

Luke: Jesus and the Outsiders, Outcasts, and Outlaws

Adam Hamilton

Chapter 6 Discussion

Crucified with the Outlaws (pgs. 109-136)

Biblical Foundations Luke 23-24

Opening Prayer

Holy and loving God, as we finish our study of Luke by again standing in awe before your Son's cross and empty tomb, fill us from above with the power of your Holy Spirit, that we may more fully offer and entrust ourselves to you, following the example and for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Three "Last Words" from the Cross in Luke

The Gospels record seven statements from Jesus as he hung on the cross. The three statements Luke records do not appear in any other Gospel. They are Luke's way of helping us understand the significance of Jesus' death on the cross.

Read Luke 23:32-43

- What does Jesus' prayer in verse 34 show about him and the meaning of his death?
- At his crucifixion, Jesus models his own teaching (Luke 6:27-28).
 - Why does Jesus teach his followers to pray for those who cause us harm?
 - When and how do you pray for those who mistreat you?
 - How does doing so make you feel, and what does it lead you to do?
- "We are part of that 'them,'" writes Hamilton (Luke, pg. 125). Jesus came to lift up the lowly, and that includes you and me and all people in the lowliness of our sin and need for forgiveness.
 - How does or how could hearing Jesus' prayer as a prayer *for you* help you when you feel guilt for past sin?
 - How does or how could it shape your present action?
- Hamilton tells the story of Carol Hannah extending forgiveness to Justin Seabon.

- When and how have you experienced or witnessed the power of forgiveness to lift people up from guilt and bitterness?
- Why does one of the men crucified next to Jesus insult him?
- Why does the other man being crucified respond as he does?
- Which of these two men, if either, do you identify with more, and why (or why not)?
- The man who asked Jesus to remember him was a violent criminal, Hamilton reminds us. But in that moment, Jesus assured him he would join Jesus in paradise. What does Jesus' response to this man show about Jesus and the meaning of his death?
- Hamilton notes that Jesus' prayer in verse 46 quotes Psalm 31.

Read Psalm 31 (Cultural Background Study Bible pgs. 907-909)

- Why do you think Jesus thought of this psalm as he died?
- How, if at all, does reading the full psalm increase your understanding of Jesus' death?
- "In your darkest moment, in the midst of the pain, uncertain precisely what will happen next, as the crowd insults him, as his enemies gloat over him, as his body fails him, Jesus prays, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." (Luke, pg. 131)
- When if ever have you experienced darkness so deep it seemed to have the final word?
- Were you able to entrust yourself to God in that moment? If so, how?

The Cosmic Rhythm of Crucifixion and Resurrection

Read Luke 24:1-12

- Why do the women who go to Jesus' tomb react as they do when they find it empty?
- How do they react to the announcement of Jesus' resurrection?
- Why do the apostles react to the women's story as they do?
- With which of these reactions, if any, do you most identify, and why?

- Why do you think the risen Jesus doesn't appear to the women who visit his tomb in Luke, as he does in Matthew (Matthew 28:8-10), or to Mary Magdalene in John (John 20:11-18)?
- How might this detail help Luke develop the special themes and emphases of his Gospel?
- The two men who appear at Jesus' tomb ask the women, "Why do you look for the living among the dead?" (Verse 5)
- When, if ever, have you looked-for life in the wrong places?
- What happened?
- How do churches and society look for life in the places where life cannot be found?
- "We all live, at points, a crucified life," writes Hamilton (Luke, pg. 142).
- What does he mean?
- Do you agree? Why or why not?
- What do Jesus' words in Luke 9:23-25 tell us about what it means for his disciples to live crucified lives?
- When is it appropriate for Christians to seek and avoid suffering and when, if ever, is it not?
- Hamilton shares that he is often asked how belief in God is possible in the face of the terrible suffering and tragedies that happen in the world.
 - When, if ever, have you asked this or a similar question yourself?
 - How would you respond to someone who asked you this question today?
- Hamilton mentions several metaphors or images the New Testament uses to explain the meaning of Jesus' death: a ransom to buy our freedom, a sacrifice to procure our forgiveness, a punishment taken in our place, a picture of the selfless love to which God calls us all, a defeat over the cosmic powers of sin and evil.
 - Which of these metaphors or images appeals most to you, and why?
 - Why doesn't the New Testament explain the meaning of Jesus' death in a single and consistent way?
- "In Jesus' death and resurrection," writes Hamilton, "light conquers darkness, love vanquishes hate, and life defeats death. The death and resurrection of Jesus shows us that these powers of darkness and evil, sin, sickness, tragedy, and death will ultimately be defeated" (Luke, pg. 147).
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When and how, if ever, have you witnessed this cosmic rhythm for yourself?

Before we depart...

Let us read aloud a passage from our book (Pg. 148)

Closing our Session

We thank you God, for the witness of your servant Luke, whose carefully ordered account of our Lord's birth, ministry, death, and resurrection challenges us to respond in greater faithfulness, and encourages us to a greater trust and hope in you. May the ancient words we have read and on which we have reflected become and remain, by your spirit, fresh and living words, burning in our hearts, that we may witness, as Luke did, to the power and love of your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

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As We Begin.....

Jesus had supper with his disciples. The disciples at this supper sat among the table and began to debate over who would be the greatest among them. Jesus heard this and took this moment, a perfect teachable moment and he went over, grab the bowl for washing, the water, and a towel, took off his outer garb and started to wash his disciples' feet. Of course, they were taken back by this, and one refused. Jesus then responds by saying "If you do not let me wash your feet, then you no longer have a place as my disciple."

After he completes this, he puts his outer garb back on and then returns to the table. He says to his disciples, that, I have done this, to show you that in order to truly become great, one must become like the lowest servant.

After supper Jesus then tells his disciples things are about to get bad. He will be counted as a criminal, tried, and put to death. He said that earlier I told you to take a purse and to trust that God would take care of you. Now I am telling you to take your wallets and your bags, and even have a sword, because this are about to get difficult.

These swords that he told them to carry were not necessarily for fighting. He was speaking in hyperbole again making a point. They would be guilty by association, and labeled or branded as outlaws as well, since they travel with, and spend the majority of their time with Jesus.

Praying on the Mount of Olives

Jesus practice prayer often in his time on earth. He also practiced praying the psalms and many other biblical prayers. We see these prayers emerge as the story of the journey to the cross and the crucifixion unfold. This is an important example in how his purpose on earth was fulfilled.

Each place where Jesus prayer, plays an important part in how the story is brought to life. Jesus says to his disciples upon arriving at the Mount of Olive

Pray that you won't give into temptation." He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, knelt down, and prayed. He said, "Father, if it's your will, take this cup of suffering away from me. However, not my will but YOUR will be done." (Luke 22:4-42)

Through this and during all the suffering the he endured Jesus has been predicting his death. Showing us all through his actions he will save and free us from the slavery of our own sins.

Jesus does not want us to suffer, prays not to suffer, but in the end is willing to suffer if his suffering is essential in God's redemptive purposes. However, we do learn that suffering is not God's plan, nor does I happen at God's initiative. However, when these things happen, God acts both to strengthen us, and ultimately, to redeem our suffering.

The violence we witness in this Gospel against Jesus will be the initiative of those who taunt, torture, and kill him. But God knew these things would happen and planned to use them as instruments of redemption.

An Angel and Perspiring Blood

In Luke 22:43-44 we read:

“Then a heavenly angel appeared to him and strengthened him. He was in anguish and prayed even more earnestly. His sweat became like drops of blood falling down on the ground.”

In these verses we see that Jesus is not a machine; he is a human being. Divine, but also, as the Chalcedonian creed makes clear, “truly human.” Jesus experiences anguish and fear. Matthew and Mark make this point as well. John however, seems almost embarrassed to show Jesus’s humanity in such an intense way. John’s account of Jesus’s arrest in the garden doesn’t mention his anguish at all.

This passage shows that Jesus struggled, was afraid and experienced these emotions of panic. He responded by praying.

The perspiring drops of blood is a rare medical condition known as hematidrosis. It is thought to be caused by intense anxiety when your body’s fight or flight mechanism narrows the capillaries or prepare us for actions in the face of fear. If the fear is suddenly relieved, the capillaries dilate, and in some cases, rupture, leaving blood entering the sweat glands.

This response would line up with an angel strengthening Jesus in the midst of his intense fear. The release he had as he prayed and found God’s help through the messenger God sent.

Jesus prays a lot, and his disciples took note, and they asked him to teach them how to pray.

Prayer in life does not remove the threat but provides strength.

Three “Last Words” from the Cross in Luke

The Gospels record seven statements from Jesus as he hung on the cross. The three statements Luke records do not appear in any other Gospel. They are Luke’s way of helping us understand the significance of Jesus’ death on the cross.

Read Luke 23:32-43

³²Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed.³³When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left.³⁴Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”^[a] And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

³⁵The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is God’s Messiah, the Chosen One.”

³⁶The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar³⁷ and said, “If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.”

³⁸There was a written notice above him, which read: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

³⁹One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: “Aren’t you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!”

⁴⁰But the other criminal rebuked him. “Don’t you fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence?”⁴¹We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.”

⁴²Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”^[b]

⁴³Jesus answered him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

There is a traditional cite in Jerusalem for the site, which presently is inside the walls of the old city, covered by a cathedral. There is also, just outside the city wall a place, called “Gordon’s Calvary,” which is a sheer cliff with caves. When the sun is at its height, the dark caves give it the impression of a skull. Right underneath is an ancient grotto, which was obviously used as a burial site. Whether that is the real place or not cannot be determined anymore at this time.

Luke tells us that Jesus was placed between two criminals. The Greek word he uses is *kakourgoi*, “wrong doers.” Matthew and Mark call them “thieves.” He is the only Gospel writer who reports Jesus’ prayer for those who crucified Him. Some Bible scholars believe that this information was added by later copyists, but there seems to be no reason to accept this.

John draws our attention to the fact that the dividing of Jesus’ clothing was in fulfillment of prophecy. In the psalm that opens with the words “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me,” David wrote: “They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.”

Both Matthew and Mark tell us that the two robbers who were crucified with Jesus joined in insulting Jesus. According to Luke only one of them did. Whether this means that one of the two did not use insulting language at all, or that he began by doing so and later changed his mind, is difficult to determine.

It is also difficult to understand that this scene of terrible, inhuman suffering could bring people to the point of mocking the victim. We do not read that the two robbers were also the object of the glee of the crowd. Evidently, it was felt that, if Jesus were in fact who He had claimed to be, it would have been impossible for Him to accept this crucifixion. Islamic theologians believe that “the prophet Jesus” could not have been the one crucified. The Koran states that this was the way it seemed, but in reality, it was Judas, whose appearance God had changed so that he looked like Jesus, who was hung on the cross.

The way Luke describes it, it seems as if what the soldiers did in giving wine to Jesus was part of their mockery. They may have acted as if they were cupbearers who presented the cup to the king. Matthew tells us that Jesus refused the drink after tasting it. The wine was mixed with gall, probably as a substance that would numb pain. They may have done this more for the purpose of having fewer problems in nailing Jesus to the cross than out of pity for His suffering. In doing so the soldiers did not know that they were fulfilling David’s prophetic words: “They put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst.”

(1) Matthew 27:34. This was evidently a draught prepared with narcotics and stupefying drugs, no doubt by some of those compassionate women addressed by him on his way to the cross as ‘daughters of Jerusalem,’ a common work of mercy at that time, and one apparently permitted by the guards. This, St.

Matthew tells us, 'he tasted of,' no doubt in courteous recognition of the kindly purpose of the act, but he refused to do more than taste of it. He would not dull the sense of pain, or cloud the clearness of his communion with his Father in that last awful hour.

(2) The second, mentioned here by St. Luke, seems to imply that the soldiers mocked his agony of thirst— one of the tortures induced by crucifixion — by lifting up to his parched, fevered lips, vessels containing their sour wine, and then snatching them hastily away.

(3) The third (John 19:28-30) relates that here the Lord, utterly exhausted, asked for and received this last refreshment, which revived, for a very brief space, his fast failing powers, and gave him strength for his last utterances. The soldiers, perhaps acting under the orders of the compassionate centurion in command, perhaps touched with awe by the brave patience and strange dignity of the dying Lord, did him this last kindly office.

No one present at the crucifixion could have understood that the cross meant the fulfillment of all Old Testament sacrifices.

Luke mentions the sign put on the cross above Jesus' head: "THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS." All four Gospel writers mention this sign, but there is a difference of wording in each of the texts. John gives us the most detailed version, which is probably the original one: "JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS."⁷⁶⁸ John also mentions that the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek, the three languages used in the Roman Empire.

Matthew and Mark mention the mocking, but they make it sound as if both thieves were involved. Luke tells us that it was only one of the two. This may mean that the second thief began to mock and changed his mind later when he realized how Jesus accepted His suffering. We assume that most criminals who were executed would curse and blame God for their fate. When the second thief realized how Jesus underwent His pain, he stood in awe and understood that this Man had a relationship with God that he had never known himself. It also made him realize that he received what was due to him. He may have known more about Jesus than we can gather from the text. He may have heard about the miracles Jesus had performed and about His teaching. It seems, however, that he recognized Jesus for Who He was, "the King of the Jews," the Messiah.

The second thief then turned to Jesus and asked to accompany him as he dies and enters into the presence of God. Jesus answered him that he would be with Him “in paradise” the same moment he dies. Much has been written about this amazing statement. Jesus opens His statement with the word “amen,” making the promise into an oath before God. And He tells him that he will be with Him “in paradise.” The Greek word used is *paradeisos*. The word is from Persian origin, meaning “garden.” It is obvious, though, that the reference here is to more than to the place where we find Adam and Eve in the beginning of the Bible story.

Although we must be careful to build a theology about life after death on this statement, it is obvious that, when the soul leaves the body, it enters into the presence of God. Whether “paradise” is a temporary abode for the soul of the believer who dies, or an in-between stage for those who await the resurrection of the body, cannot be concluded from Jesus’ words. What is obvious is that this criminal would not face judgment and condemnation when he breathed his last. Satan would have no hold on him. Those who were crucified were considered to be damned by God. Satan expected to receive three victims that day. He got only one!

It is also clear that Jesus does not speak about His return as King of kings and Lord of lords. The word “today” makes this clear. This is not, in the literal sense of the word, “My Father’s house,” about which Jesus said to His disciples: “In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.”⁷⁷⁰ Otherwise the word “today” would make no sense in this context.

The Trials (pg. 121)

As Jesus is being tried all of his disciples were waiting in the courtyard. During his trial the men that were holding Jesus in custody taunted and beat him. They blindfolded him and demanded that he prophesy who was to beat him, because they did not truly believe that he was a truly God, and the one who would later be sacrificed for their sins.

Upon trial, Pontius Pilate was unable to find any charges against him. Jesus followed the law very closely, he did not give them much reason to convict him, however, they viewed his claims as blasphemy against theirs thus they deemed it appropriate that he must be put to death. Now God and Jesus

knowing all that would happen knew that it would end badly, but the world needed this slight disruption to truly get God's plan of Salvation for us back on track.

Scripture tells us in Luke 23:5 that the crowds claimed that he agitated the people with his teaching throughout Judea—starting from Galilee all the way here.” Agitate in this instance implies seeking to move the people to rebellion. But he wasn't agitating them towards rebellion against Rome. He was agitating them to rebel against religious hypocrisy of the rules that made the ordinary people. Pilate then sends Jesus for trial in front of Herod who had been waiting to meet Jesus, because he had heard of his works.

After Jesus was tried in front of Herod, he was sent back with a purple robe and a crown of thorns. This final trial was not mentioned in any other Gospel.

He was accused of being an outlaw, he was whipped. To no avail this did not appease the masses. Pilate asks them who they want released, Barabbas, or Jesus the King of the Jews. They all shout Barabbas, to whom they all shout Barabbas. This was possibly to demonstrate that Jesus would be the ultimate sacrifice for all of mankind. In Luke 22:37, Jesus had foretold, “counted among criminals.”

Psalm 31 (Cultural Background Study Bible pgs. 907-909)

For the director of music. A psalm of David.

¹In you, LORD, I have taken refuge;
let me never be put to shame;
deliver me in your righteousness.

²Turn your ear to me,
come quickly to my rescue;
be my rock of refuge,
a strong fortress to save me.

³Since you are my rock and my fortress,
for the sake of your name lead and guide me.

⁴Keep me free from the trap that is set for me,
for you are my refuge.

⁵Into your hands I commit my spirit;
deliver me, LORD, my faithful God.

⁶I hate those who cling to worthless idols;
as for me, I trust in the LORD.

⁷I will be glad and rejoice in your love,
for you saw my affliction
and knew the anguish of my soul.

⁸You have not given me into the hands of the enemy
but have set my feet in a spacious place.

⁹Be merciful to me, LORD, for I am in distress;
my eyes grow weak with sorrow,
my soul and body with grief.

¹⁰My life is consumed by anguish
and my years by groaning;
my strength fails because of my affliction,^[b]
and my bones grow weak.

¹¹Because of all my enemies,
I am the utter contempt of my neighbors
and an object of dread to my closest friends—
those who see me on the street flee from me.

¹²I am forgotten as though I were dead;
I have become like broken pottery.

¹³For I hear many whispering,
“Terror on every side!”
They conspire against me
and plot to take my life.

¹⁴But I trust in you, LORD;
I say, “You are my God.”

¹⁵My times are in your hands;
deliver me from the hands of my enemies,
from those who pursue me.

¹⁶Let your face shine on your servant;
save me in your unfailing love.

¹⁷Let me not be put to shame, LORD,
for I have cried out to you;
but let the wicked be put to shame
and be silent in the realm of the dead.

¹⁸Let their lying lips be silenced,

for with pride and contempt
they speak arrogantly against the righteous.

¹⁹How abundant are the good things
that you have stored up for those who fear you,
that you bestow in the sight of all,
on those who take refuge in you.

²⁰In the shelter of your presence you hide them
from all human intrigues;
you keep them safe in your dwelling
from accusing tongues.

²¹Praise be to the LORD,
for he showed me the wonders of his love
when I was in a city under siege.

²²In my alarm I said,
“I am cut off from your sight!”
Yet you heard my cry for mercy
when I called to you for help.

²³Love the LORD, all his faithful people!
The LORD preserves those who are true to him,
but the proud he pays back in full.

²⁴Be strong and take heart,
all you who hope in the LORD.

Read Luke 24:1-12

Jesus Has Risen

24 On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. ²They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. ⁵In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? ⁶He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: ⁷“The Son of

Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.’”⁸ Then they remembered his words.

⁹When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others.¹⁰ It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles.¹¹ But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense.¹² Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.

Before we depart...

Let us read aloud a passage from our book (Pg. 148)

Closing our Session

We thank you God, for the witness of your servant Luke, whose carefully ordered account of our Lord's birth, ministry, death, and resurrection challenges us to respond in greater faithfulness, and encourages us to a greater trust and hope in you. May the ancient words we have read and on which we have reflected become and remain, by your spirit, fresh and living words, burning in our hearts, that we may witness, as Luke did, to the power and love of your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.