

Notes to Accompany Podcasts 15-19

Lk 4.31-9.50

In the previous podcasts we looked at the way Luke presented Jesus as the bearer of God's Spirit. The gospel's auditor already knows this from Jesus' birth story (Lk 2.1-20). In our last session, this is confirmed in Luke's unique baptismal-prayer scene (Lk 3.21-22). Through the Spirit he encounters and overcomes the 'tempter' (Lk 4.1-13) and finally announces his mission in the language of the prophet Isaiah (Lk 4.1-30).

Now, as we turn to Lk 4-9, we see how Jesus enacts the presence of the Spirit through what he says and does. His deeds and words proclaim the presence of God (the 'reign'). This is a powerful section of the gospel.



Sunset over the north-western shores of the Sea of Galilee, from the traditional site of the Mount of the Beatitudes, over the plain where Jesus possibly taught.

Photo: Michael Trainor, used with permission.

Engaging Lk 4.14-9.50

As we move further into Luke's gospel and start to look at the way the evangelist portrays Jesus in word and deed, an intricate pattern emerges. Luke brings together many of the stories received from Mark, but with significant editing that allows us to see the gospel's Christology and theology at work.

As we look at Lk 4-9 in depth, I am conscious of the insight of the Markan scholar, Elizabeth Struthers Malbon. She comments on the construction of an outline for Mark's gospel. What she says is pertinent to what I am doing here, as we move to look at Lk 4.14-9.50:

In my view, it is not necessarily Mark's Gospel that *has* an outline, certainly not a single, simple outline; it is Markan interpreters who *offer* multiple outlines as they pick up different threads of the interwoven tapestry or listen to different strains of the fugue that is Mark's Gospel. Making an outline of a narrative is a heuristic task—first for the maker herself or himself and then for anyone else who reads it; a thoughtfully constructed outline can help interpreters appreciate various dimensions of the narrative and its interpretation. Yet the goal of the procedure is to reveal something about the narrative even as it reveals something about the interpreter of the narrative.

--Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, *Mark's Jesus: Characterization as Narrative Christology* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), p. 27. Emphasis original.

Considering Malbon's thoughtful reflection, I offer *five* literary outlines that will allow us to see 'something about the narrative' of Luke in this part of the gospel:

- *Outline 1*— Lk 4.14-7.23
- *Outline 2*— Lk 4.14-7.23
- *Outline 3*— Lk 5.1-6.16
- *Outline 4*— Lk 6.20-49
- *Outline 5*— Lk 7.24-9.50

Outline 1 offers an overview of this section of Luke from the thematic perspective of the 'Word'.

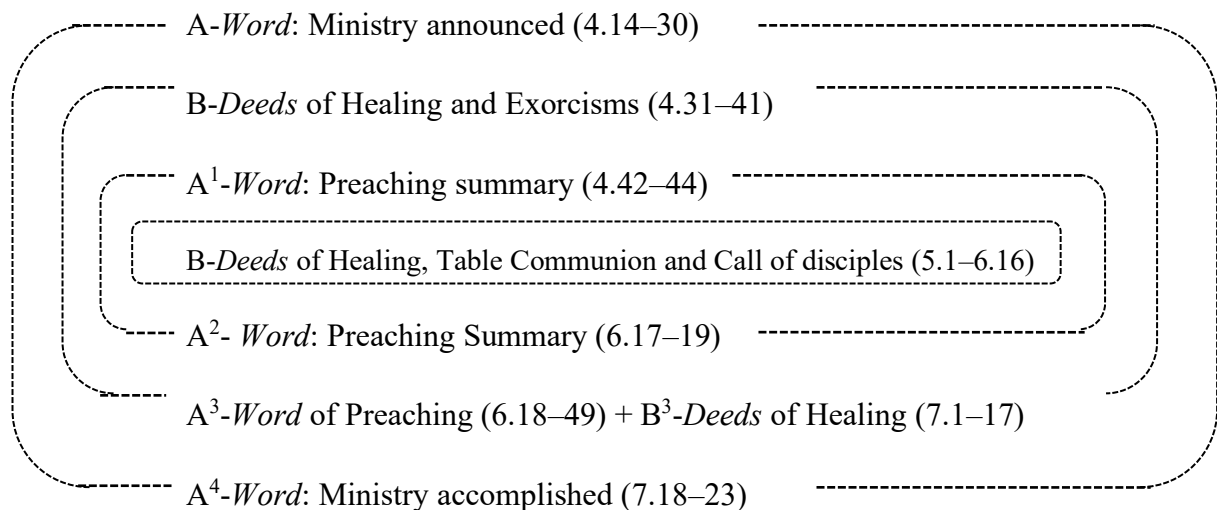
Outline 2 creates a more in-depth look at the gospel from the perspective of the 'Word' focussing on Jesus' teaching and healing activities.

Outlines 3 and *4* present details examination of pertinent sections of this part of the gospel (the call, Jesus scandalous meal ministry and Luke's 'sermon on the plain').

Outline 5 gives an overview of the remaining chapters, Lk 7-9.

Outline 1—Lk 4.14-7.23

This outline looks at Lk 4.14-7.23 from the theme of the ‘Word’ shapes this section of the gospel.



It is clear from this pattern, the ‘Word’ is central to Luke’s story of Jesus. We remember that the ‘Word’ is dynamic; it is ‘Word-Deed’. We see the pattern of the Word-Deed in what Jesus says (A-A¹-A²-A³-A⁴) and does (B).

The next schema, *Outline 2*, explicates this dynamic of the ‘Word-Deed’ in Jesus ministry.



Caesarea Philippi, modern Banyas, northern Israel. Luke situates here Jesus’ question to his disciples: ‘Who do you say I am?’ (Lk 9.20)
Photo: Michael Trainor, used with permission.

Outline 2— Lk 4.14-7.23

This outline offers a more in-depth study of the ‘Word’ on Lk 4.14-7.23 than *Outline 1*. We see how the ‘Word’ is expressed in Jesus’ preaching and healing ministry.

Preaching Transition: Jesus’ Ministry Proclaimed...

‘...release...sight to the blind...’ Offence taken (4:16-30)

Exorcism: In synagogue (4:31-37)

Healing of Widow (Simon’s mother-in-law) (4:38-39)

Healings (4:40)

Exorcisms (4:41)

Preaching Transition: Summary—mission in cities & synagogue (4:42-44)

Calling of the Twelve (Simons & Companions—5:1-11)

Healing of Leper (5:12-16)

Healing of Paralytic (5:17-26)

Calling of Levi (5:27-28)

Meal with rejected (5:29-39)

Feeding the hungry (6:1-5)

Healing in the synagogue (6:6-11)

Calling the Twelve (6:12-16)

Preaching Transition: Summary— ‘..to hear and be healed...’ (6:17-19)

Hearing: Preaching on the plain (6:18-49)

Being healed: Centurion's servant (7:1-10)

Widow’s son (7:11-17)

Preaching Transition: Jesus’ Ministry Proclaimed...

‘...sight to the blind...raised up...’ Blessed: no offense taken (7:18-23)

From this pattern, it is clear how the preaching word intersperses and frames the section. What occurs between these sections are Jesus’ deeds of healing, and calling people to discipleship.

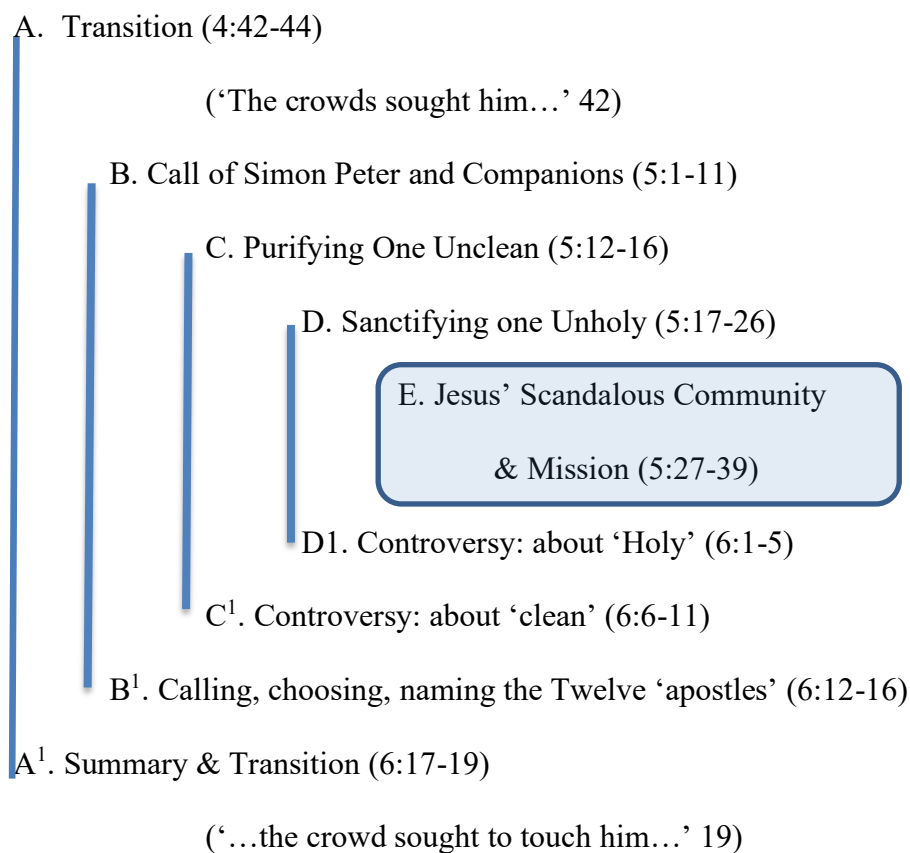


Jesus healing Simon's mother-in-law. 14th Century CE mosaic detail, Chora Museum-Church, Istanbul, Turkey
Photo: Michael Trainor, used with permission.

Outline 3—Lk 5.1-6.16.

This outline details a small section of Lk 4.14-7.23 and focuses on Lk 5.1-6.16. It looks specifically at the call to follow Jesus, especially those who are public scandals.

This is another clear example of how the ‘Word-Deed’ engages those invited to follow Jesus.



The centrepiece of this carefully structured gospel section concerns Jesus’ meal ministry in which he invites the social reprobates to be part of his community of disciples. The theme of food and eating is prominent in Luke’s gospel. Jesus’ table companions reflect those whom God wants to be part of the heavenly banquet. The guest list is scandalous for those who have already predetermined who belong to God’s *basileia*.

Jeremias reminds us,

In the East, even today, to invite a man to a meal was an honor. It was an offer of peace, trust, brotherhood, and forgiveness; in short, sharing a table meant sharing life. In Judaism in particular, table-fellowship [communion] means [communion] between God, for the eating of a piece of broken bread by everyone who shares in a meal brings out the fact that they all have a share in the blessing which the master of the house has spoken over the unbroken bread. Thus Jesus’ meals with the publicans and sinners, too, are not only events on a social level, not only an expression of his unusual humanity and social generosity and his sympathy with those who were despised, but had an even deeper significance. They are an expression of the mission and message of Jesus (Mark 2:17), eschatological meals, anticipatory celebrations of

the feast in the end-time (Luke 13:28f; Matthew 8:11-12), in which the community of the saints is already being represented (Mark 2:19). The inclusion of sinners in the community of salvation, achieved in table-fellowship, is the most meaningful expression of the redeeming love of God.

Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology* (New York: Scribner, 1971), 115-116.



Capernaum on the northern shores of the Sea of Galilee, the centre of Jesus' public ministry. Looking from the fourth century CE synagogue towards the remains of the 1st century CE fishing village.

Photo: Michael Trainor, used with permission.

I love this comment by the Lukan scholar, Robert Karris, reflecting on Jesus' eating practice in the gospel:

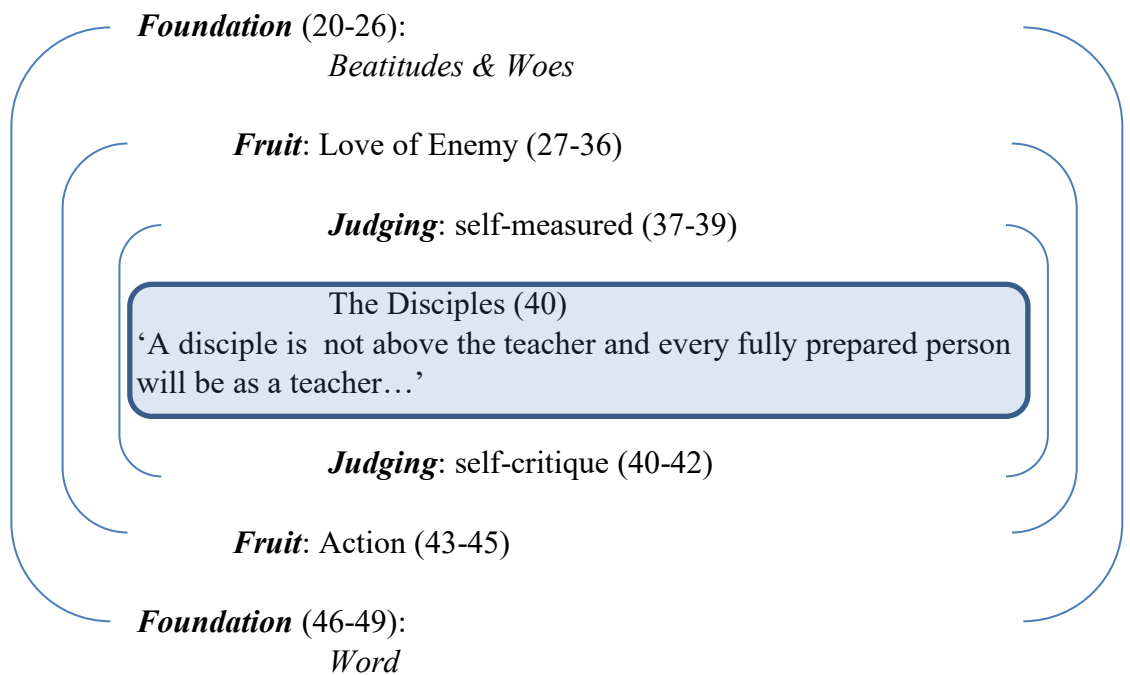
Jesus got himself crucified because of the way he ate. The religious leaders could not tolerate this prophet of good news to the poor who not only in word, but especially at meals criticized their way of life...Jesus was, for them, a spokesperson for an alien God...Jesus was leading the people astray....And why does Luke's kerygmatic story depict Jesus as enjoying life so much? Luke's view of God is the answer. And as his narrative goes, Jesus is the revealer of this God, the faithful God who feeds hungry creation, rectifies the ills that plague it, and rejoices to sup with sinners. Can the [auditor] believe this God?

Robert Karris, *Luke: Artist and Theologian*, Paulist, 1985, 70.

These two quotations sum up a central contribution from Luke's gospel upon which we shall focus.

Outline 4—Lk 6.20-49

This outline offers a way of viewing Luke's sermon 'on the plain', Lk 6.20-49.



Luke's sermon, slightly different from Matthew's 'Sermon on the Mount' with which we are more familiar, highlights the companionship with Jesus has with his disciples and those who gather around him.

As indicated by the above literary structure, the central teaching of Luke's sermon concerns discipleship. Lk 6.40 accentuates the relationship which the disciple has with the 'teacher', Jesus, The task is to be 'fully prepared.'

Everything that surrounds this central teaching (Foundation—Fruit—Judging)

Outline 5—Lk 7.24-9.50

This literary structure looks at the final chapters that conclude the section of Luke that we have engaged in this session, namely Lk 7.24-9.50.

Summary: Ministry of John & Jesus (7:24-30)
Feasting & Fasting (7:31-35)

Woman in an elite religious household forgiven (7:36-50)

Women with Jesus (8:1-3)

Parables of the Word (8:4-18)

Family Response to the Word (8:19-21)

Community in crisis: Storm on Lake (8:22-25)

Community member returned: Gerasene demoniac (8:26-39)

Woman of Jairus' pagan household healed (8:40-42a, 49-56)

Woman touches Jesus (8:42b-48)

Summary: Ministry of Twelve and Jesus (9:1-6)
Fasting & Feasting: feeding multitudes (9:7-17)

True identity of Jesus by disciples (9:18-20)

First anticipation of passion (9:21-27)

Transfiguration (9:28-36)

Healing of possessed (9:37-43a)

Second anticipation of passion (9:43b-48)

False identity of community of disciples (9:49-50)

Transition: Journey Teaching (9:51f)



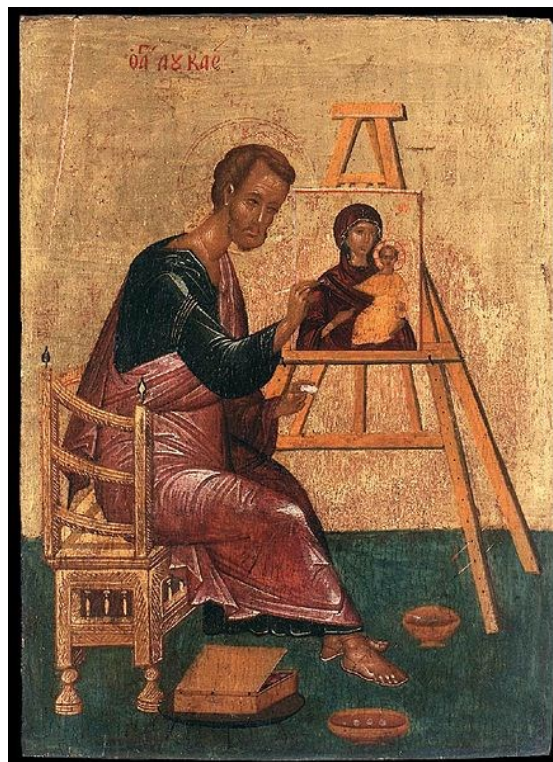
Between summaries of Jesus' ministry with John the Baptist and the Twelve linked to stories of feasting and fasting (Lk 7.24-30; 9.1-17) are stories of women (Lk 7.36-8.3; 8.40-48) and the central theme concerned with the formation of Jesus' disciples (Lk 8.4-39).

Essentially, we learn that this is a community in crisis and in need of transfiguration and healing (Lk 9.28-43). These vignettes anticipate Jesus' teaching on the journey to Jerusalem which occurs from Lk 9.51f.

Session Summary

From our engagement with Lk 4-9, we recognise how Luke:

- Continues to portray Jesus as God's spirit-filled agent;
- Presents Jesus as revealing a God who delights in people and creation;
- Sees Jesus' meal ministry and table communion with the socially excluded as central and challenging to Luke's audience;
- Allows the theme of 'Word-Deed' to permeate this section of the gospel, as expressed in Jesus words and deeds;
- Is convinced that Jesus' healings and meals are signs of God's communion with creation and humanity;
- Anticipates the next major section of the gospel, the journey to Jerusalem.



Luke Paints the Icon of the Mother of God Hodegetria.

Attribution: By Unknown Icon Painter, Russian (early 15th century)

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