infancy Narrative, but here is described simply as mother.⁷

⁵ See 4:14, 37; 5:15; 7:16.

⁶ "Jesus neither rejects nor praises his physical family; rather, he uses their arrival as a catalyst to redefine in the hearing of his disciples and the crowds the basis of kinship." Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 330.

⁷ Seim, *The Double Message*, 66.

While the narrator and others have spoken about *μήτηρ* and *ἀδελφοί* up to this, Jesus now speaks directly about *μήτηρ μου καὶ ἀδελφοί μου*. The use of ‘my’ shows that they are closely aligned to him, but also the lack of article⁸ with ‘mother’ and ‘brothers’ suggests that he is talking about a wider and more inclusive group than his immediate family.⁹ He now defines his fictive kindred no longer in biological terms, but as those who ‘hear the word of God and do it’ (8:21). It was already stated that his own family wanted to see him, but seeing is no longer sufficient. The members of his new family must hear the word of God and act on it. However, there is no sense of negativity toward his own physical family who can still be included in his new family of faith.¹⁰ “The point is not primarily to exclude Jesus’ mother and brothers and sisters in favour of the others who are present (the disciples), but rather to transform and transfer kinship categories on the basis of a new set of criteria.”¹¹ The family of Jesus are not mentioned again and obviously they would have been very disappointed with Jesus’ lack of response and nothing is said about whether they remain or leave. However, the focus has now shifted to the new family of faith who, along with the readers, principally hear the word of God from Jesus.

There is no mention of a father at any stage in this description of the new family, but then from a very early age Jesus has explained his special relationship with God. His first recorded words when he is found in the Temple, in reply to his mother’s anxious

⁸ “Predicate nouns as a rule are anarthrous.” Blass and Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 143; “The omission of the article shows that the speaker regards the person or thing not so much as this or that person or thing, but rather as *such* a person or thing, i.e. regards not the individual but rather its nature or quality.” Max Zerwick S. J. and Mary Grosvenor, *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament* (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1966), 55.

⁹ Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts Vol 1*, 212.

¹⁰ Bovon, Green and Nolland agree that Jesus’ family is included in this new understanding of family. Bovon, *Luke 1*, 316; Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 330; Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, 395; Wolter sees no role for them as he believes that Jesus’ family is now based on ethical criteria only. Wolter, *The Gospel According to Luke Volume I*, 345.

¹¹ Seim, *The Double Message*, 67.

statement that she and his father have been searching for him, is to reply that “I must be in my Father’s house” (2:49). Throughout his preaching, people have been praising God who is visiting his people through the word of Jesus (7:16). Here again he makes the link with God when he explains that those who hear the word of God are his mother and siblings (8:21). Therefore there is no need to mention ‘father’ along with mother and brothers and sisters in the new family of faith as being related to Jesus implies being related to God, who is father of this new family. “In the fictive household, the only father is the heavenly father.”¹²

The sequential reading has already demonstrated this message of fictive kinship. When Jesus called the first disciples, they abandoned everything, including family, to follow him (5:1-11). “Jesus’ mission charge urged that his disciples/followers abandon home and family for itinerant poverty.”¹³ Also, when Jesus told the parable about a man building a house, he said that he was on a sure foundation if he not only heard the words of Jesus but acted on them, while the man who built without a foundation was the person who heard his words but did not follow them with action (6:46-49). This parable can be viewed as a pointer to the creation of new households based on God’s word.

This teaching is further developed in the Parable of the Sower which is presented in the form of an intercalation.

“Luke introduces the parable by emphasizing that Jesus’ mission is with the Twelve and the women; he concludes the parable in verses 19-21 with Jesus’ assertion that his true mother and brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.”¹⁴

¹² Dennis C. Duley, “Kinship, Genealogy, and Fictive Kinship in Mediterranean Culture and in the Matthean Gospel,” in Joan C. Campbell, *Exploring Biblical Kinship*, 195-219, 216.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 215.

¹⁴ Ruth A. Foster and William D. Shiell, “The Parable of the Sower and the Seed in Luke 8:1-10: Jesus’ parable of parables,” *RevExp* 94 (1997): 259-267, 265.

In the earlier section, discipleship has already been explained in terms of journeying with Jesus, listening to his teaching and preaching and also active response (some of the women provided out of their own resources [8:3]). This combination of hearing and doing is further elucidated in this parable. Jesus tells the story of the parable to “a great crowd and people from town after town” (8:4). As he finishes the story he uses the imperative to call out to them all to listen: ὁ ἔχων ὄρα ἀκούειν ἀκούετω (8:8). Having explained the parable he concludes with a further call: Βλέπετε οὖν πῶς ἀκούετε (8:18). The challenge, however, is not simply to listen as he explains in the intervening parable. All four groups of people hear the word and, by putting ἀκούω near the beginning of each sentence, that point is emphasised. However, three of the four fail to respond, the first by falling away immediately, the second have no roots and fall away when they are tested and the third are caught up in the cares, riches and pleasures of life. The final group represent the seed that falls on good soil as “they hear the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patient endurance” (8:15).

Jesus’ exposition of the Sower Parable answers the reader’s queries about the nature of true hearing by defining a sequence of necessary perceptual activities from paying attention, to being receptive, to retaining what one has heard, to producing evidence of having perceived. Attention, reception, retention, and production are all involved in proper hearing.¹⁵

As this teaching on discipleship concludes, Jesus has now broadened his definition of family to include all those who hear his word and respond by acting in accordance with

¹⁵ John A. Darr, “Narrative Therapy: Treating audience anxiety through psychagogy in Luke,” *PRSt* 39 (2012): 335-348, 344.

what they have heard. This is now the ideal for discipleship.¹⁶

8.2 An analysis of the female character in her interaction with other characters

8.2.1 The mother and Jesus

Jesus and his mother do not actually meet in this pericope. She is never called by her name, but only by the generic term ‘mother’ which is repeated three times. On the third of these occasions Jesus refers to ‘mother’ but only to use the term to describe those who are members of his fictive kindred. He never actually refers to his own mother as an individual. However, readers realise that much of what he says has already been put into practice by his mother in the Infancy Narrative. She is an example of someone who hears the word of God and carries it out. Her story up to this has been one of listening to God’s word, accepting it, pondering on its meaning and putting it into practice.

This has happened not only when she was described as ‘mother,’ but also when she was called by her name ‘Mary.’ Immediately after the message of the angel, she called herself the servant or slave of the Lord and agreed to follow his word (τὸ ῥῆμά σου) (1:38). She followed this by proclaiming the Magnificat where she not only praised God for what he had done for her, but also extended it to the lowly and others on the margins of society (1:46-55). “God’s action in the life of Mary reflects God’s action in the life of God’s people.”¹⁷

¹⁶ “The parable also provides a measuring tool by which the disciples can be evaluated and functions programmatically to shape the reader’s expectations regarding possible ways in which characters can respond to Jesus.”Sheila A. Klassen-Wiebe, “Called to Mission: A Narrative-Critical study of the character and mission of the disciples in the Gospel of Luke” (PhD diss., Union Theological Seminary and Presbyterian School of Christian Education, Richmond, Virginia, 2001), 157.

¹⁷ Dowling, *Taking away the Pound*, 129.

A key element of the image of Mary, as portrayed in the Infancy narrative, is her reaction to the messages she received. When the angel addressed her, she pondered¹⁸ on the words (λόγος) that the angel spoke to her (1:29). After the shepherds' visit, she treasured the words (ῥῆμα) they had spoken (2:19) and once again pondered on them in her heart and finally when they returned to Nazareth, at the end of the Infancy Narrative (2:51), Mary treasured all these things/words in her heart, which is "the seat of thought, memory and affectivity."¹⁹ So, whether described as Jesus' mother or as Mary, she is a prime example of listening to God's word.

8.2.2 The mother and brothers and the crowd

The size of the crowd physically prevents the mother and kin of Jesus from reaching him. From the earliest moments of his ministry, crowds have been gathering around Jesus to hear his word and be healed of their illnesses and, as the gospel proceeds, the crowds grow in their understanding of Jesus and his role. There is no sense of antagonism towards the family. However, as family, they cannot take their rightful place beside Jesus due to them as near kin and, in fact, have to remain outside and are excluded from being inside with him. Yet, both the mother and the crowd are examples of those who listen to God's word. The mother has not only listened, but also acted on it, while the crowd are described as listening and reacting positively to Jesus. The hope is that Jesus' close family, and not just his mother, will join in this listening and acting on Jesus' message.

¹⁸ διαλογίζομαι: "to think or reason with thoroughness and completeness" L&N, 30.10; "To think or reason carefully especially about the implications of something, consider, ponder, reason" BDAG, 232.

¹⁹ Ben F. Meyer, "But Mary kept all these things... 2,19.51," *CBQ* 26 (1964): 31-49, 45.

8.3 A synkrisis of the male-female pairings

In this pericope, the narrator, the anonymous speaker and Jesus all dictate the male-female synkrisis. Jesus declares that those who hear and carry out his word are his mother and brothers and sisters and also contrasts those who are inside and outside his new family.

The first mention is of Jesus' biological family and, while there has been no mention of his siblings up to this, readers have a significant amount of information about his mother. All of them are anxious to meet with Jesus, but that is all that is known about his *ἀδελφοί*. This is very different to his mother who has already been described as someone who has fulfilled the criteria that are demanded of discipleship. She can be seen as an example for the other members of his family.

When Jesus broadens out his definition of family to incorporate all those who listen to him and follow through with action, he calls them his mother and brothers/sisters. Here, however, there is no distinction between male and female. The fact that his mother is a prime example of how to follow him does not elevate the role of women followers. Jesus' new family, both male and female, are those who hear the word of God and do it (8:21). Just as 8:1-3, where the twelve and some women are journeying with Jesus so, here also, everyone is called to follow him.

8.4 Summary

Even though the woman who is mentioned in this section is Jesus' mother, there is no actual meeting between them. She remains outside his circle and unable to see him and therefore to hear the word. Her main function in this pericope is as a representative figure so that Jesus can draw out his definition of fictive kinship, which is about listening to God's

word and acting on it. However, readers have already encountered the mother of Jesus, called both ‘mother’ and ‘Mary’ in the Infancy Narratives and she emerged very clearly as someone who heard the word, pondered on it and followed it by action. Therefore, readers bring a remembrance of this mother, and the discipleship and response to Jesus that she represents, to this present pericope.

This section and the summary including the women who follow Jesus (8:1-3) enclose the teaching about being a follower of Jesus that is taught in the Parable of the Sower. The earlier women journeyed with Jesus and some responded by “providing for them out of their resources” (8:3). The teaching is further developed through the parable and its explanation and the section ends with a clear message. Those who follow Jesus, by listening and action, are now as much his family as his biological family. His physical family are not however excluded from this group, and his mother, in particular, has been the first example of discipleship.

The interaction of Jesus with individual women up to this could be seen through the miracles (4:38-39; 7:11-17) and the woman’s anointing of Jesus (7:36-50) and much is revealed about Jesus and his ministry through these women. This section is different in that Jesus uses the arrival of his mother and siblings to teach a very comprehensive message about discipleship. He now proposes a radical explanation of what following him means, where those who hear the word of God and do it become his new extended family (often termed fictive kindred). Jesus now defines his relationship with his followers in terms of a new family of faith, with God as Father, and this relationship is developed through hearing the word of God, implicitly from him and doing it. A relationship with him is the key entry point into this family and that is why he now calls them *my* mother and *my* kin (8:21).

Chapter 9: Exegesis of Luke 8:40-56 (A Girl Restored to Life and a Woman Healed)

This pericope consists of two stories rather than one. They concern the cures of a woman and a girl, but they are written in the form of an “intercalation,” a sandwich-technique where one story is inserted in the other, with the result that each influences the interpretation of the other.¹

The episode begins with Jesus’ return from the country of the Gerasenes where he had driven out demons called Legion from a man. While the man reacts positively and wants to follow Jesus, the local community begs Jesus to leave because they are “seized with great fear” (8:37). With this as background, Jesus returns to a positive welcome from the crowd in Galilee.

9.1 A sequential reading of the pericope

When Jesus returns to Galilee, all are waiting with expectation for him (8:40). The verb *προσδοκάω* has already been used several times in the gospel² and often points to the expectation of a divine epiphany.³

Immediately, Jairus, a leader of the synagogue comes to speak to Jesus. The term *ἀρχων* implies that he is responsible for “the physical arrangements of the worship

¹ James R. Edwards, “Markan Sandwiches: The significance of interpolations in Markan narratives,” *NovT* XXXI (1989): 193-216, 197; See also S. B. Hatton, “Comic Ambiguity in the Markan Healing Intercalation (Mark 5:21-43),” *Neot* 49 (2015): 91-123.

² The people wonder if John the Baptist is the Messiah that they have been expecting (3:15); John sends messengers to ask if Jesus is the Messiah who is to come or if they are to wait for another (7:19-21).

³ The textual variant that is found in Sinaiticus replaces *αὐτόν* with *τὸν θεόν* making the connection between Jesus and God even more obvious.

service.”⁴ Jesus, who was “in a situation of ritual impurity [in the land of the Gerasenes], is now meeting the leader of the synagogue, who promotes observance of the law.”⁵ As a leader of the synagogue, Jairus is among the wealthier members of society in the town where he is a member of the provincial authorities.⁶ Most of Jesus’ encounters with senior members of the Jewish religious authorities have been negative in nature, like the reaction of the scribes and Pharisees to the cure of the man with the withered hand (6:6-11). So while readers are surprised to find Jairus come in an attitude of great humility, they have one other positive example to consider. The centurion was also in an important position in the community and liked by the people because he built their synagogue (7:1-10). His faith was so great that Jesus was amazed by it and so readers suspect/hope that Jairus will react positively as well.

Jairus falls down at the feet of Jesus, thus recognising Jesus’ authority⁷ or taking the position of a disciple.⁸ That falling down before Jesus has already occurred at crucial points in the gospel before this, for example Peter when he called himself a sinner (5:8) and the woman who was a sinner who anointed Jesus’ feet as a sign of her love (7:36-50). This is also the position of listening that the Gerasene demoniac took up after he was healed (8:35). So this man, who has status within the community, recognises Jesus’ authority and begs him to come to his house. By the use of *παρακαλέω* and *εἰσέρχομαι*, the implied author juxtaposes two verbs of hospitality (one for the host, one for the guest), thus emphasising Jairus’ outreach of hospitality to Jesus. *Εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ* “is a virtual technical term in Lucan literature to denote the act in which the guest enters into and

⁴ Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, 419.

⁵ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 344.

⁶ Arlandson, *Women, Class and Society in Early Christianity*, 113.

⁷ Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 141.

⁸ Marshall, *Commentary on Luke*, 340.

accepts the hospitality offered by his host.”⁹ He comes across as a supplicant as he invites Jesus to come to his home. Nolland suggests that in verse 41, “the imperfect tense for “implored” signals uncertainty about the outcome of the request,”¹⁰ since it is a conative imperfect, “an attempted but incomplete action.”¹¹ It, therefore, signals persistence and anxiety on Jairus’ part to get help for his daughter. The focus is on Jairus’ desperation, and it is left to the narrator to outline the seriousness of his daughter’s illness. It is a further sign of hope that Jairus invites Jesus to his house (*οἶκία*) as houses are places where Jesus heals (4:38, 5:24), where he forgives (5:20, 7:47) and where he joins in table fellowship (5:29, 7:36), all of which represent positive experiences for those concerned.

The stated reason for the request is that the man’s only daughter is dying. This man obviously cares greatly for his daughter as he pleads for her life. The girl is twelve years old and on the cusp between childhood and adulthood.¹² She is now about to embark on adult life as she is of marriageable age, which means that she is “at the age to give life to others.”¹³ So as the father of an only child, the implication is that Jairus must also fear the loss of grandchildren and a future for the family. The imminent death of the man’s *only* daughter evokes the death of the widow’s *only* son (7:1-10), which drew a very compassionate response from Jesus.

⁹ Jipp, *Divine visitations and hospitality to strangers in Luke-Acts*, 176.

¹⁰ Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, 419.

¹¹ Blass and Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 167.

¹² “By narrating the girl in this textual unit as residing in the home of her father (cf. Lk 8:41, 49, 51), the narrator seems to understand her as not yet married. Thus, with respect to her status in the household, she remains a child.” Amy Lindeman Allen, “Reading for Inclusion: The girl from Galilee (Luke 8:40-56),” *Journal of Childhood and Religion* 4 (2017): 1-17, 4.

¹³ Bovon, *Luke 1*, 337.

As he moves off in the direction of Jairus' house, the crowd that was so welcoming (8:40) seems to hinder Jesus' progress. It is described as choking (συμπνίγω)¹⁴ Jesus' effort as he goes to the girl's house. This verb has been only used one other time in the Gospel, in the Parable of the Sower, to describe the seeds that are choked by the thorns as an image of the people who are choked by the cares of the world (8:14). Jesus' journey to the house is being hindered.

There is now a change of scene as the narrator describes a woman who has a "flow of blood" (ρεύσει αἵματος). Her story connects immediately with the story of the girl because she has had the haemorrhage for twelve years, which is equivalent to the age of the girl. Many commentators (though not all)¹⁵ state that this 'flow of blood' is related to some sort of gynaecological problem.¹⁶ The use of the word ρύσις describes the illness in terms of a porous body leaking blood, a typical description used by Greek doctors of the time.¹⁷ Leviticus states that, because of this illness, the woman as well as everything and everyone she touches are ritually unclean and "irregular flows from men or women produce a more severe state of ritual defilement than menstruation does" (Lev 15:25-28).¹⁸ Numbers has an even stricter code and excludes the person with the discharge from the community (Num 5:1-3). It is not certain to what extent either which code was practiced in Second Temple Judaism but, according to the codes, the woman is in a constant state of

¹⁴ "To check the growth or well-being of something by pressure, *choke* of plants; *to crowd around, press upon* something like *almost crush*." BDAG, 959.

¹⁵ According to Levine, the haemorrhage has nothing to do with what she calls 'female troubles.' "It is read into it, so she argues, by students of Christian origins who are obsessed with Levitical purity regulations." Amy-Jill Levine, "Discharging Responsibility: Matthean Jesus, biblical Law, and the hemorrhaging woman," in *A Feminist Companion to Matthew*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine and Marianne Blickenstaff (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 70-87, 72.

¹⁶ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 347; Bovon, *Luke 1*, 337; Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts Vol 1*, 150; Reid, *Choosing the Better Part*, 139.

¹⁷ Candida R. Moss, "The man with the flow of power: Porous bodies in Mark 5: 25-34," *JBL* 129 (2010): 507-519, 514.

¹⁸ Klawans, *Impurity and sin in ancient Judaism*, 39.

ritual impurity and has been for a considerable length of time.¹⁹ The woman manages to furtively work her way through the crowd to reach Jesus. While readers are aware of her situation and her haemorrhage is not necessarily public knowledge, the social stigma of an illness involving ritual impurity would still make her wary in a public situation. However, it is important to remember that her ritual impurity is part of natural life and there is no suggestion that she is morally unclean.²⁰

Part of verse 43 [ἰατροῖς προσαναλώσασα ὅλον τὸν βίον] is considered by most commentators to be a later edition to the text.²¹ The variant does however highlight the point that no one has been able to cure the woman, and that she has spent all her livelihood on doctors trying to find a cure, and that she is now probably destitute. The word βίος means not only life but also livelihood or possessions and so the woman has not only lost her health and her whole life in pursuit of this cure, but has also suffered the loss of her wealth. Additionally, she has suffered symbolically through the loss of any relationship or communication with others because of her illness.²² Jairus' daughter is dying, but this woman is symbolically dead to those around her. No other information is given about the woman. Other than stating that she is a woman, the narrative shows that her whole life is taken up with her illness.

¹⁹ Susan Haber, "A woman's touch: Feminist encounters with the hemorrhaging woman in Mark 5.24-34," *JSNT* 26 (2003): 171-192, 177.

²⁰ Amy Jill Levine, "Common Errors made about early Judaism," in *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 501-504, 502.

²¹ This variant appears in a number of manuscripts among them ⋈ A K L P W Γ Δ Θ Ψ. Metzger states that the clause looks like a digest of Mark 5:26 but wonders if anyone except Luke himself could rewrite Mark in this way. He also states however that "the early and diversified evidence for the shorter text is well-nigh compelling." Therefore he suggests retaining it but placing it in square brackets in the text. Bruce M Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London: United Bible Societies, 1971), 145.

²² βίος is defined as "life and activity associated with it; resources needed to maintain life." BDAG, 76.

De l'essentiel, son nom, son âge, son état de vie, sa position sociale, son appartenance religieuse et culturelle, le lecteur ne sait rien. Tout se réduit à ces deux seuls éléments: c'est une femme et elle est malade.²³

The woman approaches Jesus from behind, as inconspicuously as possible. Readers are reminded of the woman, who was a sinner, who stood behind Jesus before she anointed him (7:38). This woman is also an outsider because of her haemorrhage, but her action in reaching out to Jesus shows that she is willing to behave in an inappropriate manner because of her belief in his power. She has probably already heard about Jesus and may have witnessed one of the gatherings where he healed people (6:19), or she may even be a member of the crowd who waited expectantly for his return from the country of the Gerasenes (8:40). She is persistent as she makes her way with difficulty through the crowd that is pressing around Jesus. On the other hand, the narrator makes no mention of Jesus noticing her efforts.

The woman touches the hem of Jesus' garment, which has symbolic significance in the Old Testament. First, it is a reminder to Israel to remember the commandments of God and do them.²⁴ Then, the initiation of the marriage relationship is often described in terms of the spreading of the hem of the cloak by the husband over his future wife, thus performing "a symbolic act of establishing a new relationship (Ruth 3:9; Ezek 16:8)."²⁵ So, by touching the hem of his garment, the woman is claiming a new relationship with Jesus. Shortly before this (5:34-35), Jesus has told his followers to celebrate because the

²³ Marie-Christine Chou, "Parole et silence, chemins de foi: une lecture de Mc 5, 21-43 selon la méthode narrative," *BLE CXII* (2011): 363-390, 374.

²⁴ Furthermore, the fringe or tassel of the garment is a religious symbol that was decreed by YHWH to remind the Israelites of his commandments and that they were to be "holy to their God" (Num 15:38-40).

²⁵ Paul A. Kruger, "The hem of the garment in marriage: the meaning of the symbolic gesture in Ruth 3:9 and Ezek 16:8," *Journal Of Northwest Semitic Languages* 12 (1984): 79-86, 84.

bridegroom is with them and so here, Jesus might be viewed as the bridegroom whom this woman seeks and her immediate cure gives her cause for celebration.

Jesus, who seemed oblivious to what was happening up to this (at this stage, readers know more about what has happened than Jesus does!), now realises that someone touched him purposefully and asks who touched him, mentioning not his clothes but himself. In many cases, a person's clothes were often linked with his/her power or status and so are intrinsically linked to the person himself.²⁶ The verb ἄπτω is a reminder that people reached out to touch Jesus because of their awareness that power went out from him to heal (6:19).²⁷ That same power (δύναμις) also refers to the power of the Most High (1:35), the power of the Spirit (1:44), the power of the Lord (5:17). Here the link between power and healing is seen once again as, despite Peter's protestations, Jesus is adamant not only that someone has touched him, but that power has gone out from him.²⁸ The impression is given here that Jesus has no control over what is happening.²⁹ Moreover, the woman seems to draw the power from Jesus. In these few lines ἄπτω is mentioned four times (8:44, 45, 46, 47), but it is meant to convey far more than simple touch as the narrator has already stressed that Jesus was being constantly touched by the people who were crowding around him. No less than three different verbs (συμπνίγω [8:42], συνέχω [8:45], ἀποθλίβω [8:45])

²⁶ "Some traditions portray the outer garment of special persons as conveying power (or its loss). Saul, for example, grabs and rips the hem of Samuel's cloak, symbolizing the loss of Saul's kingdom to David (1 Sam 15:27; cf. 1 Sam 24:4–20; Elijah, on the other hand, throws his mantle over Elisha to indicate his successor (1 Kgs 19:19); Elisha uses the same mantle to part the waters of the Jordan (2 Kgs 2:8, 14)." Douglas R. Edwards, "Dress and Ornamentation," *ABD* 2.232-238.

²⁷ The verb ἄπτω has also been used in association with healing (5:13; 7:14) and forgiveness (7:36-50).

²⁸ In Hellenistic culture more than biblical settings, this δύναμις was often described as working automatically almost like magic, independent of the person from whom the power went out. Camille Focant, "Opérer une brèche dans les règles de pureté en vue d'être sauvée. Le cas de la femme qui souffrait d'hémorragie (Mc 5: 24-34)," in *The Woman with the Blood Flow (Mark 5:24-34): Narrative, iconic, and anthropological spaces*. Vol. 2, ed. Barbara Baert and Niels Schalley (Leuven: Peeters, 2014), 35-50, 36.

²⁹ Barbara Baert, "General Introduction: Touching the hem," in Baert and Schalley, *The Woman with the Blood Flow*, 1-32, 5.

emphasise this. Yet, this touch is different and implies some sort of special connection between Jesus and the person who has reached out to him.³⁰ It is the woman who draws this flow of power from Jesus to stop her flow of blood. What has been going out from the woman up to this is the continuous flow of blood, which has taken her ritual purity, her livelihood and in many ways her life. In reply to this, power goes out from Jesus to counteract all of that and to stop the flow of blood and so return her to ritual purity, her life within the community and life in the fullest sense.

First century readers would have understood the encounter between Jesus and the woman in terms of their understanding of illness. Sickly bodies were those that were ‘porous’ and allowed disease or a δαιμόνιον to contaminate it. In this particular illness the woman’s body (and women’s bodies were considered more prone to being porous) is leaking blood.³¹ Jesus however, mirrors the woman in that he too is porous and he has no control over the power and healing that flow from him.³² So while the flow, that comes from Jesus, heals the woman, the fact that he too is ‘porous’ makes him physiologically weak and therefore he can be seen as aligned with the sick and weak.³³ Moss suggests that this weakness and porosity, that would have been considered very negative in the ancient world, is actually something positive. “The porosity of Jesus serves a positive function; it facilitates the woman’s cure and stands as a marker of a hidden, divine identity.”³⁴ Instead of contracting impurity, Jesus is a purifying source.

³⁰ “This touch must have taken place under special circumstances for otherwise no “power” would have gone out from Jesus.” Wolter, *The Gospel According to Luke Volume I*, 361.

³¹ Moss, "The man with the flow of power," 513.

³² Baert, “General Introduction. Touching the Hem,” 5.

³³ Moss, "The man with the flow of power," 516.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 519.

When Jesus asks who touched him, no one comes forward to answer his query; in fact they all repeatedly deny it. The woman is part of that crowd and also implicitly denies touching him. Despite her instant healing, her first reaction is apprehension and a fear of coming forward into public view, especially since she has not requested healing. Yet when Jesus insists, she realises that the cure, that she thought was in secret, was actually noticed by Jesus, and that she could not remain hidden and so she comes forward. She is first described as trembling,³⁵ but her action shows that it is with awe rather than fear because she has experienced the power of God and she throws herself at Jesus' feet.

A transformation is evident in the woman, as having been excluded from her community and having tried to reach Jesus in secret, she now proclaims her cure in public. This proclamation is in front of all of the people (λαοῦ). It reminds readers of the Gerasene demoniac who returned home and proclaimed all that Jesus had done for him. The woman now tells all the people, not only about her immediate healing, but also the reason. It has cost her whole life and livelihood, but now her healing opens her to new life (8:43).

Jesus' reply is a direct response to the woman and elevates the status of her healing because even though she has spoken of being physically healed (ιάομαι), Jesus now makes her aware that she is saved and made whole or complete (σώζω). In Luke's Gospel, σώζω means not only healed but also saved and here the woman's faith has saved her (7:50; 8:12). He addresses the woman as "daughter" (θυγάτηρ) "a term that indicates a tender and familial connection,"³⁶ and implies her reintegration into the community and into his new

³⁵ "In this passage physical shaking is probably the primary semantic component, whereas in other passages there is a stronger focus on the psychological aspect." BDAG, 1014.

³⁶ Kent Brower, "Who then is this?" – Christological questions in Mark 4:35 – 5:43," *EQ* 81 (2009), 291-305, 304.

family of faith (8:19-21). It could be said that she has also been brought back into “full personhood.”³⁷

As Jesus sends her on her way, he speaks to her in the exact words that he has used to the woman who anointed him (ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε· πορεύου εἰς εἰρήνην 7:50/8:48), thus showing that not only is he commending her faith, but is stating that this faith has saved her. It has drawn out the power to heal from Jesus.³⁸ There is a difference between the two women that Jesus commends for their faith; one came to see him of her own accord while the woman here has only come forward following Jesus’ repeated request. Yet, Jesus makes no distinction. Both are saved because of their faith.

Using the linking phrase ἔτι αὐτοῦ λαλοῦντος, the narrator returns to the original story. While this provides a continuation in the narrative, it does not avoid the gap in the story of Jairus’ daughter and this is immediately filled as someone arrives to tell Jairus that his daughter has died in the intervening time. The use of the word ‘daughter’ links the two: the woman has been re-integrated into her community while the girl has been lost to her family at the very same time. While the woman was receiving back her life, the girl’s life was ebbing away.

Before Jairus can react to the messenger, Jesus overhears the conversation and tells him to have faith. He also tells him that his daughter will be saved (σώζω). In this way, he echoes the conversation that he has just had with the woman, which Jairus must have overheard, and he now tells Jairus to demonstrate the same kind of faith.

The insertion of the woman with the haemorrhage into the Jairus story is thus not an editorial stratagem whose primary purpose is to create suspense or to give time for

³⁷ Reid, *Choosing the Better Part*, 140.

³⁸ Baert, “General Introduction. Touching the Hem,” 5.

the situation in the main incident to develop. The woman's faith forms the center of the sandwich and is the key to its interpretation.³⁹

While the woman's faith is a key element here, Jairus has already shown faith in Jesus by asking for his help in a very public manner and by reaching out to him with hospitality when he invited him to his home.

Jesus now moves from the public arena to the privacy of Jairus' house. He continues this sense of privacy by allowing only Peter, John and James and the girl's parents to come with him. The three have already been with Jesus at crucial points in his ministry (5:11; 6:14) and it is also likely that they were there for the raising of the widow's son and so hope that Jesus will be able to save the girl. On the other hand, just before this, Peter did not understand the concept of power going out from Jesus when the woman with the haemorrhage was cured.

The girl's mother is mentioned for the first time. She probably did not go along with Jairus to plead for Jesus' help as she had a seriously ill child at home, but since she enters the house with them when Jesus arrives, then she must have come out of the house to welcome him to her home. While individual parents have been present at other miracles (the young man's mother at Nain [7:11-17] and the centurion who spoke of the servant as he would his own child [7:1-10]), this is the first time that both parents are mentioned in any of the miracle stories, thus completing the family imagery.

Having entered the house, Jesus is once again surrounded by a crowd that is performing a typical Jewish mourning ritual.⁴⁰ When Jesus tells them that the child is not dead but sleeping, he uses the verb *καθεύδω* which as well as meaning 'to sleep' is also

³⁹ Edwards, "Markan Sandwiches," 193-216, 205.

⁴⁰ Marshall, *Commentary on Luke*, 347; Wolter, *The Gospel According to Luke Volume I*, 363.

used figuratively for ‘to die.’⁴¹ “His statement is nothing other than the indirect announcement that the girl will get up again in the near future- for this is precisely what distinguishes sleep from death.”⁴² The people present know that the child is dead and their laughter seems like mockery. Yet, readers are more hopeful as they know that Jesus has just cured the woman with the haemorrhage.

Readers’ hopes are further raised when Jesus tells the parents not to weep as the raising of the widow’s son immediately comes to mind (7:14). Jesus uses both word and touch to raise the girl as he grasps the child’s hand and then calls out to her. Like the woman with the haemorrhage, rather than becoming ritually unclean when he touches the dead girl, he cleanses the child of the impurity by raising her from the dead.

As in the resuscitation of the young man (7:11-17), the story is reminiscent of Elijah (1 Kgs 17:17-24) and Elisha (2 Kgs 4:25-37), but shows that a greater power is manifest in Jesus. Both Elijah and Elisha carry out complex rituals before the child is raised while Jesus simply heals by his word and touch.⁴³ Jesus is shown through the Elijah allusions to be a prophet and indeed much greater than a prophet. The stories of two children being raised to life and the echoes of the Elijah/Elisha stories, as well as the use of the verb *ἐγείρω*, are also a reminder to readers that the Son of the Father will come through death and be raised in the climax of the Gospel at Jesus’ resurrection. Furthermore, the

⁴¹ BDAG, 490.

⁴² Wolter, *The Gospel According to Luke Volume I*, 364.

⁴³ Elijah carries the child up to his room, lays him on his bed, stretches out three times over the child and cries out to God to return him to life. When the child revives he gives him back to his mother. From the very beginning it is obvious that he is calling on God to raise the child (1 Kgs 17:17-24). In the Gospel, the return of the girl’s spirit (*πνεῦμα*) is described in a very similar way to the story of Elijah where the child’s soul or breath (*πνεῦμα*) returns. In the Elisha story, he first prays to the Lord then lies on the child putting his mouth on his mouth, his eyes on his eyes, his hands on his hands until the child’s flesh becomes warm. He then walks around the room and bends over the child a second time before he revives (2 Kgs 4:25-37).

comparison in the Gospel between the two women, both of whom lose their life and regain it through Jesus, even better anticipates his paschal journey.

9.2 An analysis of the female character in her interaction with other characters

9.2.1 The woman and the crowd

The crowd is introduced in this pericope as welcoming and looking forward to seeing Jesus. However, as the woman tries to make her way to Jesus, the crowd pushes in so much around Jesus that it seems to be choking him. It may be that they are anxious to be close to Jesus, but since *συμπνίγω* has only appeared once before in the text and that was in relation to the thorns choking the good seed, then there is a hint of negativity here.

Because of her ‘flow of blood,’ which caused her to be ritually impure, it would be expected that the woman would keep herself at a distance from other people and away from the crowd. Yet her anxiety to reach Jesus overcomes this. While there is no mention of the crowd’s reaction to the woman, it is as if the narrator wants readers to sense the opposition that would exist to the woman if they knew of her unclean state. Once she is cured, the woman comes forward trembling in awe at the power of God. She had privately dissociated herself from the crowd because of her illness and, now that she is cured, she also dissociates herself from them as she publicly proclaims her cure.

After the woman is healed, she shows the effect that the cure has had on her as a person. So she not only tells Jesus about her illness, but proclaims it publicly in front of the *λαός*, a term which can designate a crowd, but also the whole people of Israel. By using this term rather than crowd (*ὄχλος*), the narrator is emphasising her proclamation of what has happened (2:10; 2:31-32) as well as her membership of the people of Israel (1:10). She

had gone from someone who was obviously anxious as she approached Jesus through the crowd, to proclaiming her healing and demonstrating her faith in Jesus in public and also proclaiming his power.

9.2.2 The woman and Jesus

The woman shows her courage and faith by going forward to touch Jesus despite the various impediments: the physical impediment of the crowd and her ritual impurity. Even though she has only touched the fringe of his clothes, Jesus realises that power has gone out from him. While his first reaction is one of surprise, the marriage symbolism that is used here is a reminder of the new relationship that is formed between the woman and Jesus once she is healed. When she is cured, her immediate reaction is to slip away. That could be out of fear at her audacity in touching Jesus, or it could be that she has now been healed and so can move on with her life. Even when Jesus asks who has touched him, she implicitly still joins the crowd in denying it. Now that she is ritually clean, she may want to be part of the community from which she has been ostracised for the previous twelve years.

The key moment in the encounter follows after this. The woman comes forward at Jesus' insistence. She describes her cure as healing while Jesus describes it as power going out from him, but he also attributes her salvation to her faith. The woman's faith in Jesus' power to heal results, not simply in the drawing down of that power and her being cured, but also in her being saved. While the woman showed by her actions that she believed that Jesus could heal her, Jesus now publicly recognises that faith and commends her for it. As someone who heard the word of God and acted on it (8:21), she can now go forth as a member of Jesus' new family.

9.2.3 The woman and the girl

The woman and the girl do not meet. There is nothing to suggest that they even know one another. Yet, for readers, their lives are inter-connected in this pericope. They are linked by the mention of the twelve years. The girl is reaching puberty and will be able to give life, while the woman because of the flow of blood has life draining away from her. So it is ironic that Jesus' healing of the woman delays his attempt to heal the girl and so she loses her life as the woman, who had earlier spent her life, regains hers. Yet, when Jesus commends the woman as he calls her daughter, it brings Jairus' daughter back to mind and readers are hopeful that she too is going to be saved. Where both the woman and girl are concerned, Jesus restores them to life. The girl has just died and the woman, who has spent her whole life or livelihood searching for a cure, is now restored not only to life but also to full membership and participation in the community.

9.3 A synkrisis of the male-female pairings

A useful synkrisis is established between Jairus and the woman in this pericope. The synkrisis here is implicit and can be seen by the proximity between the two characters, the specificity (e.g. twelve years) of the illnesses which concern them, and by their similar actions and faith. At one stage, the synkrisis is suggested by Jesus when he talks about faith in relation to both characters.

There are both similarities and contrasts between the characters of Jairus and the woman. Jairus is named and his position in the town as leader of the synagogue is given. The woman is anonymous and nothing is said about her other than her sex and a description of her illness. Jairus is described as both *ἀρχων* and *ἀρχισυνάγωγος* and is, more than

likely, one of the wealthier people in the town. The woman appears to have come from a wealthy background as she had enough money to pay for physicians and treatments of various kinds, but now having spent all she had on treatments, her life is spent. Both however, seek out Jesus to get help.

Jairus pleads with Jesus to come to his house. This direct approach, which is described in summary form, is different to the description of the woman, which is recounted in full, even though she approaches Jesus indirectly. After she touches Jesus, the woman realises that she has been healed (*ἰάομαι*) immediately. Jesus however looks beyond the physical healing when he speaks in terms of her faith having saved her (*σώζω*), a term that implies returning to completeness or wholeness.

Jairus approaches Jesus to ask for help in a public place in front of a crowd. The woman, on the other hand, makes her way with difficulty through the same crowd and approaches Jesus from behind. She is lost in the middle of the crowd while Jairus stands in front of it. Jairus speaks to Jesus to ask for help while the woman does not verbalise her request, but slips in silently behind him. Both of them show respect for Jesus, Jairus by falling at Jesus' feet in a gesture of humility and the woman (later after she has been healed) by coming forward from the crowd and also prostrating before him as she tells her story.

When Jairus addresses Jesus to ask for help, Jesus immediately responds by going along with him. The woman has to seek out Jesus, who is completely unaware of her presence, until power goes out from him. Yet, once the woman comes forward, Jesus accepts her story of her healing and extols her faith. Since this is followed immediately by

Jesus' request to Jairus not to fear but believe, readers see it as an example of faith for Jairus.

Faith is a central concept in both stories. Jairus, who is concerned about his seriously ill daughter, comes to Jesus. Even though the narrator does not name it, Jairus shows his faith by falling at Jesus' feet and begging him to come to his house. The woman in turn shows her faith in Jesus' ability to heal her, by making her way through the crowd despite all the obstacles. When power goes out from Jesus and the woman is healed, Jesus is not upset that the woman 'stole' her healing from him and instead commends her faith. When Jairus hears that his daughter has died, his messenger suggests that he should not bother Jesus any further and, before he can answer, Jesus tells him not to fear and to have faith. Readers have encountered this combination of commands a number of times already. When angelic messengers visited Zechariah (1:13), Mary (1:30) and the shepherds (2:10), they were all told not to fear before being given the divine message. When Jesus called Simon (5:10), having been told not to fear, he called him to be his follower and work along with him in his mission to "catch people." In this situation, Jairus is asked not to fear and to have faith that salvation will come to his daughter through his faith and divine power. He is asked to cooperate with God's power as the woman has so effectively done.

Jairus is not alone in his predicament. He has the support of family (his wife is introduced) and there is a large gathering in his house to mourn the death of his daughter. The woman however cuts a lonely figure as there is no mention of anyone supporting her or of any family and, because of her illness, she is probably not married and does not have any

children of her own. She is also isolated because of her illness and she may have been as “unwelcome in Jairus’ synagogue as she was in the temple.”⁴⁴

While there is a contrast between the biological family situations of Jairus and the woman, family imagery plays a very important part in this passage. There is a woman whose haemorrhage is more than likely caused by a gynaecological problem contrasted with a girl who had just reached puberty, there is parent/daughter imagery with both the woman and the girl described as daughter, and then there is the bridegroom imagery when the woman reaches out to touch the hem of Jesus’ garment. While the woman does not have a biological family, there is much to link her with the family of God (8:19-21). By being given new life, she is now able to participate once again in the community and shows this by her public proclamation (8:47). She is one of those who “hear the word of God and do it” (8:21).

As the pericope unfolds, the contrast between the two characters continues but, as is typical of Luke’s Gospel, there is also a reversal. Jairus began by making his request of Jesus in public but as the story unfolds, they move from this public arena to the privacy of a house. Then Jesus carries out the resuscitation in private, with only his closest disciples Peter, John and James and the girl’s parents present, and then orders them to tell no one what had happened (8:56). The woman approaches Jesus in a very furtive way, is healed in complete secrecy (even Jesus is not aware of where his power has gone), and then comes forward publicly to tell her story not only to Jesus but to all those who are present. “Jaire passe de la parole au silence . . . La femme passe du silence à la parole.”⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Frederick J. Gaiser, “In Touch with Jesus: Healing in Mark 5:21-43,” *WW* 30 (2010): 5-15, 10.

⁴⁵ Chou, “Parole et silence, chemins de foi,” 382.

There is a complementarity between the roles of the woman and Jairus. At the beginning of the passage, Jairus publicly addresses Jesus to ask for help for his daughter. As a wealthy man he could have sent a servant, but he shows his faith by approaching Jesus himself. As a senior synagogue official, he also differentiates himself from other religious leaders, many of whom criticise Jesus. Readers are conscious of this man's stance in contrast to the woman who approaches Jesus secretly. However, the power of her faith means that she is healed without any request. Following this, she now comes forward and makes her proclamation in public like Jairus' initial request. The acknowledgement of her faith by Jesus in turn encourages Jairus to have faith, even though he now knows that his daughter had died. By doing a synkrisis, the faith journey of each is emphasised.

9.4 Summary

When the woman is first portrayed in this pericope, she is seen as one of the disadvantaged whom Jesus has particularly singled out in his mission statement at Nazareth (4:16-21). She is rendered poor because of her efforts to find a cure for her illness, is ostracised in her community because of her ritual impurity and, in contrast to Jairus, is afraid to stand publicly before Jesus to ask for help. Yet she is also courageous as, despite this, she is willing to make her way through the crowd to touch Jesus.

Her cure, however, is very different to the healings that have taken place up to now. These have all involved Jesus healing by the power of his word or by touch. In this situation, it is the woman who draws the power from Jesus. Although aware that power has gone out from him by someone's touch, Jesus does not know who touched him. The flow of healing from Jesus reverses her flow of blood. Her reaching out to Jesus and her public proclamation of her cure causes Jesus to commend her faith. This woman is a reminder of

the woman who anointed Jesus (7:36-50) in that they are both outsiders in the community, but both are willing to step outside their expected roles to show their faith in Jesus. Jesus himself commends that faith that has led to their salvation (7:50/8:48).

This pericope presents one of the most unusual pictures of Jesus in the Gospel as the healing of the woman with the haemorrhage takes place without his knowledge. The power is drawn out of him because of the woman's faith, which he uses as an example for Jairus, who first showed great faith in Jesus, but seems to falter when the messenger comes to tell him that his daughter has died. These two interconnected stories show readers the power of faith in Jesus and its transformative effect. Along with the story of the anointing woman, it shows how Jesus extends salvation in response to the expression of faith.

This pericope further anticipates the Paschal mystery for readers. The death of Jairus' only daughter, as well as being the loss of her own physical life, is also the loss of life and future for her family. For the haemorrhaging woman, her loss of life contains many elements. Her long-running physical illness, as well as draining her health and well-being, has also drained her wealth and livelihood. It has placed her on the periphery of the community and limited her social interaction. The restoration to life of the woman, by her return to health and membership of the community, and Jairus' daughter, from death to life, is yet another reminder to readers of Jesus' return to life from death, which they anticipate. The power of God, working through Jesus that has raised the two women to new life, will also be evident in God's resurrection of Jesus.

The role of faith in the power of God, working through Jesus in these interconnected stories, is seen in particular in the woman with the haemorrhage where, even without Jesus' knowledge, she can still draw healing and be returned to full life. This

presents an invitation to readers to access that same power through the expression of faith in their own lives.

Chapter 10: Review of the Women in the Galilean Ministry

10.1 The Women

From the earliest stages of Jesus' Galilean ministry, readers become aware of a rich tapestry of women who encounter him. They come from a variety of different backgrounds and circumstances and can never be seen as one homogenous grouping. They come from all levels of society and extend from wealthy to poor and from members of the ruling class to disadvantaged, ritually impure and even ostracised. They come to Jesus because they have heard reports about him or his teaching, or are in search of healing. Just as there is a variety of women, their response to Jesus is also shown in a variety of ways and also teaches readers how they too should respond to Jesus. Through these encounters, Jesus himself is also revealed to readers.

Some of the women are flat characters while others are far more complex. There is the woman, who is a sinner, who shows greater love than the righteous Pharisee (7:36-50), the wealthy woman from Herod's court who follows the itinerant preacher and in so doing steps outside her conventional role (8:3), the woman who is ritually unclean, whose faith is used by Jesus to reinforce the faith of Jairus, a leader of the synagogue (8:40-56). These same women behave counter-culturally, by anointing the feet of a man in a public setting (7:36-50), by leaving home and following Jesus as he goes through cities and villages (8:1-3) and by touching the fringe of his clothes even though she is ritually unclean (8:43-48). Furthermore, the faith of this latter woman is such that she takes the healing from Jesus, rather than Jesus healing her.

While the majority of the women are unnamed, three are named and are examples of the diverse people who follow Jesus; Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, is a woman who was probably on the margins of society because of her illness; Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, is a member of Herod's court and therefore wealthy and mixing with those in power; and finally Susanna (8:2-3) is a name that recalls the pious innocent sufferer of the same name in the LXX (Daniel 13).

While most women are only mentioned once and nothing further is said about them, a summary describes a number of different women, including the three named above, as following Jesus (8:2-3), some because they heard reports about him or heard him preach, some because of being "cured of evil spirits and infirmities" and others who supported the group financially. The use of the summary form and the imperfect verbs to describe them gives a sense of continuity to this group's closer association with Jesus, which is different to the individuals who have single encounters with him.

Some of the women are single (Mary called Magdalene), some married (Joanna and Simon's mother-in-law) and some widows (woman at Nain and possibly Simon's mother-in-law). The mother-in-law of Simon Peter, the first of the disciples to be called by Jesus, is living in his house (4:38). When Jesus' biological family of mother and brothers/sisters cannot reach him because of the crowd, he contrasts them with his new kindred that now consists of all those who hear the word of God and do it (8:19-21). The two miracles of raising someone from the dead also take place in the context of families where the only son or daughter is restored to their family because of Jesus' compassion (7:11-17; 8:40-42, 49-

56). To underline the concept of family, many of the meetings with Jesus take place in the privacy of homes.¹

10.2 Discipleship

At the conclusion of the Galilean ministry as Jesus “sets his face to go to Jerusalem” (9:51), the sequential reading that includes male/female synkrisis, builds up a cumulative picture of several facets of his teaching with regard to discipleship and allows readers to see patterns developing as they read the Gospel for the first time. At the mid-point of the Gospel, the sequential reading outlines hospitality that has moved from within a single household (4:38-39) to Jesus’ teaching on correct hospitality (9:1-6). Similarly, service begins at the table (4:39) but later includes provision of resources (8:2-3) and crucially is also modelled by Jesus (4:40). The synkrisis, which is established between the groups of men and women that take up a peripatetic lifestyle as they follow Jesus, shows how they begin that following by listening to his teaching about the kingdom of God (8:1-3). Faith is shown by both women and men and is recognised and commended by Jesus, who also links it with the offer of salvation (5:12-15, 17-26; 7:9, 50; 8:48, 50). The synkrisis that is established between Jairus and the haemorrhaging woman demonstrates a faith that is strong enough to draw healing from Jesus by direct but furtive action. The first mention of families is in the context of Jesus’ early outreach of healing (4:38-39; 7:1-10, 11-17; 8:40-42, 49-56; 9:37-43), but it climaxes in his teaching on his fictive kindred, which

¹ Simon’s mother-in-law’s healing (4:38-39) and the raising of the daughter of Jairus take place in the houses where they live (8:51). While the woman who anoints Jesus does so in the house of Simon the Pharisee, he considers that she is not a suitable visitor to his home and criticises Jesus for associating with her (7:39). Other meetings, however, take place in public: the raising of the young man at Nain takes place at the important meeting place of the gates outside the town (7:12). The group of women who follow Jesus as he travels throughout Galilee have been willing to give up the security of their homes and are on the road with him without any sort of permanent abode (8:1-3).

incorporates all those who hear and do the word of God (8:19-21), as exemplified by both women and men as they journey with Jesus, listen to his preaching and teaching and serve him in their different ways (5:11, 28; 8:1-3).

10.2.1 Hospitality

The hospitality that is shown in the Galilean ministry is largely modelled by the women who encounter Jesus. Hospitality is extended to Jesus in his first encounter with a woman in his adult ministry, when he is invited to the home of Simon (4:38). Even though she is not the householder, the immediate reaction of Simon's mother-in-law on being healed, is to extend that hospitality not only to Jesus, but to all who come to the house. Hospitality is not confined to women as Levi, having been called by Jesus and given up everything to follow him, then organises a great banquet for him (5:29). The paradox for readers is that this man, who has given up everything, can still provide for Jesus. While both of those instances are described by the narrator, the teaching on hospitality reaches another level in the story of the woman who anoints Jesus (7:36-50). Because of the use of the descriptions, 'sinner' and 'Pharisee,' readers have already been schooled to contrast the woman with the Pharisee who upholds God's law. Furthermore, her behaviour seems outrageous as she comes to a house where she is not welcome, behaves in an unorthodox manner by kissing Jesus' feet, washing them, drying them with her hair and anointing them with very expensive ointment. Rather than criticise her, Jesus reacts by re-interpreting the woman's actions and compelling Simon, and as a result, readers to recognise that it is the woman who shows correct hospitality. Since readers know Jesus' identity, they approve characters who treat Jesus appropriately (the anointing woman), while distancing themselves from those who do not (Simon the Pharisee). Jesus further confirms this by

addressing the woman directly to commend her. Later, Jesus will assert that it is this type of hospitality that should be extended to the twelve as he sends them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal (9:1-6).

10.2.2 Service

The healing of Simon's mother-in-law also teaches about *διακονία* or service. The woman's reaction to Jesus is to get up immediately and serve (*διακονέω*) them (4:39), a foreshadowing of Jesus' healing and service later that day. Because of its situation in a household, her service was probably the provision of a meal or table service. Later on that same day, Jesus models a different type of service as he heals (*θεραπεύω*²) the sick that are brought to him and releases others from demons (4:40-41). So, an early image of service in the Gospel is of Jesus serving with Simon's mother-in-law working alongside him. The group of women, who are with Jesus and the twelve as he brings the good news of the kingdom of God, show yet another aspect of service. Some of them (8:1-3) provide financially for Jesus and the rest of those who are travelling with him out of their own resources and so, the concept of service is extended to long-term support for Jesus and his entourage rather than a single household.

At this stage in the Gospel, it is the women along with Jesus who demonstrate service. As well as extending the concept of service by moving from a household to a more public setting, the fact that Jesus models and then collaborates with Simon's mother-in-law in that service from the very beginning, emphasises its importance in his teaching.

² "To render service or homage, to heal, restore." BDAG, 453

10.2.3 Listening

Much of the early section, of the Galilean ministry, consists of miracles and healings. Alongside this, however, there is also the preaching and teaching of Jesus as he goes from place to place (4:15, 16-30, 44; 5:15, 17, 33-39; 6:18, 20-49; 7:24-35, 8:4-18; 9:23-27, 46-48). The twelve and some women, who travel with him, listen to his word as he proclaims and brings the good news of the kingdom of God (8:1-3) and then hear him elaborate on that listening in the parable of the Sower (8:4-15). This listening is further demonstrated by the Gerasene demoniac, whose response to his healing is to take up the posture of a disciple sitting at the feet of Jesus (8:35). The importance that Jesus places on listening to the Word of God is underlined when he insists that his new family of faith must listen to the Word of God and then act on it (8:19-21). Readers encounter his mother in this pericope and are reminded of her example in the Infancy Narrative where she hears the word of God, ponders on it and acts on it (1:38, 39; 2:19, 51). Shortly after that, during the Transfiguration, the command of the voice from heaven is very clear. “This is my son, my chosen one; listen to him” (9:35). Jesus’ followers must listen to the word of God as spoken by Jesus. This entitles them to membership of his new family of faith, which not only forms a relationship with Jesus but through him with God as father.

10.2.4 Faith Response

There are various faith responses to Jesus. The people, who accompany Jesus to Simon’s house, demonstrate their faith by asking for help for his mother-in-law (4:38-39) and shortly after that, the leper bows down before Jesus, calls him *κύριος* and further recognises that Jesus has power to heal him by stating that he can choose to do it (5:12-15). In a much more dramatic fashion, the friends of the paralytic show their faith by letting his

bed down through the roof tiles in front of Jesus and the narrator explains that Jesus has forgiven the paralytic's sins because of the faith of his friends, which Jesus confirms by his word and the man's healing (5:17-26).

As the sequential reading continues, some of the most complex characters, in the Galilean ministry, show faith in their response to Jesus. When the centurion, who is a Gentile and representative of the occupying power and therefore considered inferior by many Jews (even if local Jews esteem him),³ sends word to Jesus to ask him to heal his servant, he is so aware of his Gentile status that he will not even ask Jesus to come to his house.⁴ However, Jesus is so impressed by the man's faith that he addresses the crowd directly and publicly declares that this foreigner's faith is greater than anything he has seen in Israel (7:9). The woman who anoints Jesus is described as a sinner by both the narrator and Simon the Pharisee and her actions could also be viewed as inappropriate. Here again Jesus intervenes, calls her a woman rather than a sinner, and tells her to go in peace as her faith has brought her salvation (7:50). The woman with the haemorrhage is an even more striking example of faith. Since she is ritually unclean, she reaches out to Jesus in secret to touch the hem of his garment and is immediately healed (8:44). This healing is exceptional as not only does she seek healing from Jesus, but she draws it out because of her faith. Jesus is aware that power has gone out from him and that someone has touched him, but he does not know who. His response is to commend her faith publicly, thus reversing the secrecy of her cure. Her healing forms an intercalation with the raising of the daughter of Jairus, who first expresses his faith by falling at Jesus' feet to beg for healing for his

³ This centurion is well-regarded by local Jews who plead with Jesus on his behalf (7:3-5).

⁴ "If Jesus enters his home, the centurion must extend hospitality to him but this would grossly overstep Jewish sensibilities," Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 104; Esler argues that since Jews believed that Gentiles were ritually impure then they would not share table fellowship with them. Philip Francis Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts*, SNTSMS (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 71-76.

daughter. Immediately after his commendation of the faith of the haemorrhaging woman, Jesus demands the same degree of faith of Jairus, whose response leads to the resuscitation and salvation (σώζω) of his daughter. In another familial healing, Jesus heals the boy with the demon because of the pleading of his father (9:37-43).

Faith is demonstrated by both men and women, but when lack of faith is mentioned in the Galilean ministry, it is in relation to Jesus' male disciples. Jesus chides them for their lack of faith when he calms the storm (8:25) and is more angry with them when they are unable to heal the boy with the demon and do not seem to realise that faith is necessary if they are to truly follow him (9:37-43).

The relationship with Jesus is pivotal for all of those who encounter him, and this can be seen in the faith reactions above. Now, as his ministry progresses, first the leper who calls him κύριος (5:12), and then the crowds begin to connect Jesus with the power of God and glorify God as a result of his miracles (5:26; 7:16; 9:43). Even the Pharisees and teachers of the law join with the crowd in glorifying God after the healing of the paralytic.⁵ Jesus is also called a prophet by the crowd when he raises the young man at Nain (7:16), but much more importantly than this, the narrator gives readers an insight into who he is by the use of the nominative κύριος to give them a fuller Christological understanding. It takes another while for the disciples represented by Peter to come to the same conclusion when, in response to Jesus' question, Peter declares that Jesus is the Messiah of God (9:20).

10.2.5 Family and the New Family of Faith

Family imagery is very prevalent in the first half of the Gospel and shows many aspects of response to Jesus. Simon's mother-in-law shows hospitality and service (4:38-

⁵ Doble, *The Paradox of Salvation*, 34

39); when Jesus calls his first followers, it includes two sets of brothers who give up everything including their family to follow him (5:10-11; 6:14) and the distress of the widowed mother draws out deep compassion from Jesus (7:11-17). Sons and daughters are healed and even brought back to life because of the faith of their parents (7:1-10⁶; 8:40-42, 49-56; 9:37-43). This imagery is expanded when Jesus is told that his mother and family want to see him. He does not deny his family, but places the emphasis on his new fictive kindred which includes all those who hear the word of God and do it (8:19-21). ‘Doing’ has already been stressed through the examples of service and ‘listening’ in the Parable of the Sower that he has preached and explained shortly before this (8:4-15). Readers also carry images of Jesus’ mother and family from the Infancy Narrative that help elaborate these concepts. His mother, Mary has listened to the word of God, pondered on it and responded to it (1:26-56, 2:19; 33; 51). Likewise, her cousin, Elizabeth and her son, John the Baptist, have listened and responded to that word (1:41-45; 3:2-4). However, while the Infancy Narrative picture of Jesus’ biological family reinforces his teaching on his fictive kindred, there is also a certain ambiguity and tension when fictive kinship is portrayed as more important than household values (5:10-11; 8:19-21).⁷

10.2.6 Following

Men are explicitly described as being called by Jesus and following him, the calls of the apostles Peter, John, James and Levi being obvious examples (5:1-11, 27-28). On the other hand most of the women, as also many men (including the paralytic, the leper, the

⁶ While the centurion is not related to the slave, the use of the term *παῖς* shows a fatherly relationship with his servant.

⁷ Duley’s comment with regard to Matthew’s Gospel is apt. “Patriarchal household values do not totally vanish, but there are also countervailing, thus subversive fictive kin values that are in tension with them.” Dennis C. Duley, “Kinship, Genealogy, and Fictive Kinship in Mediterranean Culture and in the Matthean Gospel,” in Joan C. Campbell, *Exploring Biblical Kinship*, 195-219, 217.

Gerasene and Jairus) who encounter Jesus in the Galilean ministry are individuals who interact with him on one occasion and are not mentioned after that. The exception is the group of women who are part of his closer circle and journey with him along with the twelve (8:1-3). When a synkrisis is made between these two groups, it can be seen that both men and women follow Jesus, listen to his word and learn from his preaching of the kingdom of God. While they have much in common and all are learning what it means to be a disciple, they also exemplify different aspects of this. Some of the women, like the men, follow Jesus from place to place, but some others who have their own resources, provide for the group in a very practical way. On the other hand, the men model a different sort of following as, having been called by Jesus, they give up everything to follow him (5:11; 28). Since this group of men and women, who are members of his regular group of disciples, “hear the word of God and do it” even if it is in different ways, then it can be seen from his teaching on his fictive kindred that Jesus enlists all, both male and female from every social class and grouping and every background to follow him.

10.3 What the encounters reveal about Jesus

As the Galilean ministry concludes, the encounters with the women have revealed many aspects of Jesus. Virtually all of the women that interact with him are disadvantaged or marginalised in some way: two widows, including one who has lost her only son (4:38-39;⁸ 7:11-17), the woman who is known as a sinner (7:36-50), women like Mary Magdalene who were cured of evil spirits and infirmities (8:1-3) and the woman with the haemorrhage who was ritually unclean (8:43-48). Jesus’ acceptance, welcoming and support of these women confirms his outreach to the marginalised that he had outlined in

⁸ The presumption is that Simon’s mother-in-law is widowed.

his programmatic discourse in the synagogue in Nazareth (4:16-30) and reiterated in his meeting with John the Baptist's disciples (7:18-23). Furthermore, his lifestyle demonstrates that same marginalised existence as he journeys from place to place, teaching and healing.

The authority with which he heals Simon's mother-in-law demonstrates the power of God (4:39) and this is further acknowledged by the crowds that glorify God as a result of witnessing the raising of the widow's son. Furthermore, they also make the connection with Jesus when they recognise that God has visited his people through the intervention of Jesus (7:16). Moreover, in that same miracle, Jesus demonstrates his humanity and compassion in his empathic reaction to the woman's suffering and then links that with the loving mercy of God. The use of the verb *σπλαγχνίζομαι* (7:13) evokes the combination of *σπλάγγνον* (7:13) and *ἔλεος* found in Zechariah's prayer of praise that demonstrates the mercy of God (1:78).

Jesus forgave the sins of the paralytic (5:17-26) when he saw the faith of his friends, but in the story of the anointing woman, Jesus extends forgiveness with no prior demonstration of faith. The anointing by the woman is in response to that forgiveness rather than a request for it (7:36-50). Therefore, it is very clear that the divine forgiveness that is extended here is a completely gratuitous act. Jesus commends the faith of the woman and links it with salvation as in the case of the woman with the haemorrhage, whose faith is so strong that it can draw healing from Jesus without his knowledge (8:43-48).

While Jesus' actions in relation to women reveal a lot about him, his own words, through various teaching episodes, also add to this understanding. When the women travel

with Jesus and the twelve, they learn that the first step on the road to discipleship is to listen to his preaching on the Kingdom of God (8:1-3). The arrival of his mother and family to see him leads to his definition of his new family of faith, thus moving discipleship to a new level of an intimate family relationship with Jesus, and God as father. It is also a call to action for his fictive kindred who must not only listen to his word but also act on it (8:19-21). Readers are also aware as they hear that call of Jesus that he is the ultimate example of the one who hears and does the word of God throughout his ministry up to his death and resurrection.

The women also foreshadow some elements of Jesus' ministry. The *διακονία* that Simon's mother-in-law demonstrates after she is healed anticipates Jesus' service and healing later that evening. Furthermore, her collaboration with Jesus links her service with his servant leadership, which he illustrates in both his actions and teaching (4:38-41).

The climax of the Gospel, the death and resurrection, is also anticipated in the encounters with the Galilean women. The recovery from near death of Simon's mother-in-law as well as the raising from death of both the widow's son and Jairus' daughter, are reminders of the power of God at work in Jesus that can overcome death and lead to life. The resurrection verb of Simon's mother-in-law's healing (*ἀνίστημι*), followed by the raising of the widow's son and Jairus' daughter, are all pointers to the resurrection. The intercalation of the return to life (*βίος*) of the haemorrhagic woman with the raising of the daughter of Jairus also points to Jesus' death and resurrection, as both women lose their lives (the girl literally and the woman figuratively) before having life returned to them once again. The same can be said of the widow whose life is restored when her son is resuscitated. The lavish giving, which is demonstrated by the anointing woman in the

expensive oil that she uses, is followed immediately by the women who provide for the whole community out of their own resources. In this, they anticipate Jesus' giving of his whole life in his ministry, death and resurrection. Finally, the name Susanna is a reminder of the Old Testament figure who prefigures the innocent Jesus going to his death. As the Galilean ministry ends, all of the women who are encountered in the different pericopes, point towards the impending Paschal mystery. This cumulative gathering of material heightens readers' anticipation of the Easter event.

Part 2: The Journey to Jerusalem and the Jerusalem Ministry

Chapter 11: Exegesis of 10:38-42 (Jesus visits Martha and Mary)

Having completed his Galilean ministry and set his face to go to Jerusalem, Jesus' next meeting with women happens in the house of Martha and Mary. This pericope could be described as a 'hinge passage' in his encounters with women in this Gospel. It comes close to the intersection between the Galilean ministry (4:14-9:51) and the journey to Jerusalem (9:52-19:44) and it immediately follows the parable of the Samaritan (10:25-37).

11.1 A sequential reading of the pericope

The narrator begins by stating that "they" are travelling on the way, but that group is not mentioned again for the duration of the passage. Attention turns immediately to Jesus as he, alone, is described as entering a certain village¹ (*αὐτός* functions here as an intensive marker, thus focusing the attention on Jesus²).

The use of the verb *εἰσέρχομαι* not only indicates that Jesus is entering the village, but also implies his acceptance of the hospitality offered to him.³ Readers are already very familiar with this hospitality as Jesus is welcomed into various houses: Simon's (4:38), Simon the Pharisee's (7:36) and Jairus's (8:41). Expectations regarding hospitality are

¹ The Gospel of John places the house of Martha and Mary in the village of Bethany near Jerusalem. Luke however does not name the village and places this pericope near the beginning of the journey to Jerusalem. Kilgallen argues that this is to further elucidate 'hearing the word of the Lord' which has been the subject of much of chapter 10. John J. Kilgallen, "Martha and Mary: why at Luke 10,38-42?" *Bib* 84 (2003): 554-561, 554.

² Blass and Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, §288; BDAG, 152.

³ Jipp, *Divine Visitations*, 176."

generated from Jesus' teaching on mission when he tells the twelve (9:1-5) and the seventy (10:1-12) how to behave as he sends them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. They are to accept the hospitality of the house that they enter (9:4) and, more importantly, to offer their peace to that house (10:5). They are only to stay in that house if they find a child of peace, who receives their peace, there.

As he enters the village, Jesus is immediately received with hospitality. This is the first time that the verb ὑποδέχομαι⁴ appears in Luke, but the root verb δέχομαι (to receive or welcome) has already appeared with regard to Jesus' teaching on welcome or hospitality (9:5, 48; 10:8, 10). Jesus has already taught his disciples that the first move, which is to welcome them, is to be made by the inhabitants of the town and it is only afterwards that the disciples are to respond with healing and teaching.⁵ He has further continued his teaching about hospitality when he put a child in their midst and explained that by welcoming him, or anyone else who is considered lowly, they have welcomed firstly Jesus, but also the one who sent him, the Father (9:48). On the other hand, lack of hospitality has been seriously criticised by Jesus. Simon the Pharisee is compared very negatively with the woman who, as a sinner in the city and therefore an outsider, behaved as a host to Jesus in a manner that he did not (7:36-50). As Jesus is welcomed by Martha, readers see her model correct hospitality.

In the Parable of the Sower, δέχομαι has also been used for the people who welcome the word of God with joy, but are unable to persist in their belief when things prove difficult (8:13). So δέχομαι is used to show that hospitality extends not only to the person

⁴ ὑποδέχομαι signifies "to receive hospitably, receive, welcome, entertain as a guest." BDAG, 1037.

⁵ Francois Bovon, *Luke 2*, Hermeneia, trans. Donald S. Deer (Philadelphia: Fortress, 2013), 24.

of Jesus but to his word as well.⁶ Martha here epitomises this hospitality and is welcoming not only Jesus but his whole mission.⁷

While active verbs are used to describe Jesus going into the village and Martha as the subject of the action of welcoming him,⁸ the narrator does not actually describe the meeting.⁹ Presumably, as a sign of hospitality, she came out of the house to greet Jesus. The fact that Martha is named singles her out as an important person. She emerges as an independent woman and, like some of the women depicted in 8:1-3, seems relatively prosperous as she hosts Jesus on his journey.¹⁰ Since no man is mentioned in connection with her, she appears as the head of the house here. Her Aramaic name in fact signifies ‘Lady of the House.’¹¹ The textual variant that adds εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτῆς further confirms her status.¹² Wyant argues that this is the earliest reading and that it reinforces Martha as head of a household with all its attendant responsibilities and authority. It also places her firmly within the context of the wider travel narrative where hospitality to Jesus and his followers is highlighted, as she welcomes Jesus and hosts him in her own house.¹³ So the action has now moved from the public journey to the private house, from a public setting to a family setting and from a group with Jesus to the two main protagonists, Jesus and Martha. Since

⁶ Warren Carter, “Getting Martha out of the kitchen: Luke 10:38-42 again,” in Levine and Bickerstaff, *A Feminist Companion to Luke*, 214-231, 218.

⁷ “The references in Lk. 10:38 to Jesus entering the village (εἰσῆλθεν) and being received by Martha (ὑπεδέξατο αὐτόν) particularly recall aspects of the mission of the Seventy from earlier in ch. 10 (Lk. 10:1-20; cf. the Twelve in Lk. 9:1-5). . . . Being received involves much more than being supplied with food and drink; it primarily denotes the embracing of the disciples’ mission and its eschatological reality.” Ibid., 214-231, 217.

⁸ Carter, “Getting Martha out of the kitchen,” 215.

⁹ From the point of view of discourse, he tells rather than shows Jesus’ arrival in the village. Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978), 32.

¹⁰ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 435; Seim, *The Double Message*, 99.

¹¹ Robert M. Price, *The Widow Traditions in Luke-Acts* (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1997), 175.

¹² A D K P W Γ Δ Θ Ψ etc. In these αὐτῆς is confirmed as an intensive marker. Blass and Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, §288.

¹³ Jennifer Wyant, “Giving Martha back her House: Analyzing the Textual Variant in Luke 10:38b,” *TC* 24 (2019):1-11.

the Lord stays in the house, the initial reaction of readers is that Martha is a positive model of hospitality and *διακονία*. Mary, Martha's sister, is now introduced and the narrator implicitly compares the two women.

The initial description of Mary places her in a secondary position to her sister in the action.¹⁴

The two verbs describing Mary's activity in Lk. 10.39 are grammatically subordinated to the main clause of this verse, which uses an impersonal idiom to describe the relationship between the sisters: the use of the dative case is best translated as 'there is to her a sister.'¹⁵

Like her sister, Mary is named, thus giving her a greater status than many of the unnamed people that Jesus meets. Mary is also the subject of two key verbs, the participle of *παρακαθέζομαι*¹⁶ and the active imperfect of *ἀκούω*. While she does not speak and could be said to be inactive, her reaction to the Lord is shown. Synonyms of *παρακαθέζομαι* are used many times: the Gerasene demoniac (8:35), who had been healed by Jesus, reacted by seating himself (*κάθημαι*) at the feet of Jesus taking the role of a disciple, Simon Peter (5:8), the woman who anointed Jesus (7:38), Jairus (8:41) and the woman with the haemorrhage (8:47) also all knelt at the feet of Jesus in recognition of his power. Mary, in doing likewise, follows the same model, focusing completely on the Lord by sitting at his feet and listening to his word.¹⁷

This second element of Mary's encounter with the Lord, listening (*ἀκούω*), uses the imperfect thus implying a continuous action. She is described as listening to the word

¹⁴ Michael Wolter, *The Gospel According to Luke Volume II (Luke 9:51-24)*, trans. Wayne Coppins and Christoph Heilig (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press; Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 83.

¹⁵ Alexander, "Sisters in Adversity," 206.

¹⁶ This is the only place that *παρακαθέζομαι* appears in Luke's Gospel. Bovon states that "*παρακαθεσθεΐσα* a first aorist passive participle from *παρακαθέζομαι* must be understood here in a reflexive sense on account of *πρός* with the accusative (towards)." Bovon, *Luke 2*, 71.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 70.

(λόγος) of the Lord. From the very beginning of the gospel in his preface addressed to Theophilus, Luke insists that his purpose is to tell him the truth about the word (λόγος) which he has heard (1:4). When Jesus inaugurates his ministry in the synagogue in Nazareth, all are amazed at οἱ λόγοι τῆς χάριτος (4:22), which is qualified by τοῖς ἐκπορευομένοις ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ a direct reference to Deut 8:3 (LXX) where it refers to the power of the word of God.¹⁸ From the beginning of his ministry, the narrator comments on the authority of Jesus' word (4:32; 7:7, 29) and also refers to Jesus speaking the word of God (5:1). Furthermore, Jesus has explained to his followers that those who hear (ἀκούω) his words and act on them are like a man who builds his house on a sure foundation (6:47-48). His teaching in the Parable of the Sower is built completely around the importance of reception of the word of God (8:11, 12, 13, 15). Moreover, he states that his true family consists of those who hear the word of God and do it (8:19-21). Listening to Jesus is brought to a new level when the voice from the cloud at the Transfiguration, which declares that Jesus is his Son and his Chosen One, commands the disciples to listen to him (9:35).

In the immediately preceding pericope, the lawyer places himself in a learning situation with Jesus. He begins by asking a number of questions (10:25, 29). Then, having taught him through the medium of the parable, Jesus completes his teaching by asking a question of the lawyer, thus demanding a response to what he has learned.¹⁹ Mary, by positioning herself here and listening to the word of the Lord, is also assuming the role of a

¹⁸ Fearghus O'Fearghail, "Rejection in Nazareth Luke 4:22," *ZMW* 75 (1984): 60-72, 68.

¹⁹ Bart J. Koet, "Luke 10:38-42 and Acts 6:1-7: A Lukan diptych on ΔΙΑΚΟΝΙΑ," in *Studies in the Greek Bible: Essays in honour of Francis T. Gignac S.J.*, ed. Jeremy Corley and Vincent Skemp (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2008), 163-185, 173.

true disciple, learning at the feet of the teacher.²⁰ This type of instruction for women was not unheard of in the synagogues at the time²¹ and there is nothing in the text that points to it being unusual.²² Mary's concentration on listening could be described as "reception, not proclamation"²³ and it is possible, as this is the first time that Mary appears in the Gospel, that she is in the early stages of discipleship and like the twelve and the women of 8:1-3, she is listening and learning before proceeding further.²⁴ However, there is a certain ambiguity here as, on the one hand, it could be argued that by positioning herself at the Lord's feet, Mary has made a very bold decision to move away from the traditional woman's role of service to focus completely on listening to the Lord.²⁵ On the other hand, it could also be considered that Mary has placed herself in a compromised position by sitting at the feet of a man who is not related to her. This has already been seen in the reaction of Simon the Pharisee to the woman who anointed Jesus (7:36-50).

Readers had begun this pericope with the picture of Jesus, telling parables and teaching as he journeyed to Jerusalem. As they move into the house of Martha, his name is replaced by the term *κύριος*,²⁶ which is used twice by the narrator and then in a direct address by Martha. Readers recall that from the outset, when Elizabeth welcomed Mary as the mother of her Lord, Jesus had been referred to as *κύριος* (1:43). Luke continues to use the designation at strategic moments in the text so that as the narrative develops readers

²⁰ Bovon, *Luke 2*, 70; Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 435.

²¹ Levine and Brettler, eds., *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, 124.

²² Wyant, *Beyond Mary or Martha*, 53.

²³ Corley, *Private Women, Public Meals*, 137.

²⁴ Seim, *The Double Message*, 112.

²⁵ Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts Vol 1*, 186.

²⁶ The title *κύριος* is used four times in this pericope but many textual variants replace one or some of them with *Ἰησοῦς*. Rowe examines six different pericopes in Luke-Acts that resemble 10:38-42 where each one of them has vocative and non-vocative uses of *κύριος* and concludes that Luke would have used *κύριος* rather than *Ἰησοῦς* in all four places. Rowe, *Early Narrative Christology*, 142-151.

build up a clear image of what Jesus' identity as *κύριος* signifies.²⁷ Simon Peter (5:8), the leper (5:12) and the centurion (7:6) all recognised Jesus' power when they addressed him as 'Lord'²⁸ and the narrator described him as 'Lord' (7:13) in the description of the resuscitation of the young man at Nain when the crowd reacted by glorifying God (*δοξάζω*) and, furthermore, declared that God had visited his people (*ἐπισκέπτομαι*) through the power of Jesus. While the crowd only considers Jesus a prophet at this stage, readers are aware that, in all of these situations, God's purposes to bring salvation to his people are exemplified in the life of Jesus.²⁹ Therefore, they realise that "Jesus of Nazareth is the movement of God in one human life so much so that it is possible to speak of God and Jesus together as *κύριος*."³⁰

The action then returns to Martha who, in a very different image to that of Mary, is *περισπάομαι* by her work. This verb, which is a *hapax legomenon*, gives the impression of Martha's "hyper-busyness."³¹ However, *περισπάομαι* is an ambiguous verb that can have both positive and negative connotations stretching from busyness to agitation³² and this sows a seed of doubt in readers' minds despite the fact that her hospitality has been seen in such a positive light up to this.³³ She is concerned with regard to or concerning *περί*³⁴ *πολλήν διακονίαν* (many domestic tasks or "much service/ministry").³⁵ According to Collins, in this context *διακονία* is the appropriate word for table service of a guest and,

²⁷ Rowe, *Early Narrative Christology*, 203.

²⁸ In the vocative, it can be a polite address but the context in these cases suggests the stronger sense.

²⁹ Doble, *The Paradox of Salvation*, 26.

³⁰ Rowe, *Early Narrative Christology*, 218.

³¹ Bovon, *Luke 2*, 71.

³² BDAG, 804.

³³ Matteo Crimella, "Notes Philologiques À Propos de *περισπάομαι* en Luc 10,40. Entre Philologie et Narratologie," *RB* (2010): 120-125, 123.

³⁴ *περί* with accusative signifies 'concerning' or 'regarding.' Blass and Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, §228

³⁵ Spencer, *Salty Wives, Spirited Mothers, and Savvy Widows*, 169.

even though it has been suggested by many commentators,³⁶ is in no way demeaning to women.³⁷ So, Martha is burdened “with reference to” her household chores in welcoming the guest, “not *by* or *with* them.”³⁸ This sentence can be read in a number of ways: as a very neutral statement,³⁹ the busyness can be seen as understandable as she is entertaining an important guest who arrived unannounced,⁴⁰ or her *διακονία* can be seen as very praiseworthy as everything she does is for Jesus out of love or devotion for him.⁴¹ While this is the only time that the noun *διακονία* is used in the gospel, the verb associated with it (*διακονέω*), which has very positive connotations in the gospel, has already been used twice. Martha’s *διακονία* here is very similar to that of Simon’s mother-in-law who, immediately after she had been healed by Jesus, got up and served and continued later on that day ministering along with Jesus as he cared for and healed (*θεραπεύω*) people (4:39). So, at this juncture, as Martha rushes about, and despite the ambiguity about the possible meaning of *περισπάομαι*, readers sense that she is justifiably busy showing hospitality and ministering as hostess in her home.

Martha now speaks and explicitly compares herself with her sister. As Martha approaches Jesus, the verb used is *ἐπίστημι* that is often used to show “encounters with the Divine Presence.”⁴² It has already been used to proclaim the birth of the Lord (2:9); when Anna spoke of Jesus (2:38) and when Jesus healed Simon’s mother-in-law (4:39).

³⁶ D’Angelo, Reid, Schaberg, Schussler Fiorenza.

³⁷ John N. Collins, “Did Luke intend a disservice to women in the Martha and Mary Story?” *BTB* 28 (1998): 104-111, 110.

³⁸ Reid, *Choosing the Better Part*, 157.

³⁹ Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 173.

⁴⁰ Bovon, *Luke 2*, 71.

⁴¹ This is “performed *for* Jesus out of her deep love and care *for* him. Martha has become overwhelmed and “distracted” by her demanding work, but *not* distracted *from* her devotion to Jesus. If anything her frustration is exacerbated by how much she wants to do *for* Jesus.” Spencer, *Salty Wives, Spirited Mothers, and Savvy Widows*, 169. Italics are author’s emphasis.

⁴² Hearon, “Luke 10:38-42,” 394.

However this is another verb with a certain ambiguity as it can also signify ‘to stand up to someone,’ ‘to stand over’ (as in the case of the healing of Simon’s mother-in-law in the form of an exorcism) or even ‘to attack.’⁴³ Martha continues by reiterating the title used by the narrator in addressing Jesus as Lord (κύριος), possibly acknowledging his connection with God’s authority.⁴⁴ However, here again everything is not as it seems as despite calling him κύριος, it is ironic that she reproaches the Lord with an accusatory question.⁴⁵ So, it may be that she is simply using the polite form of address for ‘sir,’ as there is a semantic ambiguity when κύριος is used in the vocative as it can be a polite address or an acknowledgement of Lordship. The question is formulated in such a way that she expects a positive answer from him.⁴⁶ The question is also very self-centred as she begins by suggesting that he does not care about her and then uses personal pronouns to refer to herself and her difficulties three times (μου, με, μοι) and complains that she has been left to do the ministering or serving on her own (μόνος). She describes Mary as “my sister” and requests that Jesus tell “her” to help, thus ignoring Mary, who is beside her by Jesus’ feet as she speaks to him. This criticism of Mary by Martha evokes Jesus’ admonition to his disciples to take the log out of their own eye before trying to take the splinter out of their brother’s eye (6:41-42).⁴⁷ Martha then accuses Mary of actively choosing to leave her to do the work, and by the use of the imperative, demands that Jesus tell Mary to help her. This is not the first time that Jesus had been commanded in this Gospel, but the other orders have been given by the devil (4:1-13) and unclean spirits (4:34). It is now obvious to

⁴³ BDAG, 418.

⁴⁴ Carter, “Getting Martha out of the kitchen,” 225.

⁴⁵ Wolter, *The Gospel According to Luke Volume II*, 84.

⁴⁶ The use of the negative ‘οὐ’ expects a positive answer. Blass and Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, §427 (2); Seim, *The Double Message*, 103.

⁴⁷ Alexander, “Sisters in Adversity,” 209.

readers that Martha's address to Jesus is quite sharp and definitely not the language of hospitality. There is also a sense of loss and abandonment in her speech (by the use of μέλομαι in the deponent form).⁴⁸ She is also anxious that she has been left alone (μόνος)⁴⁹ to do the serving and in this context, the impression is given that she feels abandoned by her sister and unable to serve on her own and is therefore, not extending the proper hospitality which should be their focus as hostesses. On the other hand, by complaining about her sister, she has taken her focus away from Jesus, her guest, and the hospitality and service that is his due.⁵⁰

The Lord now speaks and compares the two women. Even though Martha's demand to the Lord is that he should instruct Mary to help her, he does not deal with that but addresses Martha instead and moves the spotlight to her attitude rather than her complaint about Mary not helping. The narrator's use of 'Lord' continues to emphasize Jesus' connection with the divine. The repetition of the vocative 'Martha' not only focuses readers on the Lord's reply, but also on its importance. Names are repeated in the Old Testament to highlight some very important events: when Abraham is called by God to sacrifice his son Isaac (Gen 22:1), when the messenger of the Lord withdraws the order (Gen 22:11), when God tells Israel that he will go down with him to Egypt (Gen 46:2), when God calls Moses at the burning bush (Exod 3:4) and when God calls Samuel (1 Sam 3:4). By the use of μεριμνάω, the Lord implicitly interprets Martha's attitude of anxiety and worry and this is further developed for readers by the recall of the parable of the Sower where he criticizes the person who hears the word, but is choked by the worries (μέριμνα)

⁴⁸ μέλομαι is part of the same family of words as the two verbs (μεριμνάω and θορυβάζω) which Jesus uses to reply to Martha. All refer to being concerned about or anxious. L&N, §25.223-250. Electronic Edition.

⁴⁹ "Pertinent to being the only entity in a class, *only, alone*, with focus on being the only one. BDAG, 658.

⁵⁰ Wyant, *Beyond Mary or Martha*, 59.

and riches of life (8:14). Secondly, the use of the passive of *θορυβάζω*⁵¹ adds the element of agitation to her work.⁵² The use of *πολλά* is a direct comparison with *πολλήν διακονίαν* described in verse 40. Here however the Lord chides her for being worried and agitated about many things, while in the earlier verse she was busy with service. So he is not criticising *διακονία* per se as this has been seen as a positive attribute of discipleship (4:39; 8:1-3), but he is criticising her attitude which can choke one's ability to hear the word of God and put it into practice (8:14). In fact he is much harsher on Martha than the narrator, who has shown her in quite a positive light in her service of the Lord. The Lord continues by ignoring Martha's question about Mary and tells her that there is need (*χρεία*) of only one (*εἰς*) thing rather than many (*πολύς*) things.⁵³ He does not explain to Martha what that 'one thing' is, but points to Mary and commends her for her choice. It is up to Martha to examine her own attitude and make her choice in response to the Lord.

A textual variant of this particular verse opens up another possibility, which is not as harsh on Martha.⁵⁴ It suggests that while there are many possibilities for responding to the Lord, one is better than the others.⁵⁵ While it favours Mary's role, it also explicitly allows for Martha's.

⁵¹ "To be troubled or distracted about something" Many manuscripts replace it with the more common *τυρβάζω* "To trouble oneself, be troubled, be agitated." BDAG, 1021.

⁵² While the passive is found only here in Luke, the active which is found a number of times in Acts means to make an uproar as a crowd would do in an assembly. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 174.

⁵³ Some commentators consider that this applies to Martha's hospitality and that one simple dish would suffice for the meal. Reid, *Choosing the Better Part*, 146; Christopher R. Hutson, "Martha's choice: a pastorally sensitive reading of Luke 10:38-42," *ResQ* 45 (2003): 139-150, 147.

⁵⁴ The variant reads *Ολίγων δέ ἐστὶν χρεία· ἡ ἐνός* and the witnesses are: P³ B C² L 070^{vid} f¹ 33. (579) (sy^{hmg}) bo While the majority reading is preferred, this particular variant is not as harsh on Martha.

⁵⁵ "The longer reading, while still elevating the role of Mary, leaves open the possibility that Martha's role might still be practiced—"a few things" still being necessary, "one" simply being preferred. In the longer reading, Jesus' comments to Martha gently rebuke her rather than sharply criticize her." Corley, *Private Women, Public Meals*, 139.

The Lord does not speak directly to Mary, but calls her by name in a tone that is more personal than that of Martha who simply refers to her as ‘my sister.’ He also uses her as an example for Martha in a similar fashion to 7:44 when the woman who anointed Jesus is held up as an example of correct hospitality to Simon the Pharisee. While Mary seemed very submissive earlier in the pericope, the Lord commends her for freely making her own choice.⁵⁶ The verb has only been used twice before in the gospel at times of very important choices, once by Jesus when he chose his apostles (6:13) and secondly, when the voice came from the cloud to declare that Jesus was his Son, his chosen one and followed this by telling those present to listen to him (9:35). Furthermore, the part or portion she chooses (μερίς) echoes Psalms 15; 72; 118 (LXX), where God is described as the portion of the psalmist. Mary’s portion is qualified by the adjective ἀγαθός⁵⁷ which as well as meaning good can give a “moral dimension to her choice.”⁵⁸ In this passage, ἀγαθός is usually translated as ‘better’ by most commentators, but some also translate it as ‘good.’⁵⁹ Since Hebrew lacks a comparative form, biblical Greek sometimes follows suit and uses positive expressions when it needs a comparative.⁶⁰ In context here, the comparative also makes far more sense. The whole thrust of the Lord’s argument is his favouring of Mary’s part and by the use of the divine passive, he is adamant that God will not have it taken from her.

⁵⁶ Bovon, *Luke 2*, 73.

⁵⁷ “Pertinent to meeting a high standard of worth and merit; of things characterised especially in terms of social significance and worth.” BDAG, 3.

⁵⁸ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 437.

⁵⁹ Spencer argues that by the use of ‘good’ the Lord “affirms Mary’s “part” without denigrating Martha’s.” Spencer, *Salty Wives, Spirited Mothers, and Savvy Widows*, 147; Seim points out that “the determined form of the expression can just as easily imply a contrasting comparison, in other words the good part as opposed to the bad part. Seim, *The Double Message*, 106; Hutson suggests that by calling Mary’s choice ‘good,’ Jesus is allowing for Martha to choose what she considers right in her situation too. Hutson, “Martha’s choice,” 147.

⁶⁰ Zerwick S.J. and Grosvenor, *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament*, §145.

Sequential reading is of particular importance in this pericope as a number of different ways of following Jesus on the way of discipleship that have been developing in the Gospel up to this, converge here. Jesus' teaching on mission and hospitality, before he sent out the twelve and the seventy disciples, is modelled by the Lord and Martha as she welcomes him into her home (10:38). Martha offers practical service and hospitality that have been modelled in different ways by Simon's mother-in-law, the woman who anointed Jesus and the women who travel with him and the twelve and embodies the welcome that the Lord expects to be offered to those he sends out. He also expects those who show hospitality to listen to the word of God and this is epitomised by Mary when she sits at the Lord's feet to listen to his word (10:39).

When the seventy (two) return and explain all the feats they have accomplished, Jesus tells them to redirect their gaze to their relationship with "their patron, God" (10:20).⁶¹ He explains to them that they are blessed because he knows the Father and chooses to reveal him to them (10:22) and also that they enjoy the "blessing of hearing" (10:24) that even kings and prophets desire.⁶²

The parable immediately preceding the passage begins with Jesus' teaching on loving God and loving neighbour. Jesus then proceeds to widen the definition of neighbour through his recounting of the parable, which demonstrates the mercy and compassion of the Samaritan for the victim as he actively cares for him, in "radical hospitality."⁶³ Therefore, this pericope should be read as the final episode in the context of a series of teachings about different forms of discipleship and response to the Lord. Readers also realise that listening to the word of God and doing it has been demonstrated by Jesus in his response to the

⁶¹ Carter, "Getting Martha out of the kitchen," 228.

⁶² Kilgallen, "Martha and Mary: why at Luke 10, 38-42?" 555, 556.

⁶³ Wyant, *Beyond Mary or Martha*, 40.

Father and continues to be the perfect example for his followers throughout his ministry. Therefore, together Martha and Mary embody the twofold response to the word of hearing and doing.

11.2 An analysis of Martha and Mary in their interaction with Jesus

11.2.1 Martha and the Lord

The first contact between the Lord and Martha is when he enters the village where he is welcomed with hospitality by Martha. She has obviously heard of Jesus (4:14), may even have met him previously or been part of the crowd that followed his preaching and healing. Her welcome shows her understanding of hospitality in the Semitic/Mediterranean world. As the Lord enters the house, readers presume that the scene is set for another of the meals that Jesus has shared with his followers (4:39 [the meal is implied]; 5:29, 7:36-50 [Simon the Pharisee has invited Jesus to dine with him]).

However, readers begin to have doubts when some ambiguous language is used to describe Martha's actions and her speech is very self-centred and critical of her sister. While she addresses Jesus as *κύριε* (vocative), it seems as if she is only being polite and it does not have the connotation of Jesus as Lord. Her criticism of his lack of care for her and her use of the imperative to demand Jesus' action violates her obligations as host.

The Lord's response calls for her attention by the double mention of her name, but he ignores her appeal for Mary's help with the practical tasks. Instead he is concerned about her attitude as shown by his description of her worry and agitation. He counters Martha's criticism of her sister by commending Mary. Finally he exerts his authority and rebukes Martha for her attitude to her sister and warns her that Mary's choice must be

respected. Nothing is said about Martha's reaction and readers are left wondering in the end about the outcome.

11.2.2 Mary and the Lord

Rather than focus on Martha's welcome, the first mention of the Lord in the house places Mary at his feet, in the role of a disciple listening to her teacher. So they are situated in a very specific location as opposed to the movement that is going on around them. Furthermore, the passive of *παρακαθέζομαι* and the imperfect of *ἀκούω* also render this scene calmer and more slow-moving. The narrator reports that Mary is listening to the Lord's word, but there is no mention of Mary speaking, questioning or replying to anything that is asked. While Mary can be viewed as quite passive in her listening to the Lord's teaching, it can also be said that she shows her independence by opting to take the role of disciple.

When Martha confronts the Lord, he commends Mary and uses her as an example for Martha. This commendation has great authority as it is spoken by the most reliable voice in the gospel. Since she has chosen "the better part," he values not only her choice, but also the fact that she, independently, has made that choice. The use of the divine passive confirms that "it will not be taken from her" (10:42). She has chosen to focus on her guest, the most basic tenet of hospitality. Her guest in return through his word is bringing her the message of the kingdom of God.⁶⁴ While the Lord has already affirmed the action of women before this (7:50 and 8:48), here he affirms her choice as well as her action.

⁶⁴ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 437.

11.3 Synkrisis: Martha and Mary

For the first time in this study, a synkrisis is made, not between a male and female, but between two female characters. Since this is dictated by the Lord (he has invited a similar comparison in 7:36-50 between the woman and Simon the Pharisee), then it persuades readers to make this comparison as well.⁶⁵

There are many similarities between the women at the beginning of the pericope. Both are individually named. Both are in the house to which the Lord is invited and from the very beginning their concentration is on him. Both position themselves near the Lord, Martha by welcoming him to her home and Mary by seating herself at his feet. In meeting him, both exemplify his teachings for inclusion in his kinship group, namely their response to his word of hearing and doing (8:21). Each one of them, in her own way, exhibits faith in the Lord.⁶⁶ Also, the textual variant⁶⁷ [ἦ] which appears before καὶ in verse 39, opens up the possibility that Martha also sat at the Lord's feet with Mary and that therefore both sisters expressed their hospitality by listening at the feet of their guest.

The narrator describes Martha as welcoming the Lord and their later conversation is transmitted in great detail. On the other hand, the narrator describes Mary as "listening" to the Lord's word. While there is no reported speech by Mary, she takes up the position of a disciple listening to a teacher. She may have been so enraptured by the Lord's word that she focused completely on listening or, as a student, she may have interacted with the Lord to learn from him. Since one of the methods of teaching rabbinic students was for disciples

⁶⁵ Wolter, *The Gospel According to Luke Volume II*, 85.

⁶⁶ Reid, *Choosing the Better Part*, 157.

⁶⁷ This appears in A B C D K P W Γ Δ Θ Ψ ^f13 sy^h. D'Angelo and Hutson see it as confirming that both Martha and Mary were disciples of the Lord. Mary Rose D'Angelo, "Women Partners in the New Testament," *JFSR* 6 (1990): 65-86, 78; Hutson, "Martha's choice," 145.

to scrutinize the meaning of the rabbi's actions and also have lengthy dialogues with him, this may have happened in Mary's case but it is not reported.⁶⁸ What is important to note is:

The sharpness of Martha's language suggests that we should see a deliberate contrast between Martha as she *tells* Jesus what he *must* say and Mary who *listens* to what Jesus *wishes* to say.⁶⁹

There are also differences between the two women. By placing verses 39 and 40a in the form of an interpolation, the narrator invites a comparison between the sisters: "le centre (l'attitude de Marie) aux extrémités (le comportement de Marthe)."⁷⁰ Martha is more prominent as she is introduced first and far more information is given about her. Her hospitality and *διακονία* are emphasised in a very positive way from the beginning. The active verbs are in contrast with the subordinate clause and passive verbs that introduce Mary. At the beginning, Martha is seen in a more favourable light as she seems to respect social convention, by serving, while Mary, by sitting at the Lord's feet, seems to put herself outside what is considered appropriate for women.⁷¹ Yet by the use of ambiguous terms and verbs, doubts are sown in reader's minds about their respective roles and when the Lord eventually compares the two women, readers are open to seeing them from different perspectives.

Where the women are situated in the pericope is also worth noting. When Martha welcomes Jesus, she probably does it in the public space of the village. Then she, as host, would guide him from the public area to the privacy of the house. Mary, on the other hand, remains in the privacy of the house, and is described in the very passive position of sitting

⁶⁸ Joel B. Green and Jeannine K. Brown and Nicholas Perrin, eds., *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2013), 1.

⁶⁹ John Nolland, *Luke 9:21-18:34*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1993), 606. Italics are author's emphasis.

⁷⁰ Crimella, "Notes Philologiques," 120.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 123.

at the Lord's feet. Within the house, however, Mary positions herself beside the Lord listening to him, while Martha is occupied and agitated and too busy to listen. It is Mary, in fact, who shows true hospitality to her guest by listening to him.

As the passage opens both women show great respect for the Lord, but this soon changes. Mary maintains this attitude throughout the passage and is consistent in her behaviour. Martha, who begins by exhibiting the respect that a host accords a guest, changes as the pericope develops. When she is unable to cope with *πολλήν διακονίαν*, she reacts by criticising her sister and challenging the Lord. As a guest, the Lord should be treated with the utmost courtesy as happens with Simon's mother-in-law who, on being cured, gets up immediately and serves (4:38-39) and Levi, who having been called, gives a great banquet for Jesus, which is inclusive and welcomes people like tax collectors who are on the margins of society (5:29).

There are various interpretive comments throughout the pericope, but it is the Lord who establishes the main comparison between the two sisters. He criticises Martha for being "worried and distracted" by many things (10:41).⁷² He does not state what these things are and he does not criticise her for what she is doing. The denunciation is not of her hospitality, but of her attitude. Mary on the other hand is praised; she has chosen the "one thing," the "better part" and his strongest statement is the divine passive that this "will not be taken away from her" (10:42). Her choosing has involved sitting at his feet and listening to his word. Like the twelve and women of 8:1-3, listening to the Lord's teaching and learning from him must take precedence.⁷³

⁷² Seim, *The Double Message*, 105.

⁷³ Adele Reinhartz, "From Narrative to History: The Resurrection of Martha and Mary," in *Women Like This": New Perspectives on Jewish Women in the Greco-Roman World*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine (Atlanta: SBL, 1991), 161-184, 171.

11.4 Summary

This passage draws together many of the different strands of discipleship that emerged in the Galilean ministry. Jesus here is described as “Lord” and there is a much stronger teaching element in his contact with the two women. Service, hospitality and welcome in people’s homes, which have been features of the women’s roles in many of the earlier passages (4:38-38; 7:36-50; 8:1-3) are emphasised again here. The importance of listening to the word of Jesus and of God has been increasingly emphasised in the more recent encounters with Jesus (6:64-69; 8:1-3, 4-8; 10:24) and linked with action (8:1-3, 19-21). The faith of the women and their action based on that faith was also commended (7:36-50; 8:40-56). By being described as ‘Lord’ the link with God is reiterated. In this pericope, the Lord now looks for the right attitude with regard to action while at the same time teaching about the importance of listening to his word.

Readers are drawn into this discussion with regard to a better understanding of discipleship by the complex development of the pericope. It begins with both women showing different aspects of discipleship. Martha is first portrayed as an example of service and hospitality, but doubts are created by the use of ambiguous language that leads readers to question her behaviour. Mary, who is first described in a subordinate position, is soon shown to be consistent in her following of the Lord. Her listening to his word is a better expression of hospitality to her guest than Martha’s busyness and agitation. The reliable voice of the Lord creates the synkrisis between the two women. While Martha’s service is not criticised, her attitude is called into question and side by side with that, Mary’s listening to the word is held up as a crucial aspect of discipleship.

While this pericope focuses very much on correct response to Jesus, Jesus himself is referred to as Lord (κύριος) by the narrator. It was already used in the Galilean ministry when Simon, the leper, the centurion and the crowd all recognised the power of God as seen through Jesus' miracles (5:8, 12; 7:6, 13). The use of the vocative is ambiguous – there is a major difference in use by the narrator. The first use in 7:13 is contrasted by a lack of understanding by the crowd who only see Jesus as prophet. Simon Peter accepts to follow Jesus, but perhaps initially only as teacher, the leper may only view him as an itinerant healer, the centurion has a more exalted view. There is a paradox that Martha, who uses the vocative κύριε, does not recognise Jesus' Lordship as much as Mary, who sits so attentively listening to his word. In this pericope, it is Jesus as Lord who proposes listening and doing to his followers as exemplified by him in his ministry and obedience to the Father.

Chapter 12: Exegesis of 11:27-28 (True Blessedness)

This pericope follows an exorcism and returns to the themes that have been to the forefront in Jesus' recent encounters with women. What it means to be a disciple and how to put that into practice was the focus of the Martha and Mary story (10:38-42) and also, Jesus' teaching about his new family of faith (8:19-21) near the end of the Galilean ministry, and the same themes are at the centre again of this very short interaction between Jesus and the woman.

12.1 A sequential reading of the pericope

The narrator describes a woman in the crowd, who interrupting Jesus, lifts up (ἐπαίρω) her voice to him in blessing. The previous time that this verb has been used was in another situation of blessing, when Jesus lifted up his eyes to the disciples and pronounced the beatitudes (6:20-22). It is unusual here to find the woman speaking the beatitude as they are usually spoken by Jesus in the Gospel.¹

The woman raises her voice in the crowd to praise Jesus, despite the fact that members of the same crowd have already spoken out against him just before this. Some criticised him alleging that he had cast out demons by the power of Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons (11:15) while others, in order to test him, demanded a sign from heaven (11:16). Even though some others were amazed at his power, no one else spoke out from

¹ Clifard Sunil Ranjar, *Be Merciful like the Father: Exegesis and theology of the Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6,17-49)* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press; Gregorian University Press, 2017), 122.

the crowd in his favour. The previous context of the casting out of the demon and Jesus' commentary on it, begged the question about how people should defend themselves against evil spirits. Jesus had told them that the strong man cannot do it as there is always someone more powerful than him to overpower him (11:21-22). The only hope is the gift of the Holy Spirit in response to prayer (11:13). To further confirm this, it is a woman, who is physically weaker than the strong man and culturally considered less important, who recognises Jesus and pronounces the beatitude.

The woman now speaks the beatitude (*μακάριος*), from a woman for a woman. By proclaiming blessed the womb and breasts that respectively bore and suckled Jesus, she acclaims his mother. In what is a consciously feminine response, the mother of Jesus is praised for bearing (*βαστάζω*) him and so giving him life. The beatitude applies in an indirect way to the mother of Jesus who is praised and blessed because she has such a wonderful son.² In second Temple Judaism, a woman's value would have been counted in relation to the sons she bore.³ However, since it is "the son who makes the mother honourable, the woman's blessing does also flow on to the mother."⁴ The blessing is a very physical one that, by focusing on the womb and breasts, concentrates on her maternal role (11:27).⁵ Despite this, by using beatitude vocabulary, the woman places her speech in the context of eschatological salvation where everything is focused on the kingdom of God.⁶ Even though the reference is to Jesus' birth mother, she is not named at any stage.

² Seim, *The Double Message*, 114; Tannehill, *Luke*, 194; Wolter, *The Gospel According to Luke Volume II*, 110.

³ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 161.

⁴ Dowling, *Taking away the pound*, 166.

⁵ Seim, *The Double Message*, 114.

⁶ TDNT (Abridged), 489.

The blessing recalls Jesus’ mother’s visit to Elizabeth in the Infancy Narrative where three different blessings are given. The first blessing used εὐλογέω⁷ while the other two use the adjective μακάριος and its related verb μακαρίζω (cf. 11:27). Similar to the present pericope, Jesus’ mother is not named in this exchange but is called “blessed among women” (1:42) and “mother of my Lord” (1:45).

Text	Speaker	Blessing
1:42	Elizabeth	εὐλογημένη σὺ ἐν γυναιξίν καὶ εὐλογημένος ὁ καρπὸς τῆς κοιλίας σου.
1:45	Elizabeth	καὶ μακαρία ἡ πιστεύουσα ὅτι ἔσται τελείωσις τοῖς λελαλημένοις αὐτῇ παρὰ κυρίου.
1:48	Mary	ἰδοὺ γὰρ ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν μακαριοῦσίν με πᾶσαι αἱ γενεαί,

Elizabeth’s first blessing (εὐλογέω) focuses on Jesus’ mother and her role in bringing salvation to God’s people.⁸ She proceeds to declare that the child is κύριος. From the moment that Mary is confirmed as pregnant the child in her womb is already given the title ‘Lord,’ thus linking him very strongly to God.⁹ So Elizabeth’s blessing, like the woman of 11:27, blesses Mary in relation to the child in her womb (κοιλία) and seems to imply that Mary’s value is because of her motherhood.

The second blessing (the feminine of the adjective μακάριος) changes focus from the physical carrying of the child in her womb and concentrates instead on Mary’s response. Elizabeth says that Mary is blessed because she shows her faith in what the Lord has

⁷ εὐλογέω: blessing within salvation history, Ibid.

⁸ Joel B. Green, “The Social Status of Mary in Luke 1,5-2,52: A Plea for methodological integration,” *Bib* 73 (1992): 457-472, 469.

⁹ Rowe, *Early Narrative Christology*, 48.

promised her¹⁰ and trusts in God's action in her life (1:45).¹¹ Having already accepted the Lord's plan for her (1:38), Elizabeth reiterates Mary's faith in that plan. By changing from the second to the third person, she declares Mary's faith to the readers and restates that Jesus is Lord.¹²

The third beatitude is when Mary responds in the Magnificat, firstly by glorifying (μεγαλύνω) and rejoicing (ἀγαλλιάω) in the Lord, and then by accepting that despite her humble state (ταπεινώσις) future generations will call her blessed (μακαρίζω) (1:48), since God has shown his favour to her and done great things for her (1:49). The beatitude of this anonymous woman (11:27) fulfils that prediction.¹³

The term μακάριος has already appeared six other times in the gospel but in each case, it is used by Jesus (6:20, 21(2), 22; 7:23; 10:23). The first four are a set of beatitudes which bless those who are outsiders: the poor (6:20), the hungry (6:21), those who weep (6:21) and those who are hated on account of the Son of Man (6:22). The next beatitude blesses those who are willing to see things from Jesus' perspective (7:23). The final one (10:23) recognises the disciples who see and hear that the kingdom of God is near and are therefore more privileged than even the prophets and kings of old.¹⁴

Some blessings of the Old Testament also reflect the maternal aspect of the blessing that the woman recites. Jacob's last words to his sons include not only the overarching blessing (εὐλογέω) of God, the Almighty, the Heaven above and the deep beneath, of mountains and land but also, in contrast to these monumental items, the very maternal

¹⁰ Green, "The Social Status of Mary," 470.

¹¹ James P. Martin, "Luke 1:39-47," *IBC* 36 (1982): 394-399, 397.

¹² Coleridge, *The Birth of the Lukan Narrative*, 85.

¹³ Nolland, *Luke 9:21-18:34*, 649.

¹⁴ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 424.

blessings (εὐλογία) of the breasts and the womb (Gen 49:25).¹⁵ The God of Jacob is not only a powerful figure, but a God who nurtures in a very intimate way as seen in the feminine imagery of the breasts and the womb.

Jesus reacts to the woman’s beatitude with the definitive response of the episode. The structure of the two sentences shows the direct comparison. Each begins with the blessing, followed by the items to be blessed and the verb that agrees with them.

11:27	μακαρία	ἡ κοιλία ἢ βαστάσασά σε καὶ μαστοὶ οὓς ἐθήλασας.
11:28	μακάριοι	οἱ ἀκούοντες τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ φυλάσσοντες.

Jesus further reinforces his statement by beginning with μενοῦν. In Classical Greek, μενοῦν can be adversative, in agreement or corrective. Since Luke normally uses οὐχί, λέγω ὑμῖν, [ἀλλ’ἦ] (12:51) when he wants to express contradiction and καί (7:26) when he wants to be affirmative, the implication is that μενοῦν has a corrective meaning here.¹⁶ So Jesus is being corrective rather than negative to the woman in his response. In many of the textual variants γε¹⁷ is added on to μενοῦν showing that later scribes interpreted it this way.¹⁸

The statement begins with μακάριοι in the masculine plural, implying that Jesus broadens out his reply to make it more inclusive and to apply it to men as well as women.¹⁹ However since his beatitude is so closely connected with that of the woman in the previous

¹⁵ By the God of your father, who will help you, by the Almighty who will bless you with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lies beneath, blessings of the breasts and of the womb (Gen 49:25).

¹⁶ Margaret E. Thrall, *Greek Particles in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 35.

¹⁷ It serves to “focus the attention upon a single idea, and place it, as it were, in the limelight.” BDAG, 190.

¹⁸ B² C D K Γ Θ Ψ 070 f¹⁻¹³ 33. 565. 579. 700. 892. 1241. 1424. 2542. L2211 ꝱ

¹⁹ “In New Testament Greek, generic meanings are often expressed in the masculine, since this is the dominant gender.” Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts Vol 1*, 137.

verse, it can be said to have a special message for women.²⁰ He does not negate the woman's comments but changes the emphasis. His main concern is not on the woman as mother, who physically carried Jesus in her womb, but on how people react to the word of God and he is calling on women as well as men to live up to that mission. In fact "hearing the word of God and doing it, with regard to women, is also more highly valued than gender-specified duties and privileges."²¹

However, because of the link with the previous beatitude by the woman in the crowd, readers automatically think of the mother of Jesus as the prime example. In the Infancy Narrative, she is a model for readers as the narrator emphasises her carefully considering, treasuring and pondering the word of God (διαλογίζομαι [1:29, 2:51],²² συντηρέω [2:19],²³ συμβάλλω [2:19]).²⁴ This pericope is Luke's final reference to the mother of Jesus in the Gospel and could be said to be the "climax of his teaching about her."²⁵ She, who responded openly to the Lord's command through Gabriel (1:38) and physically carried the Lord, is the prime example for others to hear and keep the word of God. By following her example, others too can become "bearers of Christ."²⁶

Jesus' beatitude in blessing those who hear the word of God and keep it, uses 'to keep' (φυλάσσω), which has not been used in Luke's Gospel heretofore. However it is used frequently in the Old Testament and, when referring to the commandments, recurs almost

²⁰ Seim, *The Double Message*, 113; Tannehill, *Luke*, 194.

²¹ De Boer, "The Lukan Mary Magdalene and Other Women following Jesus," 145.

²² διαλογίζομαι: "to think or reason with thoroughness and completeness," L&N, 30:10; "To think or reason carefully especially about the implications of something, consider, ponder, reason," BDAG, 232.

²³ συντηρέω: "to exert mental effort in storing information so as to have continual access and use of it," L&N, 29.1; "To store information in one's mind for careful consideration, hold or treasure up," BDAG, 975.

²⁴ συμβάλλω: "to give careful consideration to various implications of an issue - 'to reflect on, to think about seriously, to think deeply about,'" L&N, 30.7; "To give careful thought to, consider, ponder," BDAG, 956.

²⁵ Scott sees Mary as the type of Israel but in her own right she can be seen as an example of the true disciple. M. Philip Scott, "A Note on the Meaning and Translation of Luke 11:28," *ITQ* 41 (1974): 235-250, 250

²⁶ Bovon, *Luke 2*, 134.

like a refrain from Exodus to Deuteronomy to express “the divinely required attitude of man to the divine covenant.” (Deut 28:1)²⁷ Keeping the commandments of God will lead not only to setting them high above all the nations but will also lead to blessing (εὐλογέω) of the “fruit of your womb” (Deut 28:4). It is used with listening (ακούω/εἰσακούω)²⁸ and remembering (μιμνήσκομαι) when referring to the commandments. In this pericope Jesus, the new Moses, advocates the same response. As he continues his journey to Jerusalem, Luke presents him “as *the Prophet like Moses of Deut. 18:15-19.*”²⁹

This pericope reinforces much of what has been said already in an earlier episode when his mother and brothers and sisters try to see Jesus (8:19-21). His reply is to replace the biological concept of family with those who hear the word of God and do (ποιέω) (6:47; 8:21) it. Here, rather than focus on the physical nurturing role of mother, he repeats that all those who hear the word of God are blessed, but this time he describes them as keeping or guarding that word (11:28).

8:21	μήτηρ μου καὶ ἀδελφοί μου οὗτοί εἰσιν οἱ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ ἀκούοντες καὶ ποιοῦντες.
11:28	μενοῦν μακάριοι οἱ ἀκούοντες τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ φυλάσσοντες.

Many of the Old Testament calls to fulfil the covenant by hearing the word of God combine it with both φυλάσσω (to keep) and ποιέω (to do).³⁰ While there was an emphasis on doing earlier in the gospel (4:38-39, 8:3, 8:19-21, 10:25-37 and Martha in 10:38-42), here the emphasis is on listening, followed by pondering and keeping the word of God, as in the

²⁷ TDNT IX, 237.

²⁸ εἰσακούω :to obey on the basis of having listened carefully, to listen with the implication of heeding and responding, BDAG, 293.

²⁹ David P. Moessner, *Lord of the Banquet* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 263. Italics are author’s emphasis.

³⁰ For example: Exod 15:26; Deut 6:3; 7:12; 28:13.

example of Jesus' mother in the Infancy Narrative and of Mary who listens at the feet of Jesus (10:39).

12.2 An analysis of the female character in her interaction with other characters

12.2.1 The woman and Jesus

The woman has been part of the crowd that has seen Jesus teaching and healing. She calls out her blessing, which praises his mother. By focusing on the womb and breasts, it values the physical bond over and above any other attachment. Jesus teaches very differently in his reply when he corrects the woman and, while he does not disagree with her statement about his mother, he broadens it out and makes a more general statement about those who hear the word of God and keep it. He does not interact with the woman herself, but with her statement to him.

12.3 A Synkrisis of the male-female pairings

Readers hear two different speakers in this pericope, the woman and Jesus. The woman raises her voice from the crowd that has been criticising Jesus, a very courageous act on her part. The second speaker is Jesus, and so readers listen carefully to his words.

Since nothing is said about the interaction of the woman and Jesus other than their beatitudes, then a synkrisis can be made between what is spoken by the two characters. The beatitudes are similar in structure. Both begin with *μακάριος* and follow with what is being blessed. While they seem to be totally different, both can refer to the mother of Jesus. The first one by the mention of “the womb that bore you and the breasts that nursed you” refers to the mother. The other when citing those “who hear the word of God and

keep it” can also refer to Jesus’ mother who is the first example of this in the Infancy Narrative. While the first beatitude relates to ‘mother,’ the second beatitude extends to men as well as women and, in a manner similar to 8:19-21, expands Jesus’ biological family to include all those who hear and keep the word of God. The mother of Jesus has no special privilege because of her pregnancy and bearing of Jesus, but is however an example of those who listen to and keep God’s word and by imitating her they too can follow the example of the bearer of Christ.

There are also contrasts between the statements. The first is in the singular and obviously refers to a woman. The second is in the masculine plural and is therefore a more generic term referring to men as well as women, including the disciples and crowd who are listening to Jesus. The comparison moves from a very physical description of the maternal role to a much more inclusive message to all who hear and keep the word of God.

12.4 Summary

From the parable of the man building the house on sure foundations (6:46-49) through the parable of the Sower (8:4-15), to the meeting with his mother and brothers (8:19-21), Jesus expands his teaching on what it means to be a disciple. He focuses in particular on hearing and carrying out the word of God.

In 8:19-21 when Jesus redefines family, he describes his mother and kin as those who hear the word of God and do it. When a woman praises his mother, he reacts by again redefining relationships. Once again he replaces a biological relationship with a new relationship, based on hearing and keeping the word of God.

In his encounter with Martha and Mary, he further develops this teaching and returns to listening and keeping the word of God. Similar to that story, he uses familial

imagery again here. The beatitude of the woman concentrates on the image of the mother, but Jesus opens it out to include all of his followers. This, however, does not deny the Mary of the Infancy Narrative, but it could be said that the woman here reminds readers of Mary as a prime example of one who listens and ponders on the word of God.

This pericope concludes very comprehensive teaching on hearing and doing or keeping the word of God. Readers have already been schooled by the command of the Father to the disciples, at the Transfiguration, to listen to his beloved Son (9:35). The word of God is to be heard through Jesus and this is demonstrated in his two direct exhortations about hearing the word of God and doing/keeping it (8:19-21; 11:27-28). It is further reiterated in the parables of the man building his house on a sure foundation (6:46-49) the Sower (8:4-8) and the Good Samaritan (10:25-37). These teachings, combined with Jesus' visit to the home of Martha and Mary, establish it as one of the central motifs of his ministry.

Chapter 13: Exegesis of 13:10-17 (Jesus Heals a Crippled Woman)

As Jesus continues on his journey to Jerusalem there are far fewer reports of miracles as the narrator increasingly focuses on Jesus' teaching and parables. The recounting of this healing happens immediately after the parable of the barren fig tree and some very challenging teaching on repentance.

13.1 A sequential reading of the pericope

Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. He may have been invited to teach by the leader (*ἀρχισυνάγωγος*) of the synagogue, who would have been a prominent member of the local community and would hold “the most political power within the four walls.”¹ The mention of ‘teaching,’ ‘synagogue’ and ‘Sabbath’ immediately alerts readers to the significance of this incident as they have heard them combined a number of times already in the Gospel (4:16-30, 31-37; 6:6-11). At the beginning of his public ministry, when Jesus outlined his mission statement in the synagogue in Nazareth, he quoted Isaiah when he said that he would bring good news to the poor, release to captives, sight to the blind and let the oppressed go free and he followed by interpreting the Scripture for all present (14:17-22a). At first the people were amazed by what he said, but almost immediately they tried to throw him off a cliff because they did not agree with openness to the Gentiles, as indicated by his references to the stories of Elijah and Elisha (4:25-27). From then on synagogues were potentially dangerous locales for Jesus (6:6-11)

¹ Arlandson, *Women, Class and Society in Early Christianity*, 170.

and he even assured his disciples that they would have the help of the Holy Spirit when they encountered that antagonism (12:11-12). So there is a mixed expectation, a hope of teaching and healing but also an awareness of strenuous opposition to Jesus.

The anonymous woman appears quite suddenly and is described simply as *γυνή*.² The other woman to be described similarly in Luke's Gospel is the woman with the haemorrhage, who is an outsider in the community because of her illness (8:43). The narrator is very much in evidence here as he uses 'telling' to describe the women. She has a *πνεῦμα ἀσθενείας*, which reminds readers of the women who travelled with Jesus who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities (8:2). She has had this illness for eighteen years, a full generation in biblical terms, and its effect on her is highlighted even more by the double explanation that she is bent over and is completely unable to stand up straight.³ The description of being 'bent over' (*συγκύπτω*) reminds readers of her "ignominious social position"⁴ and others with similar disabilities who were considered unclean, like the hunchback of Leviticus who was excluded from offering "the food of his God" (Lev 21:17). The verb is used in Sir 12:11 for a humble person, but is in the context of not trusting your enemy and so still has negative connotations for readers. "The combination of evil spirit and infirm body in the woman creates a double marginalization of uncleanliness that would have restricted her to the outer edges of her community."⁵

² "In the dyadic society that typifies the first century world, it was usual for a person's identification to be within the context of a particular group, such as a city, a geographical region, ethnic/racial alignment of specific community. Usually a woman gained her identification within the kinship structure of her husband or other male representative." David M. May, "The Straightened Woman (Luke 13:10-17): Paradise Lost and Regained," *PRSt* 24 (1997): 246-258, 250.

³ Gregory E. Lamb, "Sinfully Stereotyped: Jesus' Desire to Correct Ancient Physiognomic Assumptions in the Gospel of Luke," *WW* 37 (2017): 177-185, 183.

⁴ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 522.

⁵ Heidi Torgerson, "The Healing of the Bent Woman: A Narrative Interpretation of Luke 13:10-17," *CurTM* 32 (2005): 176-186, 180.

Yet there is a certain ambiguity here as even though the physical description would point to her being an outsider, there is no evidence of exclusion in the description of her presence in the synagogue among the crowd. Shinall notes that illness did not automatically mean exclusion from the community and gives the example of lepers in both the Old Testament and the New.⁶ Also, the fact that the narrator mentions that she has this illness for eighteen years signals hope for the woman. The Israelites were freed from bondage to the Moabites (Judg 3:14) and the Ammonites (Judg 10:8) after eighteen years and, just previous to this, Jesus did not place blame on the eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them, but said that they were no worse than anyone else living in Jerusalem (13:4).

The story now moves from ‘telling’ to ‘showing’ which places the character Jesus in a more prominent position than the woman. Even though he is teaching in the synagogue, when Jesus sees the woman he takes the initiative, summons her and, very publicly, tells her that she has been set free (*ἀπολύω*) from her illness/weakness (*ἀσθένεια*) and also from the spirit (*πνεῦμα*) of that illness. Luke also uses *ἀπολύω* for forgiveness of sins (6:37), so that connotation may also be intended here. By using the perfect passive of *ἀπολύω*, Jesus is pointing to the fact that it is God who has actually freed the woman from her illness (cf. 5:20; 7:47). However, when Jesus follows this by laying hands⁷ on the woman, it appears that Jesus is also involved in the healing as it is only after the laying on of hands that she stands up straight (13:13).⁸ The detailed description of the woman as possessed by a crippling spirit and as ‘bent over’ and ‘not able to stand up straight’ (13:11)

⁶ Myrick C. Shinall Jr., “The Social Condition of Lepers in the Gospels,” *JBL* 137 (2018): 915-934.

⁷ The laying on of hands is also found in the healing of those with various diseases (4:40), the healing of the leper (5:13) and the resuscitation of the daughter of Jairus (8:54).

⁸ “Jesus thus plays the role of the mediator who extends God’s salvific action to the affected person.” Wolter, *The Gospel According to Luke Volume II*, 184.

highlights not only her illness, but also her marginalisation in her community. By freeing her from the crippling spirit and raising her to stand up straight, Jesus draws her from that near death to full life and membership of the community. This raising from illness to full life is yet another reminder to readers that Jesus (through the power of God that he is manifesting in this miracle) will rise, not just from illness but from the dead at the resurrection.

Since the narrator is telling the story from Jesus' viewpoint, he makes no mention of the woman seeking healing or approaching Jesus to ask for help and her only reason for coming to the synagogue seems to be to praise God.⁹ This is her response to the healing when she reacts by glorifying God. She is the only one, in what is probably a crowded synagogue on the Sabbath, who gives glory to God. There is no reaction from the others who are present. This same reaction, however, has already been seen in the healing of the paralytic (5:25) and in the raising of the widow's son at Nain (7:16). In both situations, the person who is healed and the crowd realise that in these events, "God has visited his people" (7:16). Jesus has already confirmed to John's disciples that by healing others, he is showing that he is "the one who is to come" (7:18-22).

The narrator says nothing further about the woman. Since the last time that she is mentioned is to say that she was praising God, then it is likely that she is still in the synagogue. Although the ensuing discussion is about her healing, she takes no part in it. The chief of the synagogue (*ἀρχισυνάγωγος*)¹⁰ is indignant about the healing on the Sabbath, but rather than confront Jesus directly, he addresses the crowd and by the use of

⁹ While some commentators maintain that it was unusual for women to attend synagogue services, Levine says that men and women gathered with no distinctions where seating was concerned. Lee I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 505.

¹⁰ The previous time that an *ἀρχισυνάγωγος* has appeared in the Gospel was when Jairus pleaded with Jesus to heal his daughter (8:40-56). In that situation he showed great respect for Jesus.

δεῖ maintains that it is God’s law that (based on his understanding of Exod 20:9 and Deut 5:13) they should not come for healing on the Sabbath as he considers it work. The narrator now changes to describing Jesus as κύριος, and by so doing, suggests to readers that the Lord has the authority to counter this. The Lord responds, not just to the ruler of the synagogue, but also to the others who agree with him with a very tightly-knit argument. He calls them hypocrites (13:15), a negative attribute that is shared by those who criticise the faults of others but ignore their own faults (6:42) and the Pharisees who spread hypocrisy in their teaching by sticking to the letter of the law (11:37-12:1). By describing their hypocrisy as ‘leaven’ Jesus draws on the connotation of it being an “impure element,” which must be cleaned out of the house before the Passover can be celebrated.¹¹

The Lord then moves on to compare how those same critics care for their animals on the Sabbath with their lack of concern for the woman. He sets up a series of parallels between the treatment of animals and of the woman.¹²

Animal	Woman, a daughter of Abraham
Bound for a few hours	Bound for more than eighteen years
Loosing the bonds of an animal on the Sabbath as well as every other day	God loosing the woman’s bond on the Sabbath

He has already made a similar point to his disciples when he described God’s thorough knowledge and care for birds and then explained that he valued people so much more (12:7, 24).¹³ Furthermore, readers on hearing this description are reminded of Isaiah where the ox

¹¹ Bovon, *Luke 2*, 176.

¹² Joel B. Green, “Jesus and a Daughter of Abraham (Luke 13:10-17): Test Case for a Lucan Perspective on Jesus’ Miracles,” *CBQ* 51 (1989): 643-654, 652.

¹³ Robert F. O’Toole, “Some exegetical Reflections on Luke 13:10-17,” *Bib* 73 (1992): 84-107, 103.

and donkey are seen in a more favourable light than the children of Israel as they know their owner and their manger (Isa 1:3).

The Lord calls the woman a “daughter of Abraham” and emphasises its importance by placing it grammatically at the beginning of the sentence (ταύτην δὲ θυγατέρα Ἀβραὰμ οὖσαν) (13:16).¹⁴ When Abraham has been mentioned previously in the Gospel, it is a reminder of God’s covenant with the people of Israel.¹⁵ In these texts (1:54-55; 3:7-9) priority is given to outsiders, the very people that Jesus specifies in his mission statement in Nazareth (4:16-30).

The appropriateness of calling the woman in the synagogue ‘daughter of Abraham,’ is not simply that she is an Israelite, but also, that as Israelite, she has a claim on the special covenant blessing promised to the seed of Abraham.¹⁶

So the Lord is clearly placing her within the family of God.¹⁷ The use of the term may evoke the mother of the Maccabees who, by supporting her sons in their martyrdom, showed strong faith and is therefore described as the daughter of God-fearing Abraham (4 Macc 15:28).¹⁸ The woman does not become a daughter of Abraham as a result of her healing; rather the Lord’s point is that she has always been one and, as a member of the covenant community, is entitled to be treated as such. The term ‘daughter’ is also a reminder of Jairus’ daughter and the haemorrhagic woman, both of whom were returned to life (literally and figuratively) as a result of their healings (8:40-56), and the teachings about Jesus’ new family of faith that have been particularly important in the middle section of the Gospel (8:19-21; 11:27-28). This now places the woman in that same family.

¹⁴ Seim, *The Double Message*, 43; Torgerson, “The Healing of the Bent Woman,” 181.

¹⁵ Torgesen, “The Healing of the Bent Woman,” 181.

¹⁶ M. Dennis Hamm, “The Freeing of the Bent Woman and the Restoration of Israel: Luke 13:10-17 as Narrative Theology,” *JSNT* 31 (1987): 23-44, 34.

¹⁷ Lamb, “Sinfully Stereotyped,” 180.

¹⁸ Seim, *The Double Message*, 44.

The Lord's description of the healing of the woman uses the same terminology that was used by the narrator to describe her illness: released, set free from the bondage of Satan and being able to stand up straight. The language of being bound (δέω), bondage (δεσμός) and set free (ἀπολύω, λύω) has been used by the narrator to describe not only exorcisms, but forgiveness of sins (6:37) and previous healings as well (4:38-39, 40-41). Here even though the woman's illness is described as bound by Satan, there is no evidence that she is possessed by a demon,¹⁹ or that she has done something wrong or is a sinner.²⁰ Instead this language is a reminder that Jesus' mission statement (4:18), which echoes Isaiah 58:6 and 61 and emphasises the concept of release and freedom, is being fulfilled here in the woman's healing.²¹

Jesus, as "Lord of the Sabbath" (6:5), also corrects the ruler of the synagogue's understanding of the Sabbath.²² With the authority of the κύριος that he showed when he raised the young man at Nain (7:11-17), he responds to the ruler's use of δεῖ by using it himself to insist that it is God's plan that the woman be healed on the Sabbath. In Deut 5:15, the people were told that they must keep the Sabbath holy as a remembrance that the Lord God liberated them and brought them out of Egypt. So here, it is only right that the Lord should liberate the woman from her illness and return life to her on the Sabbath.²³

"When the purpose of the Sabbath rest is to be free to praise God, Jesus deems it necessary

¹⁹ Bovon, *Luke 2*, 284; Wolter, *The Gospel According to Luke Volume II*, 187.

²⁰ Patricia Bruce, "Constructions of Disability (Ancient and Modern): The Impact of Religious Beliefs on the Experience of Disability," *Neot* 44 (2010), 253-281, 274.

²¹ Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts Vol 1*, 65.

²² This is not the first time that Jesus has redefined the Sabbath. In 6:1-5, he also put the needs of people before the rules imposed by the religious leaders.

²³ Hamm, "The Freeing of the Bent Woman," 27.

to free a bound woman so she can do precisely that.”²⁴ It once again emphasises his relationship with the Father in promoting the Sabbath as the day to praise God.

The focus now turns to the crowd and the opponents of the Lord. Like the servant of Isaiah 50:7, “his opponents confront him but he is not shamed.”²⁵ Instead the narrator describes the opponents as “put to shame” (*καταισχύνω* [13:17]), an echo of Isaiah 45:16 where all who opposed the Lord were put to shame (*αἰσχύνομαι*). It also reminds readers of the honour/shame culture of first century Palestine. By criticising the healing on the Sabbath, the ruler of the synagogue challenges Jesus (13:14). By initiating this dispute, it indicates that he sees Jesus as his equal as only an equal can impugn a person’s honour.²⁶ The Lord’s response in the form of a question is typical of an honour/shame defence and puts the ruler and his supporters on the spot rather than the Lord.²⁷ The dispute is resolved when the crowd agree with the Lord and uphold his honour rather than that of his opponents.²⁸

The reaction of the crowd has not been mentioned up to now, but they have been watching events unfold as the woman is healed and the Lord is challenged by the synagogue ruler. By the use of lavish language, the narrator now demonstrates how the crowd (*παῖς ὁ ὄχλος*) rejoice at all the wonderful things (*παᾶσιν τοῖς ἐνδόξοις*) that Jesus has done. They are not just delighted with this healing, but with all his marvellous deeds. This is also a reminder of the great and glorious deeds that Yahweh has done (Deut 10:21) and

²⁴ Reid, *Choosing the Better Part*, 166.

²⁵ Holly Beers, *The Followers of Jesus as the ‘Servant’: Luke’s model from Isaiah for the disciples in Luke-Acts*, LNTS 535 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark 2015), 108.

²⁶ Malina, *The New Testament World :Insights from cultural anthropology*, 41.

²⁷ Bruce J. Malina and Jerome N. Neyrey, *The Social World of Luke-Acts* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 49.

²⁸ Jordan J. Ryan, “Jesus and Synagogue Disputes: Recovering the institutional context of Luke 13:10-17,” *CBQ* 79 (2017), 41-59, 56.

the covenant that he made with wonders before all the people (Exod 34:10).²⁹ The covenant, celebrated by the Sabbath rest, has restored the ‘daughter of Abraham.’ The reaction of the crowd contrasts with previous crowds who have been amazed by Jesus’ teaching and healing and glorify God in response (5:26; 7:16; 9:43). Here the crowd focuses on Jesus’ deeds and only the woman glorifies God.

13.2 An analysis of the female character in her interaction with other characters

13.2.1 The woman and Jesus

Jesus already has a very prominent role in the synagogue when the woman appears. Nothing is said about her. She may have come to the synagogue to seek healing or simply to praise God. This ambiguity is evident when the narrator tells the story completely from Jesus’ perspective. He sees her, stops his work of teaching and calls the woman forward in a similar manner to the healing of the man with the withered hand in the synagogue on the Sabbath (6:8). Her illness draws a similar compassionate response from Jesus as that evoked by the sight of the widow of Nain, processing out with the body of her only son (7:13). There is no effort to take the woman aside and cure her in private and so, he obviously wants to demonstrate his actions of “doing good on the Sabbath” and “saving life” (6:9). There is a very concrete description of the healing. Having called the woman, Jesus speaks to her, lays hands on her; then she stands up straight and begins to praise God. While Jesus tells the woman that she has been healed, her response in praising God shows that she realises that Jesus heals by the power of God.

²⁹ Hamm, “The Freeing of the Bent Woman ,” 27.

In the second half of the pericope, readers presume that the woman has remained in the synagogue praising God, as Jesus has not dismissed her, but she is no longer spoken to or even mentioned by the narrator. She functions as a character in absentia in the speech of Jesus who first admonishes those who object to her healing, secondly calls her a daughter of Abraham and so links her to the covenant people and by the use of the familial term 'daughter' considers her part of his new family of faith and finally, links her healing with the release from bondage that he had promised in his mission statement (4:18).

13.2.2 The woman and the ruler of the synagogue

The woman, who comes to the synagogue, has a very obvious illness. Yet there is no mention that the ruler of the synagogue even notices that she is there, nor is there anything to show that she is not welcome because of her illness. Even after she is healed the man does not speak to her or about her directly. He speaks in general about the Sabbath and how wrong it is to work (i.e. heal) on that day. While her healing is the cause of his speech and reaction, he never refers directly to her.

13.2.3 The woman and the crowd

Since Jesus is teaching in the synagogue, it is obvious that there is an assembly present who are listening to him. Also, since Jesus calls the woman forward, then they are witnesses to the miracle and his admonition of the ruler of the synagogue and his supporters. They are not mentioned, however, until the end of the scene. Then, even though the woman is healed, the wider crowd rejoices more generally at the wonderful things Jesus has done and all the opponents are put to shame. There is no mention of the woman, but her reaction in glorifying God makes the link between Jesus and God more

than they do. By the end of the scene, the woman is no longer singled out of the crowd because of her disability, but instead is the only person to be described as praising God (13:13).

13.3 A Synkrisis of the male-female pairings

Since they are relatively close to one another in the text and have many similarities, a synkrisis can be made between the healings of the crippled woman (13:10-17) and the man with dropsy (14:1-6). Both take place on the Sabbath and at this stage the controversy over healing on the Sabbath has become very pronounced. Important religious leaders are present in both situations: the ruler of the synagogue and those who support him (13:10-17) and a leader of the Pharisees as well as other Pharisees and lawyers (14:1-7).

The sick people both appear suddenly (*ἰδοῦ* shows this) and they have very obvious physical disabilities: the woman is bent over and cannot stand up straight while the man is suffering from dropsy. While both have serious illnesses, neither is life-threatening and they could wait until the following day to be healed. The fact that neither of them asks for healing implies that they do not expect to be healed on the Sabbath. The decision to heal is taken by Jesus alone.

In both situations, Jesus initiates the healing when he sees the woman in the synagogue (13:12) and the man in front of him at the Pharisee's meal. He touches both of these outsiders, lays hands on the woman as part of the healing process and takes hold of the man. Verbs of release run through the woman's healing: *ἀπολύω* when she is set free from her weakness (13:12), *λύω* when the comparison is made with untying the animals (13:15) and the same word to untie the woman's bonds of illness (13:16). While these

terms are not used for the man's illness or healing, ἀπολύω is used when Jesus sends him away (14:4). After their cures, the focus changes to the discussion about the healings and the two people are no longer mentioned.

Jesus' key question with regard to the interpretation of Sabbath law centres on animals in the first scene (βοῦς, ὄνος) while the second scene refers to saving a son or an ox (βοῦς). Some textual variants³⁰ however refer to the same two animals as in the incident concerning the woman. In both situations Jesus puts a direct question to his opponents: ἕκαστος ὑμῶν (13:5) and τίνος ὑμῶν (14:5). He then follows with similar style arguments. "Jesus argues in both cases – though not in identical words – on the basis of an inference *a minore* from the treatment of an ox on the Sabbath day."³¹

While there are many similarities, there are also significant differences. The healing of the woman takes place in the synagogue but the man's is in the house of a Pharisee where Jesus has been invited for a meal. While Jesus is playing an important role in the synagogue by teaching, they are now places where he usually meets opposition while houses have been places of welcome. Yet this house is owned by a member of the Pharisees, who are usually very critical of Jesus, especially where Sabbath observance is concerned and the narrator describes them as "watching him very closely" (14:1).

The illnesses are described in very different ways. The woman has a spirit that has crippled her (13:11), which is interpreted by Jesus as being bound by Satan (13:16). The man's illness and cure use straightforward words of healing: θεραπεύω (14:3) and ἰάομαι (14:4). However, both people are healed instantly. Jesus speaks to the woman even though there is no account of her reply and it is quite likely that she remains there after her cure.

³⁰ ⋈ K L Ψ ^{f.13} 33. 579. 892. 1241. 2542. lat (sy⁵) bo

³¹ Seim, *The Double Message*, 16.

He also calls her a “daughter of Abraham” thus linking her with the covenant people (13:16). Even though Abraham is not mentioned in the cure of the man, the synkrisis is an intimation that this man too is a son of Abraham, especially given Jesus’ example of rescuing a son from a well (14:5). While the woman is welcomed back into the community, once the man is healed, he is formally sent on his way (14:4).

The discussion about Sabbath observance takes place in the episode of the woman after she has been healed and is initiated by the leader of the synagogue. He speaks to the people in the synagogue to tell them that it is wrong to look for healing on the Sabbath and does not address either the woman who has been healed or Jesus. Jesus replies not just to him, but to those who support him as well. In the episode of the man, Jesus firstly asks the question about whether it is lawful to heal on the Sabbath. When there is silence on the part of the lawyers and Pharisees, he immediately heals the man. As the Gospel progresses, he has less and less patience with their arguments. His question with regard to healing, in the first instance, is about animals and untying them so that they can have water while the second example is much more serious. It is about a child or animal that is in danger of death if he is not rescued. The use of a more extreme example by Jesus points to his growing annoyance with their lack of understanding. Jesus wins the argument in both pericopes, but those who oppose him are put to shame in the first instance and silenced in the second. In both instances they are not happy with the outcome.

Both pericopes foreshadow Jesus’ going from death to new life. The woman has been bound by Satan for eighteen years, unable to live a full life and marginalised in her community. Her release from her illness allows her to stand up straight with new life. In the story of the man with dropsy, the example of a son being in the pit of death in the well

is a reminder of the son of the Father, who will also be in the ‘pit of death’ at the place of the Skull. Furthermore, the rescue of the son anticipates Jesus’ resurrection.

There are two parables of the kingdom of God between the stories of the two cures, one is about the mustard seed (13:18-19) and the other about the yeast (13:20-21). The fact that οὕτως (therefore) appears at the beginning of these parables invites readers to read them in light of the miracles. Each parable has a description of exponential growth: the tiny seed grows into a tree and the small piece of leaven in the flour yields enough bread to feed 150 people.³² This is the growth that Jesus is predicting for the kingdom of God in their midst.

The narrative points believers to small events in their local communities as being signs that Satan’s power is ending and the kingdom is appearing. The freeing of a daughter of Abraham from Satan’s power . . . is an example of such signs.³³

This woman and also the man with the dropsy are “out of place, out of time,” and the wrong sort of people.³⁴ Yet they are both representative of the people to whom Jesus comes, and the kingdom of God is being established in their midst. Jesus is now moving the focus from the legalistic view of the synagogue leaders and the Pharisees to his teaching on the kingdom of God which is open to all.

13.4 Summary

The discourse of this pericope shows a woman who is very passive and, rather than engage with Jesus, is better described as a recipient of his healing action. Her illness is described by the narrator as “a spirit of weakness” and interpreted by Jesus as “bondage to Satan”. The language of possession and exorcism evokes the description the healing of the man with the unclean spirit (4:31-37) and of Simon’s mother-in-law (4:38-39). Like the

³² Nolland, *Luke 9:21-18:34*, 730.

³³ Tannehill, *Luke*, 221.

³⁴ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 526.

woman at Nain, her situation is noticed immediately by Jesus and his response is just as immediate. He heals her and explains that she is entitled to be freed from the bondage of her illness. While she does not dialogue with Jesus, her reaction to her cure is to praise God, like the paralytic and the crowd with him (5:25-26) and the crowd after the resuscitation of the widow's son (7:16).

Once again here Luke uses familial imagery in this pericope as he calls the woman "a daughter of Abraham." However, up to this he has spoken in terms of a new family of faith but now he speaks of the woman being re-integrated into the covenant community, the family of faith of the whole people. Like the story of the anointing woman (7:36-50), her healing exemplifies Jesus' teaching. The Sabbath is viewed through the lens of liberty for the oppressed, which again shows his outreach to the marginalised.

This woman has been suffering for eighteen years before Jesus' healing liberates her from the bondage of Satan to be re-integrated into life, from the point of view of her health as well as her membership of the community. The description of her being raised to stand up straight points to the new life that is now open to her. Readers, already familiar with Jesus' passion, death and resurrection, and reminded of this through Jesus' recent predictions (9:22, 44) might well see in the trajectory of this woman's subjugation and liberation by being raised up to new life, a harbinger of Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection.

Chapter 14: Exegesis of 21:1-4 (The Widow's Offering)

As readers approach this pericope they are aware that Jesus has arrived in Jerusalem, the location of his prophesied death. Within the Gospel, various prophecies of his passion and death (9:21-22, 44; 12:50; 13:32-33; 17:25; 18:31-33) create a sense of foreboding. In addition, the intimations of the Paschal mystery in the various pericopes concerning women (4:38-39; 7:11-17; 8:1-3, 40-56; 13:10-17) and the implied readers' foreknowledge of Jesus' passion and death intensifies the foreboding.

14.1 A sequential reading of the pericope

The action takes place in the Temple, but readers are conscious of the prior context from the time Jesus first enters the Temple after his arrival in Jerusalem, when his immediate reaction is to drive out those who are selling there, angry that instead of worshipping God they are behaving as if in a den of robbers (19:45-46). His reaction is because the Temple has become a "locus of corrupt religious leaders."¹ Immediately after that, "every day, he was teaching in the Temple" (19:47). He has, however, a very mixed audience: the people (20:1), the chief priests, scribes and elders (20:1) the Sadducees (20:27) and his disciples (20:45). The chief priests, scribes and the leaders of the people are frequently there, but keep looking for a way to kill him (19:47; 20:19), question his authority (20:1-8) and try to catch him out (20:20, 27). The only time that the scribes admit that he has spoken well (20:39) is when he answers the Sadducees about resurrection. The

¹ S. John Roth, *The Blind, the Lame and the Poor: Character types in Luke-Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997), 203.

people ‘hang on’ (ἐκκρεμάννυμι) to everything they hear from Jesus (19:48), which prevents the chief priests from laying hands on him in public (20:19, 26).

Jesus’ teaching, immediately prior to this episode, influences readers’ perceptions of the incident. He has been sitting in the Temple teaching (20:1-44), the Temple being “the place of authoritative teaching of the chief priests, scribes and elders.”² Having already criticised the scribes so blatantly in the Parable of the Wicked Tenants (20:9-18), he now speaks to the disciples about their hypocrisy (20:45-47), which is seen in their conspicuous dress and demand for respect in the market places, synagogues and banquets. His more serious criticism is of their long prayers, which are simply for show and in particular, their treatment of widows. “Devouring widows’ houses” (20:47) may be acting illegally as guardians of their estates³ or some other sort of systemic injustice,⁴ something that is a very serious offence, as the expectation of the Law is that widows must be cared for (Deut 10:17-18; 14:28-29; 24:19-21).

This episode begins when Jesus interrupts his teaching to look up and focus on what is happening in the treasury. The positioning of events by the implied author is followed by the narrator’s report of the content of Jesus’ seeing. Since the narrator’s view is through Jesus’ eyes (Ἀναβλέψας . . . εἶδεν [21:1]; εἶδεν [21:2]) rather than his own, then the perspective is more limited. Firstly, Jesus looks up and sees both the rich and the widow putting their gifts into the treasury.⁵ The repetition of language (δράω; βάλλω; δῶρον) shows that the rich people and the widow do something very similar and so this episode

² Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, “Reflections on Mark 12:38-44 for the twenty fifth Sunday after Pentecost,” *CurTM* 44 (2017): 37-42, 38.

³ John Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1993), 976.

⁴ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 727.

⁵ γαζοφυλάκιον: This may be the actual treasury or one of the thirteen receptacles in the form of trumpets that were used to collect contributions. BDAG, 186. Nine were for payments like the half shekel temple-tax and payments for sacrificial and sin offerings and the remaining four were for voluntary donations.

works like a synkrisis.⁶ In the first verse, the final position of the substantivized adjective *πλούσιος* is unusual and emphatic of their status as rich (21:1) and there is a further emphatic placement when the widow (*χήρα*) opens the reported content of Jesus' vision in the next verse (21:2). The rich are described as a generic group (*πλουσίαι*) who put in their gifts (*δῶρα*) while the poor widow is singled out as an individual, who contributes two leptas, 132 of which were a day's wage for the day labourer.⁷ The narrator thereby focuses more attention on her.⁸ Her contribution recalls the woman who provided an extravagant amount of oil for his anointing (7:36-50) and the women who followed Jesus as disciples and supported Jesus and those travelling with him out of their own resources (8:1-3).

This widow is a reminder of another widow, at Nain, who drew out one of the most compassionate responses from Jesus in the whole Gospel (7:13). Readers recall other widows; Anna who reacted to her encounter with Jesus in the Temple by speaking about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem (2:38) and the parable of the widow seeking justice who is not afraid to stand up for her rights (18:1-8).

Jesus frequently criticises the rich. He usually follows the critique of wealth in the prophetic literature, especially that of Amos, with the emphasis on God's care for the poor and criticism of the rich and of their exploitative practices. Following the beatitudes (6:20-23), his first woe is to the rich who have already received their consolation (6:24). He relates many parables where the rich are brought low because of their dependence on wealth while the poor are exalted.⁹ Mary's prayer in the Magnificat (1:52-53) and the beatitudes are examples of this dynamic of reversal. Jesus also regularly speaks about

⁶ Wolter, *The Gospel According to Luke Volume II*, 412.

⁷ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 728.

⁸ Malbon, "Reflections on Mark 12:38-44," 38.

⁹ The Parable of the Rich Fool (12:13-21); the Great Supper (14:12-24); the Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19-31)

reaching out to the poor (πενιχρός)¹⁰ and in his parables and stories, he demonstrates his preference for them.¹¹ The widow here is an example of the “righteous poor who receive the good news (4:18; 6:20; 7:22; 14:21; 16:20)” in this Gospel.¹²

On the other hand, Jesus heals people from wealthy families and joins them for meals.¹³ So his positive attitude to the poor does not imply an exclusion of the wealthy. An example of the correct attitude to wealth is shown by Zacchaeus, the rich tax collector, who, because of his encounter with Jesus, is willing to share his wealth with the needy (19:1-10). On first consideration, it could seem that the rich here are being generous like Zacchaeus as they put in their gifts (δῶρα). However by the juxtaposition of πλούσιος and χήρα πενιχρά in the two verses and by the immediate comparison with the needy woman, the implied author casts doubts on this. Like the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19-31), readers anticipate a future reversal for the rich and the poor widow.¹⁴

There is no interaction between Jesus and the people putting the money into the treasury as he merely observes them. The narrator’s report of Jesus’ perception of the people at the Temple orientates the readers to draw their own conclusions. Readers could feel that the rich are being generous while the widow is contributing a very meagre amount. On the other hand, they could have sympathy for the widow who is obviously very poor and is still willing to contribute what little she has. The deliberation is now furthered by Jesus as he takes over as narrator and comments on their actions. Whatever ambiguity

¹⁰ Mission Statement at Nazareth (4:18); The Beatitudes (6:20) and Message to John the Baptist (7:22)

¹¹ Parable of the Great Dinner (14:13,21), The Rich Man and Lazarus (16:20,22), the Rich Ruler (18:22), Zacchaeus (19:8)

¹² Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 316.

¹³ The Centurion’s servant (7:1-10), meal at the house of Simon the Pharisee (7:36-50), daughter of Jairus (8:4-56), meal at a Pharisee’s house (11:37), meal at a Pharisee’s house when he teaches about hospitality (14:1-24).

¹⁴ Luke 16:25: But Abraham said, “Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony.”

existed up to this is now dispelled as Jesus states emphatically (ἀληθῶς) that the poor widow has put in more than all of them. “It is possible that πλεῖον πάντων is meant to be understood not merely in a distributive manner (in the sense of ‘more than every single one of them’) but rather comprehensively (in the sense of ‘more than all of them together’).”¹⁵

Jesus continues by making a comparison between her offering and that of the rich. περισσεύοντος and ὑστερήματος balance each other, the first “out of what exceeds” and the second “out of her lacking.”¹⁶ Even though the rich put in substantial offerings, they are not described as special, but are merely thrown in among the other gifts (εἰς τὰ δῶρα). The widow on the other hand puts in πάντα τὸν βίον. Since βίος means both ‘life’ and ‘means of subsistence’ then it can be said that this woman has put in not just what she has to live on but all the life she has.¹⁷ This is reminiscent of the woman with the haemorrhage who spent her whole life/livelihood (ὅλον τὸν βίον) on physicians in a futile search for a cure (8:43). The Prodigal Son, on the other hand, by asking for his legacy or share of this father’s property (15:12) also took not only his livelihood but, in a certain sense, his father’s life as well. Jesus’ mention of the gift of her βίος signals how complete is her gift over and above that of all the others. Readers, aware of Jesus’ crucifixion and death, recognise that Jesus is commending this woman for doing exactly what he did by giving her whole life. Her location in the Temple, a place of sacrifice, and her donation of her whole life in her contribution to the treasury all serve to remind readers of Jesus’ ultimate sacrifice.

¹⁵ Wolter, *The Gospel According to Luke Volume II*, 412.

¹⁶ Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 316.

¹⁷ Reid, *Choosing the Better Part*, 195.

There is no actual interaction between the woman and the other characters. The widow and the rich people both put their gifts into the treasury, but they do not relate to one another in any way. Jesus comments on both the woman and the rich and compares the two, but he does not communicate with either of them. The only communication is between Jesus and the disciples that he is teaching.

This incident, which is reported as an event, could also be described as a parabolic story as Jesus uses it in his teaching. Like the parables, this story leaves “the mind in sufficient doubt about its precise application to tease it into active thought.”¹⁸ It is also polyvalent, and could be said to have a “surplus of meaning.”¹⁹ Malbon says that this “wealth of readings” should not be seen as a complication, but that “this dynamic *process* of reading and of reading readings” should be seen as a worthwhile experience.²⁰ So it can be read in multiple contexts permitting a number of different meanings, which can lead to equally valid but different interpretations.²¹ “The parables, if we take them seriously not as answers but as invitations, can continue to inform our lives, even as our lives continue to open up the parables to new readings.”²² So, this parabolic story lends itself to the possibility of a number of different synkrises.

¹⁸ C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (London: Nisbet, 1936), 16.

¹⁹ Gregory J. Laughery, “Reading Jesus’ parables according to J. D. Crossan and P. Ricoeur,” *EuroJTh* 8 (1999): 145-154.

²⁰ Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, “The Poor Widow in Mark and her Poor Rich Readers,” in *A Feminist Companion to Mark*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine with Marianne Blickenstaff (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2001), 111-127, 127. Author’s emphasis in italics.

²¹ Robert H. Stein, “The Genre of the Parables,” in *The Challenge of Jesus’ Parables*, ed. Richard N Longenecker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 30-50, 20.

²² Amy-Jill Levine, *Short Stories by Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper One, 2015), 297.

14.2 Synkrisis of the male-female pairings

There is a multiplicity of possible synkrisis²³ available here, but the two that will be outlined are chosen based on the various narrative instances (implied author, narrator, the character Jesus) and also on a sequential and cumulative reading. The implied author implicitly establishes a synkrisis between this pericope and the previous episode where the scribes are accused of “devouring widow’s houses” (20:47). This is followed by the comparison by the narrator who reports what Jesus sees. Then, like the stories of the woman who anointed Jesus (7:36-50) and Martha and Mary (10:38-42), Jesus explicitly establishes a synkrisis within the pericope when he compares the woman with the rich as they both put their contributions into the treasury.

Readers, coming to this incident, bring their own extratext as they follow a sequential, cumulative reading. This filling in of the gaps by individual readers can lead them in “unexpected directions” as they bring into play their “own faculty for establishing connections,” thus allowing the possibility of a number of different readings.²⁴ The key extratexts here are the imminent passion, death and resurrection of Jesus and the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E., which for implied readers is a historic event.

14.2.1 Synkrisis between 20:45-47 (Jesus denounces the scribes) and 21:1-4 (the widow’s offering)

This synkrisis, which is first established by the implied author in his arrangement of episodes, is a comparison with the incident that immediately precedes it (20:45-47).

²³ “Although common elements are required for the purpose of comparison, the art of synkrisis is as much about contrasting difference as elucidating similarities.” Macnamara, *My Chosen Instrument*, 426.

²⁴ Iser, *The Implied Reader*, 280.

The first incident refers to the scribes²⁵ and widows who are at different ends of the social scale in Second Temple Judaism. Following Arlandson's model, scribes are in category II (Retainers and Religionists) while widows are in category VII, the lowest category. While this does not apply to all widows in Luke's Gospel, the treatment of the widows here places them in this same category.²⁶ The second incident involves the widow and the monetary demands made by the Temple authorities. The widows are represented as in need in both sections: the first widows because the scribes are devouring their houses (20:47)²⁷ and the widow in the Temple is described as needy or poor (21:2-3). There is reference to loss of the women's livelihoods in both pericopes: the scribes devour the houses of the first widows (20:47) while the whole life of the widow in the second incident is 'devoured' leaving her destitute (21:4).²⁸

There are also contrasts between the scribes and the woman. Their ostentation resembles the rich whose donations, while substantial, have little impact on their lives while the widow gives all she has. Sequential and cumulative reading has already reminded readers of Jesus' criticism of the scribes' lack of respect for the poor and marginalised (11:42-52; 14:7-11) and here, despite their expertise in the law and their long prayers, they display a pretentious piety in comparison with the genuine piety of the widow.²⁹

²⁵ The scribes are legal experts and interpreters of the law. They are often associated with the Pharisees and some may also be priests. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 725.

²⁶ Arlandson, *Women, Class and Society in Early Christianity*, 113-116.

²⁷ The use of the very strong verb *κατεσθίω* here means that they are completely consuming the widow's houses. Geoffrey Smith, "A Closer Look at the Widow's Offering: Mark 12:41-44," *JETS* 40 (1997): 27-36, 29.

²⁸ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 725.

²⁹ Morna D. Hooker, *The Gospel according to Mark*, BNTC (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 296.

In the Infancy Narrative, the Temple was the setting for “righteous” people³⁰ and Jesus himself described it as his “Father’s house” (2:41-51). The first hint of negativity does not appear until the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector when Jesus criticises the Pharisee for his hypocrisy as he prays there (18:9-14). This criticism becomes more overt when he cleanses the temple (19:45-48). Implied readers of Gentile as well as Jewish backgrounds will be familiar with the expectation to contribute money to temples. Even though widows were exempt, the system of taxation in the Jerusalem Temple expected people to contribute half a shekel, which was approximately two days pay for a labourer, to the temple annually and this applied to rich and poor alike.³¹ This widow’s contribution is only a tiny portion of this amount, but is all that she has. The treatment of the woman here is an example of a religious system that by demanding her last coins is devouring the woman’s life, something that Jesus condemns throughout his ministry.³² Yet, a certain ambiguity is evident; readers are aware that Jesus has criticised the scribes’ unjust treatment of widows in the previous section and he has removed the sellers from the Temple, but he does not stop the woman donating to the treasury and so readers are left with the thought that Jesus may view her donation positively and her donation to the Temple can be seen as storing up treasure in heaven (12:34).

It could be that Jesus is, on the one hand, showing the worth of this inexpressibly tiny offering and, at the same time, condemning the value system that motivates the giving of it.³³

³⁰ Zechariah (1:5-23), Simeon and Anna (2:22-38) and Mary and Joseph came to present Jesus there “according to the law of Moses” (2:22-38).

³¹ Lee I. Levine, *Jerusalem* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2002), 247.

³² Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 728; Reid, *Choosing the Better Part*, 195; Addison G. Wright, “The Widow’s Mites: Praise or Lament?—A Matter of Context,” *CBQ* 44 (1982): 256-265, 262.

³³ Chloe Breyer, “The Widow’s Might,” *Journal of Health and Religion* 43 (2004): 123-126, 124.

There can also be some ambiguity in the response of readers who observe a number of layers through the synkrisis. On the one hand, the extratext includes the realisation that the Temple has been destroyed in 70 C.E. and so it is ironic that the widow's donation to the treasury can be seen as a waste. On the other hand, they know that Jesus' death was not a waste and perhaps the dynamic of the woman's gift to the Temple will also result in life, in imitation of that of Jesus.

14.2.2 A Synkrisis between the rich and the poor widow

In the second synkrisis, the needy widow and the rich are first compared by the narrator's reported visual perception of Jesus (21:1-2) and then by the character, Jesus (21:3-4) as they put their contributions into the treasury. First, there is an obvious synkrisis with regard to repetition of vocabulary as the rich put in their gifts and the woman her two small coins. There is a balance in Jesus' final comparison between their contributions.

The person	The origin of the gift	Verb	The gift
οὗτοι	ἐκ τοῦ περισσεύοντος αὐτοῖς	ἔβαλον	εἰς τὰ δῶρα
αὕτη	ἐκ τοῦ ὑστερήματος αὐτῆς	ἔβαλεν	πάντα τὸν βίον

In 21:1-2, the implied author provokes comparison and contrast by the juxtaposition of πλούσιος and χήρα which, as already stated in the exegesis, almost compels a synkrisis. The rich represent a group who have only one characteristic, namely, their wealth while the woman is an individual who, as a needy widow, is one of the poor and oppressed that Jesus mentions in his mission statement (4:18). By calling her a widow, a link is being made with Jesus' earlier teaching on the devouring of widows' houses (20:47). The fact that such

a meagre amount of money is specified, and that it is all that the woman possesses, adds a certain pathos and contrasts with the rich “who merely give out of their superabundance an amount that they themselves hardly notice.”³⁴ Therefore, it is true to say that her “contribution, given in true sacrifice, is to be more highly honoured than the contributions of the rich.”³⁵

The widow and the rich throw their contributions either into one of the thirteen receptacles or into the treasury itself.³⁶ Since some of the receptacles were for donations, then it is possible that they may be freely giving alms.³⁷ Readers of both Jewish and Gentile background are conscious of the importance of almsgiving in their cultures. In the Book of Tobit, Raphael states that while prayer with fasting is good, almsgiving is better than both of them (Tob 12:8).³⁸ Almsgiving, as well as showing concern for the poor, was a means of securing a place in God’s Kingdom.³⁹ Almsgiving was also advocated in pagan literature.⁴⁰ From the outset of the Gospel, the ethos of sharing and generosity is established by John the Baptist’s call to almsgiving and sharing with those in need. (3:10-14).⁴¹

Jesus follows this in his teaching on wealth and possessions when he tells his disciples not to worry about their lives. “For life is more than food and the body more than clothing” (12:22-23). In the parable of the rich fool, he also warns them to be on their

³⁴ Seim, *The Double Message*, 95.

³⁵ Tannehill, *Luke*, 300.

³⁶ Johnson argues that she probably put the money into the “chamber of secrets” which was used for giving money to the poor. Luke Timothy Johnson, *Sharing Possessions*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 18.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 18.

³⁸ Anthony Giambrone O.P., “Friends in Heavenly Habitations” (Luke 16:9): Charity, repentance and Luke’s resurrection reversal,” *RB* 120 (2013): 529-552, 536.

³⁹ James A. Metzger, *Consumption and Wealth in Luke’s Travel Narrative* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 9.

⁴⁰ Dio Chrysostom, in a typically Cynic statement, advocates the reduction of human needs as a means of counteracting covetousness. Abraham J. Malherbe, “The Characterisation of a Topos (Luke 12:13-34),” *NovT* 3 (1996): 123-135, 129.

⁴¹ Metzger, *Consumption and Wealth in Luke’s Travel Narrative*, 13.

guard against all kinds of avarice (12:13-21). Generosity has already been seen in the women who accompanied Jesus, and as a sign of their discipleship, provided for them out of their own possessions (8:1-3). While these women have left everything to follow Jesus, this woman's giving (because she gives her whole life) is even more radical and certainly more radical than the rich who give out of their abundance.⁴² However, readers are faced with uncertainty as they are aware that the widow's contribution is in effect being wasted on a Temple that is soon to be destroyed.

The widow's giving up of her whole life is a reminder of Jesus' teaching on giving up everything to follow him. When people asked to follow Jesus, he insisted that they leave everything, even home and family, as nothing should stand in the way of serving the kingdom of God (9:57-62; 18: 30). This is exemplified by the disciples, who leave everything when Jesus calls them (5:1-11), and the women, who travel with Jesus and provide for him and his entourage (8:1-3). Readers are also aware of Jesus' Passion predictions, as well as his actual own suffering and death (9:21-22, 44; 12:50; 13:32-33; 17:25; 18:31-33), which will involve giving up his whole life just as the widow here has given up hers. However, readers are also left with questions because, while Jesus comments on the widow's behaviour and makes a comparison with the rich, he does not actually commend it (as against 7:50 and 8:48). He does not address the woman directly either to affirm her actions and he does not invite people to follow her example.⁴³ Yet readers are left with the strong impression that the widow, in her giving up of her whole life, embodies Jesus' mission at this crucial time, just before he too will give up his life at the crucifixion. It is also an example of the perfect discipleship that Jesus has already

⁴² Forbes and Harrower, *Raised from Obscurity*, 124.

⁴³ Reid, *Choosing the Better Part*, 196.

demanded when he tells them to take up their cross daily (9:23; 14:27), to give up all their possessions (14:33) and even to lose their own lives for his sake (17:33).

While the widow is a character in this story, Jesus sees her from a distance rather than communicating directly with her, and this distance lends a parabolic feel to the story which in turn lends itself to the possibility of more than one interpretation of the incident.

14.3 Summary

This pericope is very different to all the other encounters that Jesus has had with women in his adult ministry. Jesus observes the widow and comments on her actions, but he does not interact with her. Jesus has already healed (4:38-39; 8:1-3; 8:40-56; 13:10-17), spoken to (7:11-17; 7:36-50; 13:10-17) and had recorded conversations with different women (8:40-56; 10:38-42). Here the woman is treated as an example to the disciples and all the people who are listening to his teaching. This does not in any way lessen the importance of the woman or this pericope. It is a very challenging story as readers are obliged to examine it from a number of different angles, to make different synkrisis and to see different possibilities suggested by the implied author, narrator and the character, Jesus.

The first synkrisis once again reveals Jesus' outreach to the poor and marginalised which has been a consistent theme of his ministry and is modelled by his support for the widow and his criticism of the scribes and Temple authorities. At this stage in the Gospel, however, where Jesus is concerned, the second synkrisis is even more apt as readers anticipate his imminent death. The woman, by giving her whole life (*βίος*) anticipates the giving up of his whole life, which Jesus will accomplish shortly after his arrival in Jerusalem. The fact that it is situated in the Temple, the place of sacrifice, adds further to

this. For readers, their knowledge that the Temple is soon to be destroyed as well as the fact that Jesus is in his last few days before the crucifixion adds further to the pathos.

While the male disciples gave up home, family and livelihood to follow Jesus (5:1-11) and the women disciples took on a peripatetic lifestyle and supported Jesus and his followers out of their own resources (8:1-3), this woman goes further and gives up her whole life. As well as being the best example of discipleship in the Gospel, she also gives the most comprehensive preview of Jesus' giving of his whole life.

Chapter 15: Exegesis of 23:26-31 (Jesus meets the women on the way to Calvary)

Immediately after Pilate has acceded to the demands of the chief priests, the leaders and the people, Jesus is taken away to be crucified. The only people that he speaks to on the journey are a group of women. Readers are very aware of the tension in the situation and the certainty that Jesus is going to his death.

15.1 A sequential reading of the pericope

As Jesus is lead away (*ἀπάγω* implying that he is under the control of others) to the place called the Skull (23:33), the narrator explains that a man is forced to carry Jesus' cross. As the condemned normally carried their own crosses, it probably indicates that Jesus is already weak and must be kept alive to undergo the very public "ignominious death" of crucifixion.¹

The man is named as Simon from Cyrene, which contains a large Jewish population (Acts 2:10; 6:9). Simon may be a Jew from the diaspora who now lives in Palestine or he may have come on pilgrimage to Jerusalem.² He is coming *ἀπ'ἀγροῦ* (from the country or from the fields) and this is a second reason to believe that he is an outsider and therefore has not been with the crowd that demanded that Pilate crucify Jesus (23:13-25).³ He plays a very passive role as 'they' seize (*ἐπιλαμβάνομαι*) Simon and "they lay the cross on him so

¹ Michael F. Patella, *The Gospel according to Luke*, New Collegeville Bible Commentary (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005), 147.

² Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 814.

³ Wolter, *The Gospel According to Luke Volume II*, 519.

that he will carry it.”⁴ While it seems that both he and Jesus are very passive, the narrator now points out that he carries the cross behind (*ὀπισθεν*) Jesus, in the manner of a disciple following him. This is a discipleship theme and it evokes Jesus’ teaching (9:23; 14:27) where carrying the cross is an intrinsic part of discipleship.⁵ While Simon’s action is an example of that discipleship, he has been forced into following Jesus with the cross and there is no direct indication that he himself is a disciple.⁶ Wolter’s insight is worth noting that he carries *Jesus’* cross and not his own.⁷ It is also noticeable that an outsider is carrying the cross and Jesus’ own disciples, who have been taught about what following him entails, are absent.⁸

The concept of following, and its connection with discipleship, is repeated once again as the narrator states that a great number of people (*λαός*), including women, follow (*ἀκολουθέω*) Jesus. The last time *λαός* was mentioned was when Pilate called them together with the chief priests and leaders to say that he did not find Jesus guilty of any charges, but they joined with the leaders in demanding Jesus’ death (23:13-25). As the crowd follow Jesus to the place of crucifixion they may simply want to see the spectacle unfold. The women, on the other hand, are following Jesus in procession as if he is a martyr going to his death⁹ and, by their actions, are anticipating Jesus’ death.¹⁰

The focus is on the large group of women who are lamenting for Jesus (23:27). The narrator’s description draws on the emotions of readers with the physical beating of breasts

⁴ Francois Bovon, *Luke 3*, Hermeneia, trans. James Crouch (Philadelphia: Fortress, 2012), 299.

⁵ Brian K. Blount, “A Socio-Rhetorical Analysis of Simon of Cyrene: Mark 15:21 and its Parallels,” *Semeia* 64 (1993): 171-198, 189; Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 813; Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 374.

⁶ Marion L. Soards, “Tradition, Composition, and Theology in Jesus’ Speech to the “Daughters of Jerusalem” (Luke 23,26-32), *Bib* 68 (1987): 221-244, 227.

⁷ Wolter, *The Gospel According to Luke Volume II*, 519. Italics are author’s emphasis.

⁸ Blount, “A Socio-Rhetorical Analysis of Simon of Cyrene,” 195.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 191.

¹⁰ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 815.

happening alongside the audible wailing.¹¹ The suggestion is that they are not professional mourners, but genuinely upset as they follow Jesus.¹² Beating of breasts as a sign of sorrow has already been seen at the death of the daughter of Jairus (8:52) and when, in the parable, the tax collector as a mark of contrition, beat his breast to ask God for mercy (18:13). While lamenting is described frequently in Old Testament passages,¹³ readers have already heard Jesus use it in his description of those who rejected his message as well as that of John the Baptist (7:32), and when he lamented over the destruction of Jerusalem and longed to protect her people (13:34) and now he himself is being rejected as he journeys to his death. The lament over Jerusalem is ominous given that readers know of its destruction in 70 CE. For the characters within the story, Jesus is giving advance warning, a prophecy in fact, of the destruction that is to come. The mourning and lamenting of the women evokes Zechariah where it states, “when they look on the one whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn” (Zech 12:10-14). The mourning of the women forms a link between Jesus’ suffering as the firstborn and only child of the Father and their situation as mothers when they will soon be lamenting the suffering of their own children.

Jesus, who has seemed passive and subservient up to this, takes control of the situation. It is obvious from now on that “though he is led by others he is still in command of himself and those who follow him.”¹⁴ He turns and addresses the women. Jesus is the only subject of the verb, *στρέφω*, in the Gospel and “while Luke’s mention of Jesus turning per se may not communicate an act of significance, the turning sets up activity that seems

¹¹ Bovon, *Luke 3*, 301.

¹² Dowling, *Taking away the Pound*, 171.

¹³ Judg 11:40; Joel 1:5, 8; Zech 1:11; Lam 1:1; Ezek 8:14.

¹⁴ Soards, “Tradition, Composition, and Theology,” 242.

to be profoundly important.”¹⁵ Luke uses it six other times in the Gospel: commenting on great faith (7:9; 44), teaching on how disciples should behave (9:55, 10:23, 14:25) and finally, when he turns to Peter after he has betrayed him and Peter realises what he has done (22:61). Peter goes away and weeps bitterly, which contrasts him with the women who wail but continue to follow Jesus on his journey to the crucifixion.

In describing the women as “daughters of Jerusalem,” the term “daughter” is a reminder of the two very positive situations when Jesus addresses women in this way: the woman with the haemorrhage who is cured and her faith is commended (8:48) and the healing of the woman who is bent over in the synagogue and is then described as a daughter of Abraham and therefore a member of the covenant community (13:16). There are also pointers to the death and resurrection in the haemorrhaging woman spending her whole life and the woman who was bent over in the synagogue being liberated from Satan’s grip and raised up straight as a member of the covenant people. Here, the daughters of Jerusalem lament as Jesus goes to his death.

In the LXX, the term ‘daughters of Jerusalem’ or ‘daughters of Zion’ is frequently used for the whole people of Israel. In many cases, it speaks of salvation and deliverance for the people of Israel,¹⁶ but there are also criticisms of the people who turn away from Yahweh.¹⁷ The women, by their expression of grief, show that they are the faithful ones. The term ‘daughters of Jerusalem’ is used in a very specific way in the Song of Songs where the lover calls on them to witness to the love that is being expressed (Song 1:5; 2:7; 3:5, 10; 5:8, 16; 8:4). The group of women here, like a Greek chorus, are also looking on and by their lamenting, commenting on what they see. For readers, they are a reminder of

¹⁵ Soards, “Tradition, Composition, and Theology,” 231.

¹⁶ Ps 9:14; Isa 16:1; 37:22; 52:2; 62:11; Mic 4:8, 10; Zeph 3:14; Zech 2:10; 9:9.

¹⁷ Mic 1:13,

Jesus' death and resurrection and the love that he shows. On the other hand, the narrator is also being ironic as the chorus of women in the Song of Songs could be attendants to the king, and Pilate has asked Jesus if he is a king just before he condemns him to death (23:3).¹⁸

Jesus' reply to the women's lamenting is to tell them not to weep. He made that same comment to the widow of Nain (7:13) and at the death of the daughter of Jairus (8:52). In both situations, readers know that the person was resuscitated, an intimation of the resurrection that is to come. There is a chiasmic structure¹⁹ to Jesus' response as he moves the focus from his suffering to the impending suffering of the women and their children: *μὴ κλαίετε ἐπ' ἐμέ· πλὴν ἐφ' ἑαυτὰς κλαίετε καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ τέκνα ὑμῶν*. Instead of weeping for Jesus, the women are commanded to weep for themselves and their children. Jesus already spoke a lament for Jerusalem (13:34) and then wept over it when he entered the city and gave the second prediction of its fall (19:41-44). "They will crush you to the ground, you and your children within you" (19:44) is a reminder of what is to happen as he instructs the women to turn their tears away from him to the tragedy that is about to effect them and their children.²⁰

Jesus' explanation is in the form of eschatological language introduced by the phrase "for the days are surely coming," which was frequently used in the Old Testament for prophetic announcements.²¹ He then pronounces a blessing on women who are barren

¹⁸ Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, 1137.

¹⁹ Bovon, *Luke 3*, 302.

²⁰ Donald Senior C.P., *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1989), 126.

²¹ "1 Sam 2:31; 2 Kgs 20:17; Amos 4:2; 8:11; 9:31; Isa 39:6; Jer 7:32; 9:24; Zech 14:1" Wolter, *The Gospel According to Luke Volume II*, 522.

that is a parody of the traditional beatitude.²² While it uses very similar language to the beatitude of the woman from the crowd who calls out to Jesus (11:27), it is a complete reversal of that blessing. This reversal has already been anticipated when he foretells the destruction of Jerusalem and pronounces a woe on those who are pregnant and nursing infants (21:23).

Blessings				
11:27	μακαρία		ἡ κοιλία ἢ βαστάσασά σε	μαστοὶ οὖς ἐθήλασας.
23:29	μακάριαι	αἱ στεῖραι	αἱ κοιλίαι αἱ οὐκ ἐγέννησαν	μαστοὶ οἱ οὐκ ἔθρεψαν
Woe				
21:23	οὐαὶ		ταῖς ἐν γαστρὶ ἐχούσαις καὶ ταῖς θηλαζούσαις ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμέραις	

The woman of 11:27 blessed the mother of Jesus who bore and nursed him. In this section, Jesus blesses those who are barren and cannot bear a child or nurse it, something that is the complete antithesis of traditional beliefs, found not only in the Old Testament but also in the new.

Sterility and barrenness are classic expressions of failure and of God's disfavour rather than blessing (Gen 15:2; 16:1-6; 1 Sam1: 2-11; Luke 1:25). For a tradition in which having children is the quintessential blessing of God (Gen 15:5; Deut 30:5-10) a situation in which the barren are blessed is indeed grievous.²³

Like the woman of 11:27, Jesus corrects the women here. In the first case, he tells the woman that hearing the word of God and keeping it is more important than being his biological mother, but in this instance he tells the women to weep for themselves and their children because of the dreadful situation that is about to happen, which is so bad that a

²² Ibid., 522.

²³ Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 373.

woe is spoken on those who are pregnant or nursing infants (21:23). There are times in the Old Testament when God blesses the childless woman because she is faithful to the covenant (Isa 54:1), but her reward is usually in the form of children.²⁴ Here however the catastrophe is going to be so great that the blessing is for those who are childless. The most harrowing part of this reverse beatitude is that “although he does pronounce a blessing for the childless, Jesus does not make any promise of future fertility.”²⁵ Jesus follows by quoting almost directly from Hosea 10:8 (but the verbs are reversed).

Hosea 10:8	καὶ ἐροῦσιν τοῖς ὄρεσιν καλύψατε ἡμᾶς καὶ τοῖς βουνοῖς πέσατε ἐφ’ ἡμᾶς They shall say to the mountains, Cover us, and to the hills, Fall on us.
Luke 23:30	τότε ἄρξονται λέγειν τοῖς ὄρεσιν· πέσατε ἐφ’ ἡμᾶς, καὶ τοῖς βουνοῖς· καλύψατε ἡμᾶς· Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us'; and to the hills, 'Cover us.'

Hosea was describing a time of apostasy, which was followed by the exile of Israel and Jesus predicts that the same suffering will befall the people once again. While readers are aware that Jesus has given three warnings about the destruction that is to come in Jerusalem (13:34-35; 19:41-44; 21:20-24) and that he is here pointing to a terrible fate, readers know the reality of that destruction, including that of the Temple, and realise how catastrophic it has been.

The proverb at the end of this pericope continues the theme of desolation and draws once again on Hosea who refers to Ephraim’s root being dried up as a symbol of the coming time of barrenness and judgement (Hos 9:16).²⁶ Similarly, Jesus is speaking of the green wood of the present time in comparison with the dry of the future. This is another

²⁴ Brant J. Pitre, “Blessing the Barren and Warning the Fecund: Jesus’ Message for Women concerning Pregnancy and Childbirth,” *JSNT* 21 (2001): 59-80, 64.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 65.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 71.

reminder of the fall of Jerusalem, but blame is not being attached to the women as, even though he has been speaking directly to the women, Jesus has been employing the third person plural rather than the second person in his description of the things to come and is therefore relating to the women as victims of the future devastation.²⁷

15.2 An analysis of the female character in her interaction with other characters

15.2.1 The women and Jesus

The first time that the women are mentioned is when they follow Jesus and actively mourn and lament for him. The use of the verb ἀκολουθέω leaves readers wondering about whether or not they are disciples following Jesus or merely part of the crowd who want to see the execution. Jesus turns to the women, which implies that he is going to make a significant statement, and then completely reverses their understanding of what is happening. Instead of being the victim and receiving their expressions of grief, he shows compassion for the women, but also corrects them as he tells them to mourn for themselves and their children.²⁸ By negating what was the most important role for women in Second Temple Judaism and blessing instead those who are barren, and unable to bear children or nurse them, he presents a future that is frightening. The weeping of the women is a reminder that Jesus too wept over the city of Jerusalem when he first arrived (19:41), and the connection with the women reiterates the fact that the destruction of Jerusalem will be particularly hard on women and children.²⁹

²⁷ Seim, *The Double Message*, 207.

²⁸ Dowling, *Taking away the Pound*, 172.

²⁹ Tannehill, *Luke*, 339.

Jesus continues on his journey, but there is no mention of the women's reaction to his address to them. However, it is likely that they too continue on the way and are part of the crowd who watch the crucifixion (23:35) – as distinct from the leaders who scoff – and are among those who afterwards return home beating their breasts (23:48), a repetition of their mourning when they first see him on the road to his death (23:27).

15.3 A Synkrisis of the male-female pairings

15.3.1 The women and the crowd

A synkrisis can be made between the women and the crowd (23:13-23) that are described as part of the great number that is following Jesus and both are probably Judeans.

Previous to this, the crowd (*λαός*) is mentioned when Pilate calls them together along with the priests and leaders of the people to tell them that he has not found Jesus guilty of any of their charges (23:13). Since *λαός* also has the connotation of the whole people of Israel, then the narrator is hinting that this is a representative group. When they react by demanding Jesus' death, the use of *παμπληθείς*³⁰ implies that the whole group responds and therefore, have all turned against him.³¹ This is the opposite to all the previous mentions of *λαός* where the people have been amazed by Jesus' words and actions, have responded by glorifying God and have prevented the leaders from harming Jesus (3:15; 7:16; 7:29; 18:43; 19:48; 20:6, 19; 21:38; 22:2). The threefold response to Pilate, once demanding that Jesus be taken away (23:18) and twice that he should be crucified (23:21, 23) grows in intensity.

³⁰ This is a *hapax legomenon* in the New Testament but implies the whole people. Bovon, *Luke 3*, 282.

³¹ Wolter, *The Gospel According to Luke Volume II*, 513.

The Jews and their leaders “shouted out together” (v 18) and “kept shouting” (v 21), “urgently demanding with loud shouts” (v 23) until “their voices prevailed” (v 23).³²

The antagonism towards Jesus is also evident. “The Greek αἶρε is both vulgar and violent” (23:18).³³ As Jesus journeys to the place of execution, this crowd (λαός) is once again described as following him. It probably includes some of those who called for his death, but they are silent now and there is no mention of antagonism or of any other reaction. Some of them may simply be part of the large crowds that often attended crucifixions to see the actual spectacle.

While the women are described as being among this main group who are following Jesus to the place of crucifixion, they are treated separately. They, too, are loud in their response to Jesus, but in contrast to the main group, they mourn for Jesus by beating their breasts and wailing (23:27). Although part of the crowd, the narrator singles them out as lamenting Jesus’ death. There is no communication between Jesus and the crowd and to emphasise this, the narrator makes a point of saying that Jesus turns to the women (αὐτὰς) only and addresses them directly. Even though the main crowd has been called by the term for the people of Israel, it is the women as ‘daughters of Jerusalem’ whom Jesus considers as the representative group here.

15.3.2 The Women and Simon of Cyrene

A synkrisis is also established between Simon of Cyrene and the women who lament in this passage. With regard to similarities, both meet Jesus on the road to his crucifixion and both support him in their own way; Simon, by carrying the cross behind

³² Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 807.

³³ Bovon, *Luke 3*, 282.

him, and the women by beating their breasts and by their tears. Neither of them speaks to Jesus directly but both express their connection with him by their actions.

The most important comparison is in the concept of following Jesus. While Simon is seized from the crowd and the cross is laid on him, he carries it behind (*ὑπισθεν*) Jesus, a position suggestive of discipleship. The women are described as following (*ἀκολουθέω*) Jesus. While this verb has been used simply for ‘following’ as in the case of the crowd following Jesus to his execution, it is also used for the calls of the first disciples at the lake of Gennesaret (5:11), the call of Levi (5:27-28) and the discipleship of the blind man near Jericho who on being healed immediately followed Jesus, glorifying God (18:43). Jesus’ teaching about discipleship also uses *ἀκολουθέω* to describe the necessity of taking up one’s cross daily as part of that discipleship (9:23, 14:27) and the sacrifices involved in discipleship and following Jesus (9:57- 62; 18:22, 28). However, the narrator is ambiguous about Simon’s discipleship.³⁴ While Simon’s support for Jesus seems involuntary, the situation of the women is also ambiguous as there is no clarity about what their following means and whether it implies discipleship or simply concern about the condemned man.

There are also contrasts between Simon and the women. Simon is an individual character while the women are treated as a group character and no individuals are identified. While Simon is a Jew of the diaspora, who has come from Cyrene, the women are described as daughters of Jerusalem. So a clear contrast is being made between the outsider and the Jerusalem community.³⁵ Simon has come from the country and so seems to be an innocent bystander who has not been involved in the condemnation of Jesus. The

³⁴ *ἐπιλαμβάνομαι* signifies “grasping or taking hold of (sometimes with violence)” and also “to arrest” and therefore presumes an unwillingness on Simon’s part to carry the cross. BDAG, 374.

³⁵ Blount, “A Socio-Rhetorical Analysis of Simon of Cyrene, 195.

women are described as being with the “great multitude of people” that follows Jesus as he carries his cross but this same word (*λαός*) is used of the group who were with the elders of the people and the priests when they called for Jesus to be crucified. However, the fact that they lament and beat their breasts implies that they are “a segment of Jews who are not disciples of Jesus but are touched by his suffering and death.”³⁶

Jesus does not speak to Simon, and even though Simon is carrying the cross because Jesus is not physically able, Simon is still led by Jesus as he carries the cross behind him. On the other hand, the women first cry out to Jesus as they bemoan his suffering, but he immediately reverses that and “demonstrates the equanimity of one who knows that he dies in accordance with God’s plan.”³⁷ He addresses the women and he directs them to turn their lamenting to themselves and their children. His apocalyptic teaching moves beyond the women to foretell the destruction of Jerusalem.

The synkrisis is focused very much on the concept of following Jesus, from the involuntary following of Simon, with terminology suggestive of discipleship, to the possible discipleship of the women who follow and lament Jesus on his way to the place of execution. It poses the question for readers as to whether they will take up the cross and follow the journey of Jesus to his crucifixion.

15.4 Summary

These women are the second grouping of women that appear in Luke’s Gospel. The first group from Galilee travel with Jesus and the twelve, listen to him and learn about the kingdom of God and some of them support the group out of their own resources (8:1-3).

³⁶ Raymond E. Brown, “The Passion according to Luke,” *Worship* 60 (1986): 2-9, 7.

³⁷ Soards, “Tradition, Composition, and Theology,” 242.

This group of women are ‘daughters of Jerusalem’ and so are local women who follow Jesus on his way to his death. All of Israel is symbolically represented by these two groups; the earlier group represent Galilee and the women in this pericope Jerusalem/Judea. Jesus tells these women to weep for themselves and their children, indicating that they have family obligations, which is not true of all of the women who have come from Galilee.³⁸ They call out to Jesus like the woman of 11:27, and while Jesus reconfigures the women’s speech in both situations, it is for very different reasons. Earlier he emphasised hearing and keeping the word before any biological motherhood (11:27) while here, Jesus redirects the women’s mourning to themselves because of the catastrophe that is about to take place.³⁹ Against all traditional blessings, it is better to be barren than to bear children in the time that is to come. This is an apocalyptic message for the hearers within the text as it predicts not only the destruction of Jerusalem, but the effect that this will have on the women and their children. Readers know of that devastation and can appreciate the women’s weeping even more than those within the narrative. They realise that the destruction of Jerusalem will be life-changing not only for the women and children, but for all the people of Israel. However, they also know the story of Jesus’ passion, power over death, and resurrection which means that they view the present situation through a different lens.

While the terminology of discipleship is used in this pericope, there is no overt teaching and there is an ambiguity about both Simon and the women as to whether or not they are disciples. The women follow Jesus on the road to the crucifixion, but Jesus reverses their weeping for him to ask them instead to concentrate on their own situation. This is not in the form of a beatitude for their mourning (6:21), but takes instead a form of

³⁸ Seim, *The Double Message*, 206.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 205.

‘reverse beatitude’ (23:29). If they are to follow Jesus, then it must be built very much on Jesus’ various teachings on discipleship and carrying their own crosses through the difficulties that are soon to be theirs (9:23; 14:26-27).

When Jesus meets Simon’s mother-in-law, the first woman that he encounters in his adult ministry (4:38-39), the picture that is painted of him is of his authority as he stands over the woman’s illness and rebukes it. As he journeys to his death (23:26-31), it seems at first as if he is completely helpless and even needs a stranger to help him carry his cross. However, when he meets the women, this soon changes. When they are lamenting for him, he takes control of the encounter to show compassion for them and warn them of the future that lies in store for them. As he journeys willingly to the crucifixion, he remains calmly in control.

Chapter 16: Exegesis of 23:49; 55-56; 24:1-12 (Women in the Tomb and Resurrection Narratives)

Rather than appear in one contained pericope, the women disciples are mentioned periodically following the death of Jesus as the narrative develops, giving the impression of their largely continuous presence. First mentioned during the Galilean Ministry (8:1-3), they emerge as a line of continuity from Jesus' Galilean ministry to the Passion and Resurrection.

16.1 A sequential reading of the women disciples in the passion and resurrection narratives

The women first appear after the crucifixion and death of Jesus (23:49) when they appear last in a series of reactions to Jesus' death. In what can be seen as typical of Luke's use of reversal, the centurion, who is an outsider and Gentile, is the first to comment on Jesus (23:47). He recognises that Jesus is a righteous (*δίκαιος*) man like Elizabeth and Zechariah (1:6) and Simeon (2:25) in the Infancy Narrative. The crowd, which has been wavering between calling for Jesus' death in support of the chief priests and leaders (23:18-23) and following him on the road to his crucifixion (23:27), are now seen in a more positive light as they return home beating their breasts. Finally, his acquaintances and the women are described as being there.

Luke uses the term acquaintances (*γνωστός*) for only the second time in the Gospel, having already used it to refer to those who were travelling in the convoy with Joseph and Mary on the journey back to Nazareth when they discovered that Jesus was not with them

(2:44). Many commentators¹ consider that it refers to Jesus' male disciples, but it is a term that has never been used about them at any stage. They appear and almost immediately disappear and that term is not mentioned again.² They may be onlookers who have some contact with Jesus and his ministry or fellow travellers from Galilee (like those in the convoy with Joseph and Mary as they travelled from Jerusalem to Galilee). However, πάντες οἱ γνωστοί is a very inclusive term and allows for the possibility of some disciples and apostles being present. They stand at a distance, which keeps them both physically and psychologically back from the actual crucifixion. The narrator says nothing of their inner response and this further distances them from what is happening.³ Readers remember that the last person who is described as ἀπὸ μακρόθεν is Peter who “followed at a distance” when Jesus was seized and lead away (22:54) and they are also reminded that Peter “denied Jesus when his own life was threatened.”⁴ The distance evokes two Psalms of Lament (Psa 38:11; 88:8) where “the suffering righteous one complains” because of the distance of his friends and companions in his affliction.⁵ So this physical distance hints at a “weakened discipleship that is unwilling to identify too closely with Jesus in his humiliation and death.”⁶

Among those known to Jesus, a group of women is specifically mentioned, also at a distance. They have accompanied Jesus from Galilee and, along with the Twelve, travelled with Jesus as he preached and proclaimed the good news of the Kingdom of God and many of them supported them out of their own resources (8:1-3). The feminine participle of

¹ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 828; Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 383; Senior, *The Passion of Jesus*, 148.

² Claudia Setzer, “Excellent Women: Female witness to the Resurrection,” *JBL* 116 (1997): 259-272, 265.

³ Mark Coleridge, “You are witnesses” (Luke 24:48). Who sees what in Luke,” *ABR* 6 (1997): 1-19, 5.

⁴ Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts Vol 1*, 272.

⁵ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 828; Wolter, *The Gospel According to Luke Volume II*, 533.

⁶ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 828.

συνακολουθέω here indicates that the women have been faithful in their following of Jesus all the way from Galilee.⁷ Setzer argues that the actual verb means ‘accompanied’ rather than ‘followed’ thus giving a weaker sense of discipleship,⁸ but the prefix ‘συν’ intensifies their association with Jesus and “has the connotation of being a disciple.”⁹ While the women as well as the acquaintances are described as standing at the crucifixion, the feminine of the participle of ὁράω indicates that only the women are noted as watching. The present participle emphasises the continuity of the action and the women’s desire to see what is happening.¹⁰ They are willing eyewitnesses to this event.¹¹

Women are next mentioned as being present at the tomb (23:55-56) with a reminder again from the narrator that they have come with (συνέρχονται) Jesus from Galilee, thus emphasising that they are among the same women who watched at the cross. The journey from the place of the crucifixion to the tomb is narrated twice, once with Joseph of Arimathea as the central figure (23:52-53) and secondly, as seen through the actions of the women (23:55).¹² The two descriptions are separated by a narrative aside that, by emphasising the beginning of the Sabbath, tells readers that both Joseph and the women are faithful Jews who keep the Mosaic Law.¹³ The women follow (the prefix *κατα* in the compound verb *κατακολουθέω* has that sense of ‘after’ or ‘behind’) and it is important to note they are the only members of Jesus’ disciples who follow on the final stage of his passion journey.¹⁴

⁷ Seim, *The Double Message*, 148.

⁸ Setzer, “Excellent Women,” 265.

⁹ BDAG, 964.

¹⁰ Bovon, *Luke 3*, 329.

¹¹ Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 383.

¹² Wolter, *The Gospel According to Luke Volume II*, 537.

¹³ Coleridge, “You are witnesses,” 6.

¹⁴ Tannehill, *Luke*, 348.

In a similar way to their watching at the cross, the women ‘see’ (θεάομαι)¹⁵ the tomb. However, unlike 23:49, the verb used here “is not a simple look but an exact observation or a sustained contemplating,” and so, the intensity of their observation has increased.¹⁶ They look at where the body is placed. Readers, knowing the configuration of a tomb hewn out of rock, would realise that the burial chamber would have a central area surrounded by spaces carved into the rock along the sides. This central area would have enough space to allow a number of people stand while preparing the corpse for burial.¹⁷ So, in order to see where and how the body is placed, these women have moved from standing at a distance at the cross (23:49) to following behind Joseph to the tomb, to noting at close quarters, quite likely inside the tomb itself, the position of Jesus’ body.

How the body is laid indicates to the women that the preparation of the body for interment has not been completed and so they return to prepare spices and ointments to complete the process.¹⁸ By resting on the Sabbath, they obey the Law of Moses. Ironically, readers, knowing that Jesus will have risen from the dead, realise that their work of preparation is completely unnecessary and also that the women have no intimation of the resurrection. As the scene ends, as at the crucifixion, the women are the last to be mentioned. The burial account ends with them intently observing all that has happened.¹⁹ However, this is purely external and there is no description of their reaction to what has

¹⁵ “to have an intent look at something, to perceive something above and beyond what is merely seen with the eye” BDAG, 445.

¹⁶ Bovon, *Luke 3*, 334.

¹⁷ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 830.

¹⁸ Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, 1166.

¹⁹ Senior, *The Passion of Jesus*, 152.

happened.²⁰ During the Sabbath rest, the focus remains on the women who prepare the spices.

Since the narrator wants to maintain the link between the women at the burial and the women who go to the tomb,²¹ the preparation of spices is once again mentioned and the feminine participle of φέρω is a reminder that this is a group of women. The women are familiar with the layout of the tomb and the position of the body and so they know exactly where to look.²² As the narrative develops, the women come more and more into the frame, from watching at a distance, to following Joseph of Arimathea to now being the first people to enter the empty tomb to investigate. The double use of the verb εὑρίσκω and the balance in the sentence emphasise the fact that even though they find the stone rolled away, they do not find the body.²³ By describing it as the body *of the Lord Jesus* (24:3), the narrator gives the first hint “of the new status of the risen Jesus” and his connection with the power of God.²⁴ Readers, who are given information through the narrator’s commentary that the women do not have, understand the terms ‘body’ (which is semantically ambiguous indicating either living body or cadaver/corpse) and ‘Lord Jesus’ in the context of the resurrection while the women, because of their lack of comprehension, are simply perplexed by the empty tomb.

The sudden appearance of the two men in dazzling clothes causes the women to recognise a heavenly presence and to react with fear²⁵ and bow their heads in respect.²⁶

²⁰ Coleridge, “You are witnesses,” 7.

²¹ Seim, *The Double Message*, 149.

²² Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 386.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ While this is not found in all texts, Marshall contends that since it is in the Alexandrian text it is probably true. Marshall. *Commentary on Luke*, 884.

²⁵ Like Zechariah (1:12), Mary (1:29-30), shepherds (2:9)

²⁶ Matteo Crimella, “The Transformation of Characters in Luke 24: A narrative investigation,” *RB* 119 (2012): 173-185, 175.

The narrator calls them two men, but like the women, readers are likely to conclude that they are heavenly messengers. The pair evokes two other men in dazzling clothes, Moses and Elijah, in glory at the Transfiguration (9:30-31) who discussed with Jesus his departure from Jerusalem, a departure that is being fulfilled through Jesus' death and resurrection.²⁷ The two men pose a question that begins to correct the women's misconception that Jesus is dead and move instead to join the implied reader in the belief that he is alive.²⁸ It is in the form of a rebuke and recalls Jesus' reply to the Sadducees that "he is God not of the dead, but of the living; for to him all of them are alive" (20:38).²⁹ The men continue by giving the women a resumé of a number of the passion predictions that Jesus gave in Galilee.³⁰ There are slight variations that show that their account is after the Passion rather than before, for example, the use of the term "crucified" in place of "killed" and calling those responsible "sinners."³¹ However, the accounts are remarkably similar. In fact, "the words of Jesus himself provide the interpretive key to his absence among the dead."³²

Verse	Comparison of Passion Predictions and Proclamation at Tomb
9:22	εἰπὼν ὅτι δεῖ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου πολλὰ παθεῖν καὶ ἀποδοκιμασθῆναι ἀπὸ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων καὶ ἀρχιερέων καὶ γραμματέων καὶ ἀποκτανθῆναι καὶ τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ ἐγερθῆναι.
9:44	θέσθε ὑμεῖς εἰς τὰ ὦτα ὑμῶν τοὺς λόγους τούτους· ὁ γὰρ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου μέλλει παραδίδοσθαι εἰς χεῖρας ἀνθρώπων.
24:7	λέγων τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ὅτι δεῖ παραδοθῆναι εἰς χεῖρας ἀνθρώπων ἀμαρτωλῶν καὶ σταυρωθῆναι καὶ τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ ἀναστῆναι.

²⁷ Luke Timothy Johnson, "Luke 24:1-11," *Int* 46 (1992): 57-61, 59.

²⁸ Deborah Thompson Prince, "Why do you Seek the Living among the Dead?" Rhetorical questions in the Lukan Resurrection Narrative," *JBL* 135 (2016): 123-139, 134.

²⁹ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 837.

³⁰ See 9:22, 44; 18:32-33

³¹ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 838.

³² Johnson, "Luke 24:1-11," 60. Author's emphasis in italics.

The women are asked to remember (μιμνήσκειν) what Jesus told them (24:6) and they remember his words (24:8). The verb implies more than simply memory as it brings the event to mind in the present.³³ Every time the verb is used in Luke-Acts, it is always associated with God or Jesus.³⁴

By remembering Jesus' words, those who did not find the Jesus they were seeking (the body of a dead person) discover something much deeper, which does not so much lead them to the tomb as to the encounter with the one who is alive (24:5).³⁵

This remembrance also shows a different aspect of the women's role within the Gospel. The two men assume that the women were present in Galilee when Jesus predicted his passion death and resurrection. Their direct speech ("remember how he told you when he was still in Galilee" [24:6]) addresses the women directly using an emphatic 'you' (ὁμοῖν).³⁶ The women had been present with Jesus along with the twelve (8:1-3), but then their participation was "obscured"³⁷ as the passion predictions were made to "the disciples" (9:21-22, 44) and the impression could be given that these were male disciples. However, the clear statement: "they remembered his words" shows that this is an analepsis and implied readers are only now being explicitly told that the women were part of the group of disciples who were regularly with Jesus in Galilee.³⁸ Furthermore, it indicates **their presence for Jesus' key/central teaching**. This surprising information causes readers to re-evaluate the role of the women in the Gospel. They now realise that they,

³³ "The meaning of this key Lucan and OT word ('remember') should not be watered down and taken to mean the mere recollection of the content of a previous conversation. Remembering is bringing to bear in the present, with power and new and deepened insight, the meaning of past actions and works in salvation history." Robert J. Karris, "The Gospel according to Luke," in *NJBC*, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer and Roland E. Murphy (London: Burns and Oates, 1995), 675-721, 720.

³⁴ Luke 1:54, 72; 16:25; 23:42; 24:6,8; Acts 10:31; 11:16. Maria-Luisa Rigato, "'Remember' ... Then they remembered": Luke 24.6-8," in Levine and Bickerstaff, *A Feminist Companion to Luke*, 269-280, 270.

³⁵ Crimella, "The Transformation of Characters in Luke 24," 178.

³⁶ Rigato, "'Remember' ... Then they remembered'," 272.

³⁷ Setzer, "Excellent Women," 262.

³⁸ Bovon, *Luke 3*, 351; Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 838; Robert J. Karris, "Women and Discipleship in Luke," *CBQ* 56 (1994): 1-20, 10. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 388.

along with the male disciples, have travelled with Jesus, listened to him as he preached and taught the kingdom of God and been schooled by him in discipleship and been prepared for his death and resurrection.

The women then ‘return’ thus showing that they are part of the “eleven and all the rest” (24:9) who are gathered together. Moreover, they proclaim all this, telling the whole story of what happened.³⁹ Their message is very comprehensive as it includes the empty tomb, the message of the men and the remembering of Jesus’ words. Furthermore, even though they have not been commissioned to deliver the message to the others, they do it on their own initiative.⁴⁰ The imperfect of λέγω implies that the women tell their story repeatedly. However, despite the fact that the narrator states twice that they told their story, their direct speech is not given.

By ‘sandwiching’ the names of the women who deliver the message (24:10a) between the descriptions of the audience of the eleven and the rest (24:9) and the apostles (24:10b), the importance of the women as messengers is emphasised. Readers recognise two of the three named women (Mary Magdalene and Joanna) as “exemplary disciples”⁴¹ who travelled with Jesus in Galilee (8:1-3) and here as well as then, they are joined by a further group of unnamed women. Susanna may be there, even though she is not named, but she has already been a type of the innocent one who was condemned to death but ultimately saved (8:2-3).

A parallel can be drawn between the groups of men and women and the pre-eminence of the leaders can also be seen.

³⁹ Rigato, “‘Remember’...’Then they remembered’,” 279.

⁴⁰ Dowling, *Taking away the Pound*, 174.

⁴¹ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 839.

	Women	Men
Leaders	Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary, the Mother of James	The Eleven/ Apostles
Others	The other women	All the rest

First, the narrator describes the dismissal of the women’s story by the male disciples. The use of the word *λῆρος* is particularly “condescending”⁴² as it was used as a medical term for “the confused speech of delirious people ill with fever.”⁴³ However, the women give a full witness to what happened at the tomb. They have told everything (*ταῦτα πάντα*), which shows that what they say is trustworthy and reliable.⁴⁴ There are enough women present to fulfil the need for at least two witnesses (Deut 19:15). Immediately after giving their testimony, three women are actually named “just as a protocol of testimony concludes by mentioning the names of the eyewitnesses.”⁴⁵ While some commentators maintain that women’s testimony was not accepted in Second Temple Judaism, Wegner states that in certain cases pertaining to women (for example cases relating to virginity or divorce), women could be called as witnesses. Therefore “in accepting a woman's testimony or making her swear an oath, the sages implicitly equate her with a man, for they assume she possesses similar qualities of rational thought and moral choice”⁴⁶ The objective account of the narrator and the events that the readers have witnessed at the tomb with the women, prompt them to accept their witness, despite the negative reaction of the men. In fact it is the male disciples (with the exception of Peter), because of their dismissal

⁴² Dowling, *Taking away the Pound*, 175.

⁴³ Wolter, *The Gospel According to Luke Volume II*, 544.

⁴⁴ Seim, *The Double Message*, 156.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 156.

⁴⁶ Judith Romney Wegner, *Chattel or Person?: The status of women in the Mishnah* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 121.

of the women's testimony, who show a complete lack of belief.⁴⁷ The actual narrative here gives an ambiguous message. By the description of the men's reaction and ridicule of the women's message, "Luke outwardly denigrates the significance and effect of the women's witness, while his narrative affirms it."⁴⁸ Readers, schooled by the narrative, especially the preceding account of the women at the tomb, and their own knowledge of the resurrection, know the truth of what the women are saying and therefore accept their witness.

Yet another ambiguity follows after this. Despite the fact that Peter is one of the apostles, who have ridiculed the women, he gets up and runs to the tomb to check on their story and "his marvelling is a counterpoint to the apostles' incredulity."⁴⁹ By his action he shows that he does not completely disbelieve the women. He sees the linen cloths, but does not meet any messengers. His reaction is amazement (*θαυμάζω*), which echoes earlier reactions to extraordinary events (1:63, 2:18, 2:33, 4:22, 8:25). However, it is not faith or acceptance of the women's witness.

16.2 An analysis of the female characters in their interaction with other characters

16.2.1 The women and the two men/messengers

The women see the two men in dazzling clothes and their immediate realisation is that they are heavenly messengers. They react accordingly with fear and by bowing their faces to the ground. They receive a message from the two men that leads them to remember what Jesus had told them in Galilee and therefore to reinterpret the empty tomb and to understand his predictions about his death and resurrection. The two men are

⁴⁷ Joseph Plevnik, "The Eyewitnesses of the Risen Jesus in Luke 24," *CBQ* 49 (1987): 90-103, 93.

⁴⁸ Setzer, "Excellent Women," 259-272, 265.

⁴⁹ Crimella, "The Transformation of Characters," 173-185, 181.

heavenly messengers and once the women hear their message, they immediately return to proclaim this news. They do not ask for any more information or question the two men further.

16.2.2 The women and the eleven (apostles) and the rest

The focus of this pericope is on the women at the empty tomb. Their contact with the male disciples is described at a distance. Readers have journeyed with the women and there is still the sense that the story is being told from their point of view. By describing the men as ‘the eleven’ and the ‘apostles,’ the narrator places them among Jesus’ closest disciples who have been learning from him about the kingdom of God and even been sent out on mission (9:1-6, 10-11; 10:1-12, 17). ‘All the rest’ (24:9) includes a larger group of disciples, which places it in parallel with the ‘other women’ who are described alongside the three named women at the tomb (24:10). The women return from the tomb, having discovered the absence of Jesus’ body and having encountered two heavenly figures who have incited them to remember the words spoken by Jesus and to reinterpret the absence of the body, proclaim what they have seen, heard, remembered and reinterpreted. The reaction of the men is completely negative. *ἄγροσ* is not used anywhere else in the Gospel and it ridicules the women’s message. The imperfect of *ἀπιστέω* shows a continuous lack of belief that allows no room for listening to anything they say. This negativity is countered by the knowledge that readers bring from what they have learned in the account of the women’s visit to the empty tomb and from their own knowledge of the resurrection. The men do not believe what the readers know to be true.

16.3 A Synkrisis of the male-female pairings

16.3.1 The women and the acquaintances (γνωστοί)

A synkrisis is developed between the women and the acquaintances who are both at the cross at the moment of Jesus' death, the pivotal point of his passion and crucifixion, thus showing their fidelity to him. The fact that both groups stand at a distance, however, reflects their fear.

A number of differences are also evident between the two groups. By using the plural of πᾶς to signify all of his acquaintances, the importance of the woman as a separate group is diminished. On the other hand, 'acquaintances' is a very vague word to use and leaves readers wondering as to whom exactly is included in this group. The more detailed description of the women and the connection back to the Galilean ministry, places more emphasis on them than the others and it means that readers now realise that these women were an integral part of Jesus' entourage from the beginning. The women, alone, are described as 'watching' and are therefore witnesses to what is happening while the acquaintances are merely described as present. In this way, the narrator focuses attention on the women and sparks the readers' interest in their future role.

16.3.2 The women and Joseph of Arimathea

A useful synkrisis is established between the women at the tomb and Joseph of Arimathea. The women are faithful followers of Jesus who have come from Galilee, observed his crucifixion and now watch at the tomb as he is buried. Joseph is named, his home town is mentioned and he is a member of the council. He is also described as a 'righteous' (δίκαιος) man, which is a reminder of the righteous people (Elizabeth, Zechariah

and Simeon) of the Infancy Narrative⁵⁰ and also recalls the centurion's description of Jesus immediately after his death (23:47). The women and Joseph show exemplary piety and faithfulness to the Mosaic Law; the women by resting on the Sabbath according to the commandment (23:55) and Joseph by burying the dead,⁵¹ one of the greatest expressions of Jewish piety (Tob 1:17-18; 2:3-8).⁵² While the journeys of Joseph of Arimathea and the women from the cross to the tomb are described as parallel episodes in the text, (firstly Joseph's request for the body, his taking it down, wrapping it in the shroud and laying it in the tomb and secondly the women's following, seeing where the tomb is and how the body is laid), readers realise that in real time they journey and enter the tomb together. Neither Joseph nor the women shows any sign of anticipation of the resurrection.

There are also contrasts between the women and Joseph. The women are Galileans while Joseph is a member of the elite in Jerusalem and, as a council member, is associated with those who asked Pilate to condemn Jesus. However, the narrator is quick to point out that he did not agree to their plan. While both are very positive towards Jesus, the women are disciples who have followed Jesus from Galilee. Joseph appears for the first time, but everything that is said about him is positive as he is a "good and righteous man" and is waiting for the kingdom of God, which has been preached by Jesus throughout his ministry (4:43; 6:20; 8:1; 9:2, 11; 10:9; 17:20; 18: 16, 17, 24, 25). He evokes the figure of Simeon, also a righteous man, who has predicted that Jesus would bring salvation to all (2:25-35), Simeon took Jesus in his arms in the Temple and now another righteous man takes him in his arms at the end of his life for his burial. Joseph shows great courage in asking Pilate for

⁵⁰ Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, 1166.

⁵¹ Joseph follows Deuteronomy which requires that the criminal be removed from the cross because if he remains there after sunset the land would be defiled (Deut 21:22-23).

⁵² Wolter, *The Gospel According to Luke Volume II*, 536.

Jesus' body, organising the tomb, the shroud and the burial. He is not afraid to be seen as opposing the other members of the Jewish council. The women, who stood at a distance at the cross as if in fear, have moved closer to the action at the tomb, but are still silent witnesses. Their witness, nevertheless, signifies that they are faithful. While only the women are described as leaving the tomb, presumably both they and Joseph left as the Sabbath was breaking. He has completed his work of piety in burying the dead, and they are going to prepare the spices to anoint the body and complete the burial process once the Sabbath rest was over.

16.3.3 The Women and Peter

A synkrisis is established between the women at the tomb and Peter. Both have come with Jesus from Galilee. Peter and the women were among the group who travelled with Jesus as he went through towns and villages “proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God” (8:1). They learned from Jesus and listened to his teaching about “hearing the word of God and doing it.” (8:21). The fact that the women remembered the predictions that Jesus made in Galilee shows that, like Peter, they were regular members of Jesus' band of followers. In Jerusalem, the women and Peter are also members of the group that includes the “eleven and the rest” (24:9).

The women and Peter both go to the tomb and find it empty, but there are a number of significant differences. The women were already at the tomb for the burial and so are familiar with its position and the layout inside (23:55). Peter had never been there and probably has to ask the women for directions.⁵³ The women plan and organise their visit as they are going to bring spices and ointment to embalm the body (23:56; 24:1) and are

⁵³ Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 279.

expecting to find the body of Jesus in the same place where they last saw it. In an impetuous gesture, Peter runs to the tomb to check out the story that has been ridiculed by his fellow apostles (24:12) and shows at least some effort on his part to try to make sense of the women's story.⁵⁴

On arriving at the tomb, the women and Peter have different experiences. The first reaction of the women is that they are perplexed (*ἀπορέω*) when they do not find the body, but then they meet the two men who interpret the absence of the body for them by reminding them of what Jesus had predicted about his death and resurrection and they then return to tell the eleven and the others. Their experience at the tomb leads to their witness. Peter, on the other hand, also finds that the body of Jesus is not there, but he sees the linen cloths by themselves, which leaves the mystery as to why the shroud would be removed from the body. It has been suggested that the fact that the cloths remain rules out the possibility of the body being stolen.⁵⁵ Peter returns home amazed (*θαυμάζω*) and this amazement is his final reaction while it is the first reaction of the women.⁵⁶ There is no mention of whether Peter proclaims what he has seen.

The concept of 'remembrance' is a further link between the women and Peter. The women are asked by the two men in dazzling clothes to remember what Jesus told them in Galilee and they remember his words (24:6-8). This transforms them from being perplexed into believing in the resurrection. "By telling us that the women *do* remember, Luke informs the reader that the women have come to belief, and the proper understanding of the event."⁵⁷ A similar incident occurs to Peter when, having denied Jesus, the Lord turns to

⁵⁴ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 836.

⁵⁵ Wolter, *The Gospel According to Luke Volume II*, 545.

⁵⁶ Seim, *The Double Message*, 157.

⁵⁷ Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 391. Author's emphasis in italics.

look at him and he remembers the word of the Lord (22:61). The verb ὑπομιμνήσκω is a parallel verb to μιμνήσκομαι which is used to describe the women's remembrance.⁵⁸ Peter remembers the prophecy of the Lord that before the cock crows he would deny him three times (22:34) and he is transformed by that remembrance and repents (23:62). "The remembered words of the Lord help to transform people to change their opinions of themselves and of God's ways and to move along the journey of faith"⁵⁹ The women are also transformed as following their visit to the tomb, they now witness to the resurrection.

A synkrisis may also be established between the way the women and Peter see what is unfolding. Four verbs of seeing are used in this section: ὁράω, θεάομαι, ζητέω and βλέπω but the women and Peter 'see' very differently. The women first see (ὁράω) the crucifixion from a distance (23:49), then they watch much more carefully (θεάομαι) where the body is laid in the tomb (23:55) and finally the two men question why they are looking for (ζητέω) the living among the dead (24:5). Their remembrance leads to them gaining insight and seeing the truth of the resurrection.⁶⁰ Peter comes to the tomb, sees (βλέπω) the linen cloth, is amazed, but does not understand what has happened. "His "seeing" is not yet the penetrating understanding of revelation that transformed the centurion or the women themselves."⁶¹ The women's 'seeing' leads to faith while Peter's amazement has not arrived at that stage.⁶² Furthermore, the women's 'seeing' leads to witness while Peter goes home. There is no mention of him sharing what he has observed with the others.

⁵⁸ Karris, "Women and Discipleship in Luke," 1-20, 14.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 1-20, 14.

⁶⁰ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 836.

⁶¹ Senior, *The Passion of Jesus*, 154.

⁶² Crimella, "The Transformation of Characters," 173-185, 181.

These three synkrisis highlight the role of the women as witnesses at this crucial time. When compared with the acquaintances (some of whom may be apostles or disciples) and Peter, they watch more closely, follow the procession of the body to the tomb, prepare for the anointing, visit the tomb after the Sabbath and encounter heavenly messengers. Their encounter prompts the women to remember the words of Jesus and understand their implication about his death and resurrection, while the disciples and Peter who have been described throughout the Gospel as being within Jesus' closest circle, fail to understand what has happened. It is the women who emerge as the first witnesses to the resurrection.

16.4 Summary

The episodes surrounding the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus form the climax of the appearances of the women in the Gospel. At this key point, the women disciples are the people who are consistently present and remain faithful to the end. At the beginning they find it difficult as they remain at a distance but as the narrative progresses, they move closer to the action, by following Joseph of Arimathea and entering the tomb to see where the body is laid, then by returning to the tomb by themselves and meeting the two men in dazzling clothes when they are reminded of Jesus' predictions in Galilee. This leads them to remember and reinterpret what they see and believe. They then return to the eleven and the others to proclaim what they have seen and witness to it.

Women form an *inclusio* around the Gospel. At the beginning, readers remember Elizabeth (1:25) and Mary (1:38) who accepted divine messages and Mary who "treasured all these things" and pondered on them (2:19, 51).⁶³ At the end, the women remain faithful, see what is unfolding, hear the message of the two men, remember and witness. The

⁶³ Johnson, "Luke 24:1-11," 57-61, 61.

message of listening to the Word that has been such an important element of this Gospel, now comes to fruition in their actions (6: 46-49; 8:4-15, 21; 10:39; 11:28).⁶⁴

The sequential, cumulative reading of the Gospel confirms the discipleship of these women. They are the same women who followed Jesus with the twelve in Galilee (8:1-3) and the call to remember at the empty tomb places them with Jesus and the other disciples when he predicted his suffering, death and resurrection (9:44) and, while not explicitly mentioned for almost seventeen chapters in the Gospel, readers retrospectively learn that they were members of Jesus' entourage as he journeyed to Jerusalem. They were "with" Jesus beyond the specific mentions theretofore: as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God (8:1), they listened to his Word (8:4-15) and his teaching about that Word (8:21; 11:27) and they observed his deeds. They followed him to the cross and tomb, encountered the two men, listened to them, remembered what was predicted at their instigation, newly interpreted it and understood its meaning and finally proclaimed what they had learned and gave witness (24:9). Some of them also demonstrated Jesus' call to serve (22:26-27), by providing for them out of their resources (8:3). "The women were named when they began their role (8:1-3) and now at the culmination of their role."⁶⁵

When the women are asked to remember by the angelic messengers, this confirms that they have been hearers of the Word. However, they are not overtly given the task to tell the eleven and the others. This can be seen in a positive light as the message is addressed to the women themselves and they are not merely messengers.⁶⁶ On the other hand, it can mean that they were not given the commission to proclaim or to preach.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Seim, *The Double Message*, 153.

⁶⁵ Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, 1191.

⁶⁶ Carolyn Osiek, "The Women at the Tomb. What are they doing there?" *Ex Aud 9* (1993):97-107, 100.

⁶⁷ Seim, *The Double Message*, 163.

However, the women take it on themselves and are the first witnesses to proclaim the resurrection as a result of their understanding of the message that they have received from the two men. The negative response comes from the disciples who not only do not believe them, but ridicule what they are saying. In this last scene of the women in the Gospel, readers are far more aware of the women as the first disciples to witness to the resurrection than their fellow disciples within the text.

It is only now, at the culmination of the sequential reading, that readers become fully aware of the presence of the women throughout the whole adult ministry of Jesus, from the early ministry in Galilee to his Passion, death and Resurrection. They remained faithful throughout his whole ministry, and when the male disciples abandoned him in his final days, they remained steadfast. Their presence at the empty tomb places them at the centre of the Gospel story as the first witnesses of the Resurrection.

Chapter 17 Review of the Women on the Journey to Jerusalem and at Jerusalem

As Jesus sets his face to go to Jerusalem (9:51), a more tense atmosphere develops in the Gospel. Jesus receives more criticism from the scribes and Pharisees and leaders of the people (11:53-54; 16:14-15; 19:47; 20:19) and in turn, he is far more forthright in his denunciation of their behaviour (11:37-52; 12:1-3; 13:15; 20:9-18, 45-47). For readers, the shadow of his impending death is evident as having already foretold his death near the end of the Galilean ministry (9:21-22, 44-45), he repeats this again (12:50; 17:25; 18:31-34) and also predicts the fall of Jerusalem (13:34-35; 19:41-44; 21:20-24). The narrative includes more teaching, often through parables, as Jesus prepares the disciples for what lies ahead. This teaching is more challenging and anticipates refusals and difficulties.

With this focus on teaching, there are far fewer encounters with individual women on the journey to Jerusalem, but, like the men, they still come from a variety of different backgrounds and circumstances. The cross-section of women on this journey includes single women, widows and women with children. Martha is the head of a house (10:38-42) and on the other hand, the woman who is healed in the synagogue is ritually unclean and probably an outsider in her local community (13:10-17) and even more radically, the widow at the Temple is so poor that she contributes 'her whole life' (*βίος*) when she contributes one sixty-fourth of a day labourer's pay to the Treasury (21:1-4). Two groups of women are mentioned, the first consisting of women from Jerusalem who lament for Jesus as he goes to his death (23:26-31) and the second has already been introduced during the Galilean ministry as part of the group who regularly journeyed with Jesus (8:1-3; 23:49,

55; 24:1-11). Between them, these two groups of women represent women from the whole of Israel, from Galilee to Jerusalem and Judea.

17.1 Martha and Mary (10:38-42)

The first pericope where women encounter Jesus on the journey to Jerusalem, is his visit to the home of Martha and Mary (10:38-42). This takes place in the privacy of their home and is positioned near the middle of the Gospel. From a thematic point of view, it could be said to use an ancient device to unite narratives, namely the “chainlink” approach as evidenced by Longenecker.¹ This passage draws a number of the strands of discipleship and response to Jesus that were found in the first half of the Gospel together namely: hospitality, service and listening to the Word of God while simultaneously setting the scene for what follows. Service, especially that demonstrated by Jesus as servant leader, hospitality and listening to the word of God continue to be important elements of discipleship. This is the only time in the Gospel that a synkrisis is established between two women rather than a woman and man. The varied forms of discipleship demonstrated by the women, are a reminder that discipleship is not limited to gender, but are open to all.

The characterisation here is quite complex. The character, Martha, begins by extending positive hospitality to Jesus, which models the correct response to the welcoming of missionaries. This is followed by her service, which exemplifies the parable of the Good Samaritan that Jesus has just told. The scene changes then to Mary listening at the feet of Jesus. The comparison between Martha and her sister Mary, proposed by the narrator, Martha herself and finally Jesus, and the skilful use of ambiguous verbs (*περισπάω*,

¹ Bruce W. Longenecker, “Lucan Aversion to Humps and Hollows: The case of Acts 11:27-12:25,” *NTS* (2004): 185-204; Bruce W. Longenecker, *Rhetoric at the Boundaries: The art and theology of New Testament chain-link transitions* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2005).

μεριμνάω, θορυβάζω) leads readers to compare the two women and their roles. While Jesus commends Mary as having chosen the better part, it is not the only part and so readers are drawn in to evaluate their own response to Jesus. The synkrisis that is established by both the narrator and Jesus between the two women shows the value of both service and listening to the Word of God and even though the comparison is between two women, it is obvious that the teachings are applicable to all.² The two episodes where Jesus formally teaches that his fictive kindred are those who hear the word of God and do it (8:17-19; 11:27-28) further confirm this by forming an *inclusio* around the pericope. This, combined with another *inclusio* on prayer (Jesus' own prayer in 10:21-22 and his prayer and teaching on prayer in 11:1-13), presents very comprehensive guidance on how to be a disciple.

As the journey continues, most of the same themes that were in the Galilean ministry reappear, but with an extra intensity as Jesus nears Jerusalem. What is seen in Jesus' encounters with both women and men is now augmented by his teaching, which is elaborated more than it was in the earlier part of the Gospel.

17.2 Discipleship

17.2.1 Hospitality

The positive treatment of hospitality in the Galilean ministry is followed, at the beginning of the journey to Jerusalem, by the negative reaction of a Samaritan village when they refuse to welcome Jesus and his followers (9:53). Soon after this, when Jesus sends out the seventy (10:1-12), he gives detailed instructions about hospitality and how his followers are to be received. He predicts refusal as well as welcome for his followers and the very severe consequences that will follow that refusal (10: 10-16). In particular he tells

² All of the other synkrisis in this study are male/female comparisons and contrasts.

them to offer their peace, which will be accepted if a person of peace is present. In contrast to the rejection by the Samaritan village, Martha's outreach of hospitality to Jesus (10:38-42) is an example of that person of peace and also models the hospitality that Jesus has requested for his missionaries. The hospitality to the *κύριος* is shown not only by the welcome of the householder, Martha, but also by her *διακονία* and by the listening of Mary. As the Gospel continues and Jesus focuses on his teaching, he tells the parable of the Great Banquet (14:7-24), which extends hospitality to everyone of every class and background. He models this later by staying with Zacchaeus, a tax collector who is described as a sinner by the crowd.³ Zacchaeus' response, which involves sharing with the poor, is a further example of how to extend the hospitality that Jesus advocates (19:1-10). A very clear message about hospitality, which was outlined mainly in relation to welcoming the Lord and his followers earlier in the Gospel and was shown in a very radical way by people such as the anointing woman (7:36-50), is now extended to encompass everyone and in particular the ostracised and disadvantaged, thus recalling Jesus' mission statement in the synagogue in Nazareth (4:16-30). All are welcome in the kingdom as outlined by Jesus.

17.2.2 Service

At the beginning of the Galilean ministry a woman anticipated Jesus *διακονία*, then collaborated with him as he healed people immediately after her cure (4:38-41). This service was further shown by Jesus through his many miracles of healing and the feeding of the five thousand (9:10-17) and by the women through both table service (4:38-39) and financial support (8:3).

³ This reminds readers of Levi, another tax collector who left everything to follow Jesus but began his discipleship by throwing a banquet, not only for Jesus, but for tax collectors, who were also considered outsiders, as well (5:27-32).

At the beginning of the Jerusalem ministry, it is once again a woman who gives the first example of service. Martha's practical service (10:38-42) is positioned immediately after Jesus' teaching in the parable of the Good Samaritan (10:25-37), thus underlining the crucial importance that Jesus places on service of the neighbour. As he continues his journey to Jerusalem, Jesus consolidates the importance of service by direct teaching and parables. In the parable of the Master serving the slaves (12:35-38) and immediately after the Last Supper, a crucial point in the Gospel (22:26-27), he points out that he is among them as one who serves and therefore reveals himself as the servant leader. Having begun his ministry with healing service, with which the women of the Gospel collaborated (4:39-40; 8:1-3), he now concludes his ministry by setting this service as a standard for all of his followers, thus making it a core tenet of discipleship. Furthermore, by proclaiming and exemplifying this service, readers are left in no doubt as to what their response should be.

17.2.3 Listening

Listening to the Word, which was highlighted so much towards the end of the Galilean ministry through Jesus' definition of his fictive kindred and his explanation of the Parable of the Sower, is recalled at the beginning of the journey to Jerusalem when Jesus tells his disciples that they are more blessed than kings and prophets because of what they are seeing and hearing (10:23-24). It is then further exemplified by Mary, sitting at the Lord's feet and listening to what he is saying (10:39). Jesus not only commends her action, but states that she has chosen the better part and also confirms her right to choose it. Shortly afterwards, in reply to the woman who calls out a blessing, he places listening and keeping the Word of God side by side (11:27-28). As the journey to Jerusalem progresses and Jesus spends even more time teaching about the kingdom of God, the emphasis is very

much on the disciples listening and learning from Jesus. This however is not a passive exercise as it involves keeping the Word and responding to it.

17.2.4 Discipleship and Sacrifice

The Galilean ministry introduced men who were specifically called by Jesus and gave up all to follow him (5:1-11, 27-28) and, in a similar fashion, some of the women also left the security of their homes to follow him (8:1-3). On the journey to Jerusalem, Jesus highlights even more the demands that this discipleship will place on his followers. They must be willing to give up family, home and possessions (9:57-62; 14:33; 18:18-25) and discipleship will not be easy as it will cause division in families (12:49-53). Examples of following now go wider than Jesus' immediate circle. For example, the blind man, upon being healed, gets up immediately and follows Jesus (18:35-43). It is even more evident in the story of the widow at the Temple treasury (21:1-4), who gives her whole life (*βίος*) while the rich with whom she is compared give only out of their excess.⁴ This is even more poignant in the shadow of upcoming events as readers realise, that when Jesus declares that the widow has given up her whole life, it foreshadows his giving up of his whole life in the passion narrative that is about to unfold. So, as Jesus arrives in Jerusalem and the sequential reading accumulates, readers see an increase in the demands of discipleship. It has gone from giving up possessions, home and family to being willing to take up one's cross daily and following (9:23) and finally, to give up life itself as described in the example of the widow giving up her whole life, which Jesus then models when he goes to his death.

⁴ This can be contrasted with the haemorrhagic woman in the Galilean ministry who also gave her whole life (*βίος*), fruitlessly, in search of a cure and was commended by Jesus because of her faith (8:43-48).

17.2.5 Faith Response

On the journey to Jerusalem, faith is demonstrated especially by those who are on the margins of society. When only one leper (a Samaritan) of the ten who were healed returns, he confirms his faith by glorifying (δοξάζω) God and prostrating himself at Jesus' feet. Jesus' response is not only to commend his faith, but to criticise the others who did not return to give praise to God (17:11-19). In a similar fashion, Jesus commends the faith of the blind beggar who acknowledges Jesus as Lord, when he requests his healing. As well as praising God, the beggar follows Jesus and the crowd is also drawn in to praise God because of the miracle (18:35-43). With Doble it can be said that "a response to Jesus is, at the same time, a response to God's act."⁵

While faith is not mentioned in other miracles on the journey to Jerusalem, the response to Jesus is still very evident. The immediate response of the woman who is healed when Jesus lays his hands on her in the synagogue is to praise (δοξάζω) God (13:13) and this is soon followed by the rejoicing of the crowd (13:17). The freeing of this woman and of the man with dropsy (14:1-6) from their illnesses recalls for readers Jesus' mission statement in the synagogue in Nazareth when he promised to let the oppressed go free (4:18). As Lord of the Sabbath (6:5), Jesus liberates the oppressed children of Abraham so that they can be free to praise the Lord on the Sabbath.

17.2.6 Family and the New Family of Faith

The importance of family is again evident in this section and at times the teaching is also quite challenging. Martha and Mary are sisters, but there is tension as they work out their response to Jesus (10:38-39). A woman calls out a beatitude to Jesus' mother for

⁵ Doble, *The Paradox of Salvation*, 43.

bearing and nursing him and is corrected by Jesus, who extends and directs the beatitude, to take in all those who hear his word and keep it and so become members of his fictive kindred (11:27-28). The parable of God's love and mercy is set in the complex interaction between a father and his two sons (15:11-32). When Jesus sets the woman in the synagogue free from her illness, he calls her a daughter of Abraham (13:16) and later on he explains that salvation has come to Zacchaeus' house because he is a son of Abraham (19:9). By declaring that they are members of the covenant people, he expresses the inclusivity that he preached at the launch of his ministry in the synagogue in Nazareth and also welcomes them into his fictive kindred (4:16-30). However, that membership of the covenant people does not mean automatic membership of the new family of faith. In the parable, even though the rich man calls Abraham his father, his behaviour means that he ends up suffering in Hades while the poor man, Lazarus, reclines on the bosom of Abraham (16:19-31). On another occasion Jesus shows his concern for the people of Jerusalem by calling them children and, in a very poignant description, wants to care for them as a hen gathers her brood under her wings (13:34). This compassion continues on the road to the crucifixion when, addressing the daughters of Jerusalem, he turns their concern back to themselves and their children, and in fact to the whole people of Israel, as he laments the destruction of Jerusalem and of their lives (23:28).

The earlier Galilean ministry contains many references to families and a large number of the miracles are in family settings (4:38-39; 7:1-10, 11-17; 8:40-56; 9:37-43) where Jesus reacts to the request or plight of parents or guardian (in the case of the centurion) for their child. As he nears the end of the Galilean ministry, he widens his concept of family by going beyond his biological family to include all those who hear the

word of God and do it (8:19-21). He confirms this with extensive teaching in the Parable of the Sower and through his meeting with Martha and Mary (10:38-42). As he proceeds on the journey to Jerusalem, he reiterates the importance of hearing and keeping the Word of God (11:27-28) and he transcends his biological family and mother with his new fictive kindred. It is Jesus who speaks God's word and God himself directs the disciples and implicitly readers to listen to him (9:35).

On the journey to the place where the prophet must die (13:33), he sets out a much more stringent set of demands for his fictive kindred. Those who follow him must be willing to give up everything, even fundamental family responsibilities like burying their father (9:59).⁶ Divisions will be caused as family members are pitted against one another (12:52-53) and, in very strong language, they are even expected to "hate" (*μισέω*) or reject⁷ their family (14:26). This is not an emotional reaction, but "a disavowal of primary allegiance to one's kin."⁸ So membership of Jesus' fictive kin is now more exacting than what was outlined at the end of the Galilean ministry and must take precedence over every other relationship. The difficulties that must be faced by his followers correspond with the suffering that Jesus will face when he arrives in Jerusalem.

As readers read the Gospel for the first time, there is a tendency to believe that those who follow Jesus and become members of his fictive kindred are mainly men. However, when they encounter the women at the empty tomb and their discussion with the two

⁶ Burial of a father was a fundamental duty that was not easily dismissed. See Exod 20:12; Tob 4:3-4; 6:13-14; 14:11-13. However, 9:59 may not apply to the original burial but to a second burial which was common in Second Temple Judaism from circa 30 BCE to 70 CE. A year after the burial, the family returned to the tomb and gathered the bones of the deceased and placed them in an ossuary which was placed on a shelf within the tomb. Rachel Hachlili, "Burials :Ancient Jewish" in *Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* ed. David D. Freedman

⁷ Because of the semantic connotations, Wolter translates it as 'to reject' or 'to discard.' Wolter, *The Gospel According to Luke Volume II*, 227.

⁸ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 565.

messengers, they realise that these women have also been members of Jesus' entourage on the journey to Jerusalem and that his fictive kindred includes a diversity of people, both men and women, rich and poor and people from all backgrounds and circumstances.

17.2.7 Witness

From early in the Gospel, witness has been shown by some of the men. After he is healed, the Gerasene demoniac is sent back home by Jesus to proclaim what God has done for him and in return, he proclaims what Jesus has done for him, therefore revealing the power of God in Jesus (8:26-39). When the twelve and the seventy are sent out by Jesus to proclaim the kingdom of God (9:2; 10:9), the narrator reports on their success as they bring the good news everywhere and heal in Jesus' name (10:17).

Women are not described as witnessing until their last appearance in the Gospel when they return from the empty tomb. However, that witness is crucial. The first proclamation of the resurrection, the key event of the Gospel, is made by the women. They are eminently qualified to be the first witnesses as they have already formed a continuous presence throughout the crucifixion, burial and visit to the empty tomb (23:49, 55; 24:1-12). At first, like the acquaintances, the women stand at a distance from the crucifixion but unlike them, the women watch what is happening (23:49) and they watch even more intently as they follow Joseph of Arimathea to the burial (23:55-56). When they return to find the tomb empty, they are terrified to meet the two men who tell them that Jesus has risen and ask them to remember what he told them in Galilee (24:6-8). Having listened to the messengers, they remember Jesus' words in Galilee that he must be crucified and on the third day rise again. This remembrance is not mere recollection, but makes Jesus' words present to them and also the reality of the resurrection. They then return to the eleven and

the others to proclaim what they now understand. The women's story is described as 'an idle tale,' but that shows a lack of belief on the part of the eleven not only in the women, but ultimately in Jesus' own words. Peter seems to believe something of what the women describe, as he goes to the tomb, but his reaction is amazement (the initial reaction of the women) and at this stage he does not move on to the fuller understanding that the women have. They have moved from fear and amazement to listening to the messengers, recalling the words that Jesus had spoken to them and are therefore able to reinterpret the absence of the body and proclaim what they had heard, remembered and reinterpreted to the eleven.

These are the same Galilean women who, along with the twelve, have already been with Jesus, followed him, listened to his Word and learned from his preaching of the kingdom of God in Galilee and some of them have also served by providing out of their resources (8:1-3). They also heard his predictions about his death and resurrection. However, it is not until the empty tomb and the witness of the heavenly figures that that the women retrospectively understand the full implications of this. While Jesus encountered many individual women throughout his ministry, this cohort of women were with him throughout his entire ministry and therefore, it is very likely/possible that they were among those sent out to proclaim the kingdom of God during that time, perhaps as part of the seventy (10:1-12).

The Galilean ministry showed a variety of responses to Jesus from both men and women. Some of these were quite complex particularly in the areas of hospitality, service and listening to the word of God. As that ministry culminated, the concept of Jesus' fictive kindred began to emerge much more clearly, ratified by Jesus' own teaching on it. The second half of the Gospel, with the shadow of the cross and suffering prevailing, increases

the challenges of discipleship and of membership of Jesus' new family as it prioritises following Jesus above all else. There are more overt references to suffering where Jesus prepares his followers for the trials that are to come (12:5, 11; 21:12-19) that may necessitate the giving up one's whole life, like the widow at the Treasury (21:1-4). The witness, which was demonstrated mainly by men earlier, is modelled at the empty tomb by the women who, when all the others have abandoned Jesus, remain faithful to the end and through their steadfastness become the first witnesses and proclaimers of the resurrection.

17.3 What is revealed about Jesus

Much is revealed about Jesus on the journey to Jerusalem and in Jerusalem itself. He is once again the healer (13:10-17; 14:1-6; 17:11-19; 18:35-43) and continues to express compassion in his meetings with both men and women (13:34; 19:41). The service that he has modelled earlier in the Gospel (4:40), is now formalised as he declares himself "one who serves" (22:27). Many of the reactions to Jesus lead to people glorifying God (13:13; 17:15; 18:43), acknowledging Jesus as Lord (18:41; 19:8) and, like the leper, giving glory to God at Jesus' feet (17:16).

The foreshadowing of Jesus' ministry that was seen in the Galilean ministry is evident once again on the road to Jerusalem. The woman, who is bent over in the synagogue, has been enduring her suffering for eighteen years. This illness, which prefigures death rather than life, also prevents her from living her life to the full within her community. There is resurrection language in the description of her healing as "standing up straight" and her reaction, in praising God, confirms that it has happened through Jesus' power and authority (13:13). The most important revelation of Jesus' death and resurrection comes however in the story of the widow at the treasury as she is praised by

Jesus for offering her whole life despite being destitute as a result (21:1-4). Her contribution of two leptas, when she could have held back one even though it was a miniscule amount, signifies her willingness to give all. The timing of this pericope shortly before Jesus' passion and the placing of the incident in the Temple, the place of sacrifice, add further to its significance, anticipating when Jesus too will give his all in his passion and death.

Chapter 18: Conclusion

18.1 The Question

The field of research of this thesis was the women associated with Jesus' ministry in Luke's Gospel, from the beginning of his ministry in Galilee (4:14) to the discovery of the empty tomb, and their proclamation of his resurrection (24:1-12). The title of the thesis asked the question 'Do you see this woman?' (7:44) and this led to the open question that was asked, which sought to ascertain what the women exemplified as they encountered Jesus and the aspects of discipleship and response to Jesus that they modelled.

Furthermore, what did their reactions and responses reveal of Jesus and anticipate about him? This multi-faceted witness was examined through sequential reading with the implied first century reader of the passages related to women and through comparison and contrast of the women with the men in invited synkrisis.

The diversity of women meant that they could never be treated as a group character in the way that Gowler describes the Pharisees in his monograph where, even though there is a certain number of individual Pharisees, he argues that group characteristics can be assigned to the Pharisees as a whole.¹ Instead, by reading sequentially, women characters were examined in the narrative contexts and rather than homogenising them, the differences and variety of the various characters were maintained. While recognising the individuality of the characters, patterns of response to Jesus were also found. The use of synkrisis with the male characters in the Gospel, displaying similarities and contrasts, evidenced a more complementary picture of discipleship, modelled by both men and women.

¹ Gowler, *Host, Guest, Enemy and Friend*.

While much research has been done on the women in the Gospel and on particular pericopes, a number of lacunae are still evident. This research avoided the background question as to whether Luke is positively disposed to women or not and examined instead the discipleship of the women in their own right. Narrative studies are common and sequential readings of the Gospel are also available, but, where women are concerned, very few studies consistently follow a sequential, cumulative reading. Darr² and Iser³ have both shown the benefit of this type of study and, by using it, this research built up a composite picture of the women's interaction with Jesus, while still allowing for differences in the individual characters. Secondly, the use of male/female parallels by Luke has been noted by scholars for many years and research has been done on Luke's purpose in using them. From a historical perspective, Seim⁴ proposes that this shows that Luke's community contained both men and women and while Tannehill⁵ views it positively as promoting the role of women, D'Angelo⁶ takes the opposite view that it places women in a subservient position. However, very little work has been done from a narrative point of view to see what these synkrisis, through comparison and contrast with the men, add to an understanding of the role of the women followers in the Gospel.

18.2 Diversity of Women

The reviews of the Galilean ministry and the journey to Jerusalem and Jerusalem ministries have already outlined the diversity of women in the Gospel. Like the male characters, they come from different social classes, rich and poor, from the ruling class and

² Darr, *On Character Building*, 42.

³ Iser, *The Implied Reader*, 278.

⁴ Seim, *The Double Message*, 24.

⁵ Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts Vol 1*, 132.

⁶ D'Angelo, *Women in Luke-Acts*, 441-461.

destitute, ritually clean and unclean as well as sinners. They range from single women to married, to widows and women with children. They come from throughout Israel, from the Galilean women to the women of Jerusalem and the surrounds of Judea. Many of the women have complex backgrounds, behave counter-culturally towards Jesus and are willing to step outside their comfort zones as they take on a peripatetic lifestyle following him.

Furthermore, their relationships with Jesus are varied and they meet him in many different ways. Some are only seen (8: 19-21; 21:1-4), some communicate with him, but no further details are given (7:36-50). Some have a dialogue with him (8:43-48; 11:27-28; 23:26-31) and one woman even challenges him (10:38-42). Some women draw out Jesus' compassion for their circumstances (7:11-17), some are healed (4:38-39; 8:43-48, 54-55 13:10-13), some give practical service and also work alongside him as he heals (4:40-41; 8:3). Some listen to his preaching, learn from him and then follow him as he journeys on his preaching, teaching and healing ministry through Galilee and on to Jerusalem and finally, in the last scene that contains women, they witness by proclaiming what they have seen (24:1-11).

Most of the women who encounter Jesus are individuals who occur in only one pericope and are not mentioned again. However there is one notable exception: a group of women who are mentioned first when they journey with Jesus along with the twelve (8:1-3) and then reappear at the death, burial and empty tomb (23:49, 50-56; 24:1-12). The women's remembrance of Jesus' words at the tomb leads readers to retrospectively recognise that these women have been the unbroken link with Jesus throughout his ministry and remained faithful when the men stood at a distance at the cross.

18.3 Main Findings

This research began by asking the question about how women interacted with Jesus, how Jesus engaged with them and how they followed him as disciples. The sequential reading and the synkrisis indicate that this following is best understood in the wider context of the following of both men and women. The patterns that emerge in the sequential reading, show the diverse responses to Jesus that are modelled by both men and women at different stages with different emphases at different times. Much of what is exemplified in the early parts of the Gospel in particular is confirmed by Jesus in his teaching and parables, which are more common later in the journey to Jerusalem.

18.3.1 Responses to Jesus

Hospitality is shown by both men and women where welcoming of Jesus is concerned. While women are the main providers of support in their homes, the homes of Simon's mother-in-law (4:38-39) and that of Martha and Mary (10:38-42) being obvious examples, men including tax collectors like Levi (5:29) and Zacchaeus (9:1-10) also extend hospitality as does Simon the Pharisee (7:36) and indeed other Pharisees (11:37; 14:1)! Jesus' teaching on hospitality and on the welcoming of those he sends out, is modelled in the home of Martha and Mary, while his commendation of the lavish generosity of the woman who anoints him extends a challenge, not only to Simon the Pharisee, but also to those at his table and to readers (7:36-50).

Jesus models service (*διακονία*) and healing (*θεραπεύω*) from the very beginning of his ministry. This service is imitated by women, as household or table service first (4:38-39; 10:38-42) and in a broader sense by providing for Jesus and those accompanying him

through the use of their own possessions and funds (8:3). While service is mainly attributed to women, it is also exemplified in the response of the four men who bring their friend to Jesus despite all the obstacles (5:19) and by Peter and John who make the preparations for the Passover meal (22:7-4). A fundamental aspect of service is shown in the collaboration between Simon's mother-in-law and Jesus as she serves while Jesus heals all who are brought to him (4:38-41). As the Gospel progresses, the emphasis moves from the examples of service shown by the women to Jesus' teaching and its illustration in various parables (10:25-37; 12:35-38; 17:7-10). It culminates when he advocates it explicitly at the end of the Last Supper by challenging all of his followers, both men and women, to imitate his example of servant leadership, as he is "among them as one who serves" (22:27).

Two examples of the importance of listening to the Word of God form an *inclusio* around the teaching in the parable of the Sower (8:4-15). The twelve and the Galilean women are described simply as "with Jesus," listening to him as he proclaims and spreads the good news of the Kingdom of God (8:1-3) and Mary's listening is commended by Jesus, when he describes her as having "chosen the better part which will not be taken away from her" (10:42). On two related occasions, Jesus formalises that teaching when he extends his fictive kindred to include all those who hear his word and do it (8:19-21; 11:27-28). However, such listening and responding is not easy as is seen in the story of the rich ruler who obeys all the commandments, but cannot make the ultimate sacrifice of giving up his wealth to follow Jesus (18:18-23).

Sacrifice is demonstrated early in the Gospel by the men who give up everything when Jesus calls them (5:1-11, 27) and the women who join the twelve and also provide for

them out of their own resources (8:1-3). Later the blind beggar, upon receiving his sight, immediately follows Jesus glorifying God (18:35-43). The ultimate example, however, is the widow at the Temple treasury where Jesus commends her for giving more than everyone else and in fact giving up her whole life, (21:1-4) thus reflecting what he has taught in his teaching on discipleship (14:25). This is the most powerful example of imitation of Jesus in the Gospel as it is a harbinger of Jesus' giving of his own life in the well-heralded passion.

Faith response to Jesus is shown by both women and men. The leper (5:12), centurion (7:1-10), Jairus (8:40-42, 49-56), the leper who returns to give thanks (17:11-19) and blind beggar (18:35-43) not only show that faith, but also recognise Jesus' authority and give glory to God. Also, the anointing woman shows her faith in a tangible way by her actions (7:36-50). However, the most extraordinary example is that of the haemorrhaging woman, whose faith is so strong that it draws healing from Jesus without his knowledge and he responds by publicly commending her faith (8:43-48).

18.3.1.2 Witness, the Culmination of the Women's Response to Jesus

Men demonstrate witness from the early stages of the Gospel. Having been specifically called by Jesus (5:1-11; 27-28, 6:12-16), the twelve are sent out to proclaim the Kingdom of God and to heal (9:2) and are followed shortly afterwards by seventy others (10:1-12). Where the women are concerned, there is no mention of an overt call by Jesus and it is not until the empty tomb that women are specifically described as witnessing when they are called to remember what the Lord said to them and, with that remembrance, thereby reinterpret the events of the empty tomb and then return to the eleven to proclaim what has happened. However, these women have already been schooled in discipleship

with the twelve in Galilee (8:1-3) and the dialogue at the empty tomb shows that they have been with Jesus as he journeyed from Galilee to Jerusalem and remained with him throughout the entire events of the passion, death, burial and empty tomb (23:49, 50-56; 24:1-12). As a culmination of this continuous presence with Jesus, they are now the first to understand Jesus' teaching on the resurrection in the light of the empty tomb and the heavenly messengers' repetition of his teaching and invitation to remember. They are able, therefore, to proclaim the resurrection to the eleven and the others (24:9). Despite the doubt expressed by the eleven, the women continued to proclaim (the aorist of ἀπαγγέλλω [24:9] is replaced by the imperfect of λέγω [24:10]) the good news of the resurrection.

As they arrive at the end of the Gospel, implied readers realise the importance of these women, who are the link from Jesus' earliest ministry right through to the resurrection. Almost all of the individual women who met Jesus in Galilee anticipated his death and resurrection in some way (the supreme example of witness is the widow at the Temple treasury who gave her whole life in anticipation of Jesus' giving of his life) and so readers are open to the possibility that some of these women may have continued on the journey to Jerusalem with Jesus and may, along with the three named women, be part of the group who proclaimed the resurrection following their visit to the empty tomb. These women are privileged witnesses as they have seen Jesus' power in their own lives, through their encounters with him in Galilee, and are therefore eminently qualified to be witnesses to the resurrection..

18.3.2 Complementarity and Collaboration

Given the focus of this study on the women in Luke's Gospel, most of the Lukan synkrisis that are examined are between men and women. The synkrisis elicit further

information on the characters through an examination of their similarities and contrasts. Although Luke has more women than other Gospels, statistically men predominate, but, by using men as a control, this study has shown that women exemplify discipleship and response to Jesus much as men do. The synkrisis further highlight the different emphases at different stages in the Gospel (for example, women predominantly demonstrating service and men witness in the earlier sections), but both demonstrate how to respond to Jesus. The key factor is not gender, but discipleship. The synkrisis, that is between two women, namely, Martha and Mary (10:38-42), presents a very complex picture not only of Jesus' teaching on hospitality, but also on hearing the word of God and doing it (8:21). This study agrees with Wyant when she describes the story of Martha and Mary as focusing on Christian discipleship rather than the discipleship of two women. She explains: "this story places a challenge on readers of all genders that should shape how they practice their faith."⁷

The synkrisis clarify the respective responses of women and men to Jesus. In many cases, men and women are shown as working collaboratively in the mission, not only together but also with Jesus, following his teaching on what it means to be a member of his family of faith. As well as the response of Simon's mother-in-law (4:38-41), it is also evident with regard to the twelve and the women who follow Jesus (8:1-3), as they first listen to him proclaiming the kingdom of God (8:1-3) and later go out on mission (9:1-6 [the twelve] and 10:1-12 [the seventy which may include women]). Response to Jesus is also modelled. The anointing woman models hospitality for Simon the Pharisee (7:36-50), the haemorrhaging woman models faith for Jairus (8:40-56), Mary models listening for

⁷ Wyant, *Beyond Mary or Martha*, 267.

Martha (10:38-42) and true generosity is modelled by the widow (21:1-4) both for the wealthy and for Jesus' hearers (9:24-25). In all cases, this also impacts on readers as they are schooled in what it means to be a disciple.

18.3.3 New Family of Faith

The discipleship of both women and men is confirmed in Jesus' invitation to become members of his new family. In the sequential reading, the infancy narrative has already placed great importance on Jesus' family and in particular, his mother, Mary, who listens to the word of God, ponders on it and acts in response (1:26-56; 2:19, 22-38, 51). Also, her cousin Elizabeth is the first person to recognise that Jesus is *κύριος* even before his birth (1:43) and John the Baptist emphasises that his role is to witness to Jesus' coming (3:15-17). The use of familial language (4:38; 7:12, 15; 8:3, 19-21, 42, 49, 51, 54, 56; 9:38, 42, 47, 48, 59; 10:39; 11:7, 12, 13; 12:13, 53; 13:16, 34; 14:5, 26; 15:11, 12, 17-22, 24, 25, 27-32; 16:24, 25, 27, 28, 30; 18:3, 18:15-17; 19:9, 44; 20:13, 28-32, 47; 21:2-3, 16) and the many miracles that concern families (4:38-39; 7:1-10, 11-17; 8:40-56; 9:37-43; 13:10-17)⁸ continue this emphasis. However, Jesus transforms the concept of family when he extends an invitation to all those who hear the word of God and do it to become members of his fictive kindred (8:19-21; 11:27-28). Careful reading shows that he does not exclude his biological family, and in particular his mother, but extends his fictive kindred, opening discipleship to all who hear and do the word of God. As he journeys to Jerusalem, he elaborates on this discipleship and places the demands of the kingdom of God above all

⁸ The healing of Simon's mother-in-law takes place in Simon's house (4:38-39), the use of the word *παῖς* or child for the centurion's servant (7:1-10), the son of a widow is restored to life (7:11-17), the healing of the woman with the haemorrhage is an intercalation with the resuscitation of the daughter of Jairus (8:40-56), the plea of the father to Jesus to rid his son of the unclean spirit (9:37-43) and finally the woman who is described as a daughter of Abraham thus highlighting her membership of the covenant community (13:10-17).

else. Disciples must be willing to give up possessions, family and even life itself to become members of his fictive kindred (9:57-62; 21:4) but even more than that, becoming members of Jesus new family of faith will pit them against their own families and even cause them to be rejected (12:52-53; 14:26, 21:12-19). As he advances to Jerusalem, the suffering that he predicts for himself, is also anticipated for his fictive kindred (9:21-27, 43-45; 18:31-34).

When the sequential reading and male/female synkrisis are completed, the patterns of interaction with Jesus can be seen more clearly. It can be summarised in the witness of the group of women whose listening and following continued from their first encounter with Jesus in Galilee through to the empty tomb where they heard the words of the messengers, remembered Jesus' word from Galilee, interpreted them in the light of the empty tomb, and reacted by witnessing and proclaiming to the eleven and the others (24:1-12). These same responses can be seen in many of the interactions of the individual women with Jesus, hearing about him (7:37; 8:43; 10:38; 23:27), listening to his word (8:1; 10:39), and reacting, not by vocally witnessing but by the actions of hospitality (4:40-41; 7:36-50; 10:38), serving (4:39; 8:3; 10:40) sacrificing (8:1-3) culminating in the ultimate sacrifice of one giving her whole life (21:4), remembering (24:6-8) and finally interpreting that remembrance not only for themselves, but also, for the eleven (24:8).

18.4 What the encounters with the women reveal about Jesus

The encounters with women reveal much about Jesus, but just as discipleship needs to be put in the context of both men and women, the same applies here and once again, different emphases can be seen at different stages in the Gospel. Jesus' explanation of the

purpose of his ministry, in the synagogue in Nazareth (4:16-30) and in his meeting with the disciples of John the Baptist (7:18-23), is demonstrated in his outreach to the women he encounters. The vast majority are marginalised in some way, from widows (4:38-39; 7:11-17; 21:1-4), to sinners (7:36-50), to those suffering from illnesses who would be considered ritually unclean (8:1-3, 40-56; 13:10-17) and to the materially destitute (21:1-4).

Correspondingly, there are also many men in marginalised categories: some possessed by unclean spirits (4:31-37; 8:26-33; 9:37-43); sinners (5:17-26) and ritually unclean (5:12-16; 7:11-17; 17:11-19).

Jesus' authority which expresses the power of God is evident from his first healing of a woman (4:38-39) when, like the healing of the man with the unclean spirit in the synagogue (4:31-37), the emphasis is placed on that power. It is further acknowledged by the crowd after the raising of the young man at Nain (7:11-17), by the haemorrhagic woman when she declares 'before all' the crowd that she has been healed (8:47) and by both the woman and the crowd when he heals the crippled woman in the synagogue on the Sabbath (13:10-17). The climax of these is the story of the leper who returns to thank Jesus and prostrates himself at Jesus' feet as he glorifies God (17:15-16). This power over illness and, in particular over death, foreshadows Jesus' power to overcome death by his resurrection.

The compassion of Jesus is very evident in the miracles that he performs as well as his teaching. However, that compassion is demonstrated particularly in the story of the resuscitation of the young man at Nain (7:11-17). In this incident, the plight of the woman

draws out Jesus' compassion. The use of the verb *σπλαγγίζομαι*⁹ shows the intensity of his reaction to the widow. His compassion is also depicted in the description of his gentleness in telling her not to weep and in returning the son to his mother. Further expressions of that compassion can be seen in Jesus' reactions to the people of Jerusalem, his wish to gather them as a hen gathers her brood (13:34), his weeping as he approaches the city (19:41) and his response to the women of Jerusalem on the road to the crucifixion when he redirects their lamentations to their own situation (23:28).

Jesus' power to forgive sins is shown in his response to the paralytic (5:17-26), but a more important connection between this forgiveness and a response of love is seen in the reaction of the anointing woman (7:36-50), whose response is a reaction to the gratuitous act of forgiveness.

Jesus teaches about discipleship from the time he first calls his disciples. The twelve and the women who journey with him are schooled in the good news of the kingdom of God (8:1-3), his encounters with women draw out his clearest teaching on hearing and doing the Word of God (8:19-21; 11:27-28) and his visit to the home of Martha and Mary further develops that teaching (10:38-42). As he continues his journey to Jerusalem, he highlights the challenges of discipleship and the demands that it will place on his followers (9:25-26, 57-62; 12:52-53; 14:26; 21:12-19). Readers however are aware that Jesus is the prime example of the one who hears the Word of God and does it, as he journeys to his death and resurrection.

⁹ It is only used in two other places in Luke, and both by Jesus when he describes the compassion of the Good Samaritan (10:33) and that of the father of the Prodigal Son (15:20).

18.4.1 How the women foreshadow Jesus

The actions of the women throughout the Gospel anticipate many aspects of Jesus' ministry and also alert readers to it. Simon's mother-in-laws' *διακονία*, which is shown immediately after she is healed, is the first example of service in the Gospel and is a forerunner to Jesus' example of healing service that he demonstrates later that evening (4:38-41). Moreover, this collaboration between Jesus and the woman further illustrates his teaching on servant leadership that he outlines at a pivotal point in the Gospel immediately after the Last Supper (22:27).

Most of the women who encounter Jesus are on the margins of society and so foreshadow Jesus who gives his all, not only through his death, but throughout his life. This generosity is seen in the anointing women who buy the costly perfume to anoint Jesus (7:37), in the women who leave their homes and take up a peripatetic lifestyle to follow Jesus (8:1-3) and also in women like Martha and Mary who extend hospitality to Jesus in their own home as he journeys to Jerusalem.

From the first encounter of women with Jesus, they foreshadow his death and resurrection. Simon's mother-in-law is raised from near death through the power of Jesus as he exorcises the fever (4:38-39), Mary Magdalene's illness and healing is of the most severe form as seven demons have gone out from her, and the woman in the synagogue, who has spent eighteen years crippled by her illness, is raised up straight as a result of her healing (13:10-17). The raising of the dead to life, the widow's son at Nain (7:11-17) and the daughter of Jairus (8:40-56), are even more compelling intimations of Jesus' coming through death to new life. Alongside the physical resuscitations, the losing and gaining of life is shown in the widow of Nain. When Jesus raises her son from the dead and "gave

him to his mother” (7:15), he is also returning her to life in the fullest sense. Furthermore, the restoration to health of the haemorrhagic woman, not only cures her of her illness, but also restores her whole life, which has been lost through her constant search for a cure (8:43-48). The mention of Susanna as one of the named women who follow Jesus may evoke for readers the innocent woman condemned to death (8:3) and prefigure the whole passion narrative, where the innocent Jesus is also condemned to death. The culmination of these foreshadowings comes in the story of the widow at the Temple treasury (21:1-4), when Jesus himself commends her willingness to give up her whole life (βίος). Moreover, the setting in the place of sacrifice (the Temple) as well as the proximity to Jesus’ own death alerts readers to Jesus’ forthcoming passion. The combination of these women makes them key indicators of the Paschal mystery that unfolds at the end of the Gospel.

The power of God, bringing Jesus through death to new life, is not mentioned explicitly at the resurrection. However, Mary Magdalene, Joanna and Mary, the mother of James, as well as the other women are commanded to remember Jesus’ words and through them, readers are also invited to remember. As readers look back with the women, they realise that these women, or those close to them, have gone from near death or death to life (4:38-38; 7:11-17; 8:2; 8:43-48, 49-56; 13:10-17; 21:1-4) and so, are living witnesses to the power of the resurrection. The power of God that Jesus has demonstrated in their lives, is now demonstrated in his own journey through death to new life. While there are also male examples of this (7:1-10, 14-15), the women are more prominent as readers are invited to remember with them, and in so doing recognise that many anticipate Jesus’ death and resurrection.

The difference in emphasis that was seen in the discipleship of men and women is also evident in anticipating different aspects of Jesus' ministry. While women are more prominent where his death and resurrection are concerned, more men are cited with regard to the forgiveness of sins. This is a key fruit of the Easter proclamation (24:46-48) and, while it is exemplified especially by the anointing woman (7:36-50), there are more examples of men whose sins are forgiven (5:8, 17-26, 32; 19:7). This is yet another element of the complementarity of men and women that is demonstrated in the Gospel.

18.5 Dialogue with Recent Scholarship on Women in Luke's Gospel

The assessment of this study, which states that women are not in opposition to the men in the Gospel, nor are they proposed as secondary to the male characters, but rather have a complementary role as disciples, agrees to a certain extent with Reid's recent article "The Gospel of Luke: Friend or Foe of Women Proclaimers of the Word."¹⁰ Her earlier book argued that in many situations, women were silent and passive when compared with the male disciples.¹¹ The recent article, however, revises that opinion and, in particular, she shows the importance of women as proclaimers¹² in the beginning of the Gospel, in the Infancy narrative and again at the empty tomb. However, by focusing only on those who speak in the Gospel, her sequential reading misses much of the discipleship that is shown by the actions of both women and men. If, as well as looking at those who speak, the Gospel is viewed through the lens of Carey's recent article on active discipleship in Mark, then a more rounded view of discipleship in Luke's Gospel is possible.¹³ The women and

¹⁰ Reid, "The Gospel of Luke: Friend or Foe of Women Proclaimers of the Word?"

¹¹ Reid, *Choosing the Better Part*.

¹² The term is used by Reid in her article.

¹³ Carey, "Women in Action; Models for Discipleship in Mark's Gospel," 429-448.

also the men in the Gospel show much of their discipleship by action and reaction to Jesus, as well as speech, and this can be seen in the patterns that emerge from the sequential reading in this study. This form of discipleship is not only validated but recommended by Jesus, when he blesses those who hear the word of God and do it, and welcomes them into his fictive kindred (8:21).

Seim's monograph¹⁴ posits that the Gospel of Luke is much more positively disposed to women than Acts. She recognises that the gender pairs show a complementarity between men and women in the Gospel, a point with which this study agrees, but while she does a sequential reading, it is in relation to themes rather than the Gospel as a whole. One of her conclusions, that Luke wants to keep women within a domestic setting, does not fully acknowledge the convincing discipleship that they show in the sequential reading. Also, while she recognises the peripatetic lifestyle of the women who travel with the twelve following Jesus, she categorises them all as women who were marginalised because of illness, thus assuming that no women followed because of hearing his preaching about the Kingdom of God. Her statement that the witness of the women when they return from the empty tomb is not accepted by the men, is true. However, the methodology of this research, which involves reading along with the implied reader, who fills in the gaps, highlights the acceptance of the validity of the women's witness by implied readers. This study agrees with her when she posits that Luke has a nuanced approach to women in the Gospel, but takes a more positive view of the discipleship that is demonstrated by women in their active following of Jesus.

¹⁴ Seim, *The Double Message*.

Even though it focuses on only one pericope in the Gospel, Wyant's main finding in her monograph agrees with the findings of this study.¹⁵ Both posit that the women in Luke's Gospel demonstrate discipleship that is equally relevant to both men and women. This study, while agreeing with Wyant, recognises different emphases at different times in that discipleship. For example, women rather than men, demonstrate the importance of service throughout the Gospel, and, while witness is shown by the men disciples in the earlier parts of the Gospel, it is not overtly attributed to the women until the open tomb.

18.6 Suggestions for Further Research

This research asked three main questions about the women's interaction with Jesus: what aspects of discipleship and responses to Jesus do they model, what do these reactions and responses reveal of Jesus and, finally, what do they anticipate about Jesus? It would be interesting to use the same methodology to examine the discipleship of men in the Gospel.

Likewise, an investigation of the Infancy Narrative, using the same methodology, may provide interesting insights, particularly with regard to how Jesus' interaction with his mother in the Finding in the Temple (2:41-51) prefigures his adult ministry.

Seim has noted a decided difference in Luke's attitude to women between the Gospel and Acts. While the question would have to be changed to ask about women's discipleship in the early days of the church in Acts, the methodology that was used in this study could be used to discover what it reveals about the women in Acts.

One of the key findings of this study is that virtually all of the women anticipate the Paschal Mystery. Pigott, in her study of 1 and 2 Samuel, shows how women also play a role

¹⁵ Wyant, *Beyond Mary or Martha*.

as key indicators, but in relation to David's kingship and succession.¹⁶ Since 1 and 2 Samuel is an intertext for Luke's Gospel, a comparative study of the women as key indicators may merit further study.

18.7 Implications of the Research for Today

While this study focused on the multi-faceted witness of women, its findings are applicable to all Christians, both men and women. Luke's Gospel proposes a Gospel of complementarity between men and women disciples, who are called to follow Jesus and, together and separately, exemplify the various aspects of that discipleship. All are called to be disciples in Jesus' new family of faith. This gospel model allows for a Christian community, where everyone's talents and abilities are welcomed, respected and empowered irrespective of gender. This is particularly important for women, whose role is often limited

The collaboration with Jesus, as well as collaboration with one another, that is evident in this Gospel and that is required in Jesus' teaching on hearing and doing the Word of God, also points to a way of living those Gospel values in practice. For a church that is speaking of synodality at the moment, lessons can be drawn from this finding of collaboration between men and women disciples that could be put into practice in Christian communities today.

¹⁶ Susan M. Pigott, "Wives, witches and wise women: prophetic heralds of kingship in 1 and 2 Samuel," *RevExp* 99 (2002): 145-173.

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