

An Explanation of
**THE GOSPEL ACCORDING
TO LUKE**



BEHOLD, THE MAN

**BEHOLD
SERIES
3**

The Gospel According to Luke

The Gospel According to Luke

Behold, The Man

Ger de Koning

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Het Evangelie naar Lukas

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Abbreviations of the Names of the Books of the Bible

Old Testament

Gen – Genesis

Exo – Exodus

Lev – Leviticus

Num – Numbers

Deu – Deuteronomy

Jos – Joshua

Jdg – Judges

Rth – Ruth

1Sam – First Samuel

2Sam – Second Samuel

1Kgs – First Kings

2Kgs – Second Kings

1Chr – First Chronicles

2Chr – Second Chronicles

Ezra – Ezra

Neh – Nehemiah

Est – Esther

Job – Job

Psa – Psalms

Pro – Proverbs

Ecc – Ecclesiastes

Song – Song of Songs

Isa – Isaiah

Jer – Jeremiah

Lam – Lamentations

Eze – Ezekiel

Dan – Daniel

Hos – Hosea

Joel – Joel

Amos – Amos

Oba – Obadiah

Jona – Jonah

Mic – Micah
Nah – Nahum
Hab – Habakkuk
Zep – Zephaniah
Hag – Haggai
Zec – Zechariah
Mal – Malachi

New Testament

Mt – Gospel of Matthew
Mk – Gospel of Mark
Lk – Gospel of Luke
Jn – Gospel of John
Acts – Acts of the Apostles
Rom – Letter to the Romans
1Cor – First Letter to the Corinthians
2Cor – Second Letter to the Corinthians
Gal – Letter to the Galatians
Eph – Letter to the Ephesians
Phil – Letter to the Philippians
Col – Letter to the Colossians
1Thes – First Letter to the Thessalonians
2Thes – Second Letter to the Thessalonians
1Tim – First Letter to Timothy
2Tim – Second Letter to Timothy
Tit – Letter to Titus
Phlm – Letter to Philemon
Heb – Letter to the Hebrews
Jam – Letter of James
1Pet – First Letter of Peter
2Pet – Second Letter of Peter
1Jn – First Letter of John
2Jn – Second Letter of John
3Jn – Third Letter of John
Jude – Letter of Jude
Rev – Revelation

Explanation of general format

PERSONAL PRONOUNS are capitalized when pertaining to Deity.

BRACKETS [] are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words which are not found in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek but implied by it.

SHARP BRACKETS < > are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words possibly not in the original writings.

When **ASTERISKS** * are used in New Testament quotations, it is to mark verbs that are historical presents in the Greek which have been translated with an English past tense in order to conform to modern usage. The translators recognized that in some contexts the present tense seems more unexpected and unjustified to the English reader than a past tense would have been. But Greek authors frequently used the present tense for the sake of heightened vividness, thereby transporting their readers in imagination to the actual scene at the time of occurrence. However, the translators felt that it would be wise to change these historical presents to English past tenses.

ALL CAPS in the New Testament quotations are used in the text to indicate Old Testament quotations or obvious references to Old Testament texts.

The Gospel According to Luke

Introduction

If we give a description of someone, we can do so from different angles. For example, we can highlight someone as the father of a family. In addition, a description of the same person is also possible as a colleague or as a neighbor. In this way we see how four evangelists – under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit – report the life of the Lord Jesus during His stay on earth. In the four biographies we have in the Bible, Matthew tells in his Gospel about the Lord Jesus as King, Mark presents Him as Servant, Luke describes Him as true Man and finally John writes about Him as the eternal Son of God.

The purpose of this Gospel is to look at the Lord Jesus as Man. Hence the call: “Behold, the Man” (Jn 19:5) is chosen as the subtitle for this book. If we read this Gospel with the desire to see Him as Man, we will get to know Him as Someone in Whom God has come close to us men. He became equal to men, yet without sin (Heb 4:15).

Ger de Koning

Middelburg, October 2009, new version 2020, translated 2020

Purpose of the Gospel according to Luke

Luke presents the Lord Jesus as the Son of Man, the Man of God for all men. In Him God reveals Himself in redeeming grace to lost men. In this Gospel God addresses all mankind. Here, the dispensation of the law is not replaced by another dispensation (the kingdom) as in the Gospel according to Matthew, but here the law is substituted by saving heavenly grace. Grace is not just the solution to the problem of sin. Grace goes much further and that is what this Gospel presents. This Gospel is not so much about what God wanted to deliver us from, but what He wanted to make of us.

In this Gospel, men are presented as men with whom God is pleased (Lk 2:14). God has predestined them to that purpose. Therefore, a heading for

this Gospel could be “taken into favor in the Beloved” (Eph 1:6, Darby Translation). Favor or grace contains everything that God has prepared for us in His counsels. It is said of believers that they are made pleasant in the Beloved, for it is He, the beloved Son, in Whom God reveals Himself. In Him God comes in grace as Man to us. He is the Man from heaven, He is true Man, yet without sin.

The Writer Luke

God used Luke to record this Gospel. Luke is a co-worker of the apostle Paul and a physician by profession (Col 4:14; 2Tim 4:11; Phlm 1:24). He is most probably a Gentile of origin and he writes to a Gentile. It shows that the grace of God is also for the Gentiles.

As Paul’s companion he wrote about things on which Paul expands in his letters. There is a close connection between these two servants, who have spent a lot of time together. Luke shows us what Paul further elaborates on: the sonship of the believer. Luke speaks of sons of the Most High (Lk 6:35), a son of peace (Lk 10:6, literal translation), sons of light (Lk 16:8), sons of God (Lk 20:36), sons of the resurrection (Lk 20:36). Sonship is the highest position of the believer before God, for that is what the believer is in the presence of God Himself as a joy to His heart (Eph 1:5).

Luke 1

Lk 1:1-4 | To Theophilus

1 Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, 2 just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, 3 it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write [it] out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; 4 so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.

With his account of the life of the Lord Jesus on earth, Luke wants to make the converted Gentile Theophilus better acquainted with Who He is. There were many accounts about the life of the Lord Jesus in circulation, but they were insufficient. That's because the "many", who had undertaken to compile this account of Him, were not inspired. Luke does not accuse them of false intentions or falsehood in what they have written, but their biography clearly fell short. In all cases it was nothing more than the work and effort of *men* to tell the things that are completely certain and believed among Christians.

Because their work failed, it was necessary to write a new and above all God-given account about Christ. When we read Luke's considerations to record the Lord's life, we notice that there is with him talk of a "motive" and of "inspiration". Both come from God. God worked in Luke the desire to take on this task. Subsequently He has led him entirely and completely into everything he writes down.

We must carefully bear in mind that the difference between an inspired Scripture and another scripture is not that only the inspired is true and that everything else is untrue. A scripture other than an inspired Scripture need not be untrue. No, the big difference is that an inspired Scripture represents the truth as *God* sees it. This Gospel that Luke writes is not just a biography, as other historians have written. It is *God's* story about Christ, which from beginning to end breathes the special meaning with which it pleases Him to permeate it.

This is distinctive for all inspired Scriptures, whatever their form or meaning may be. Inspiration excludes mistakes in the story and the text. And that's not all. Inspiration also includes a Divine purpose to teach the believer the revelation of the glory of God in Christ.

Besides the fact of inspiration, we also see a difference between Luke and the other, uninspired writers in the working method. The many uninspired writers have delivered what they themselves have seen of the Lord's life. In it they were servants of the Word. This may mean that in their account they have testified of the Lord Jesus as the Word (Jn 1:1,14). Luke, like all those who have already compiled an account, also wants to compile an account.

Those who have already written an account, have as a source their own perception. They started from what they have seen with their own eyes from the Lord's deeds. This also determines that what they have written is no more than their human observation. They could only pass on their own observations, without being able to go into the depths of the truth that in Christ has come to man.

Luke has done an accurate, thorough study of the Lord's life. He has personally "investigated everything carefully from the beginning". He has not limited himself to what he has seen of the Lord. He has also studied the beginning of things concerning the Lord. It is also doubtful whether he knew the Lord Jesus on earth. This is not a problem when we realize that God has given him the special inspiration and revelation of the Spirit. This makes it clear that God has chosen Luke as His instrument, not only to add a new eyewitness testimony to the many that already existed, but to show to men His own pleasure in this Man.

Although Luke says "it seemed fitting for me as well ", just as it had seemed fitting for others well, he still distinguishes his own account from their account. He does not tell how he obtained his perfect knowledge of all the things he writes about, but he simply states the fact that he possesses this perfect knowledge. Accurate research has brought him to the account we have before us in this Gospel.

We know that God has shown Luke everything that is needed for this. But everything God shows a man, does not relieve that man of his own respon-

sibility to study what he wants to describe. Only God is able to unite the responsibility of man with His own sovereign plan. He can do so in such a way that man's responsibility remains fully valid, while that man acts precisely according to God's plan and purpose.

This is aptly seen in what Luke presents as a result of his research in this Gospel. Not a word is mentioned about the wonderful combination of Luke's thorough research and the inspiration and revelation by the Spirit. Yet every believer who reads this Gospel with prayer, will notice how much this Gospel also has come into existence under the mighty effect of God's Spirit and is therefore completely different from any other account about the Lord's life.

There is still a peculiarity to mention about the way in which Luke passes on his findings. He says to do so "in consecutive order". By this, however, he does not mean to say that he describes the life of the Lord in a regular chronological or historical order. The "consecutive order" that he means, has to do with the spiritual coherence of the events. He places events together, not because in time the one event is followed by the other, but because certain events belong together through an inner connection.

For example, he lets an event in which Mary sits at the Lord's feet to hear His words to be followed by an event in which prayer is central (Lk 10:38-42; 11:1-13). In doing so, he emphasizes the inner connection that exists between the Word and prayer, without wondering whether these two events also follow one another in time. A considerable time may have elapsed between the two events. We will find more proofs of this approach to the Lord's life in this Gospel. We will see how facts, conversations, questions, answers and discourses of the Lord are presented by Luke according to their inner connection and not always as events have taken place successively.

Then we hear to whom Luke writes. He writes to the "most excellent Theophilus". "Most excellent" refers to the official position of Theophilus and not to his character. Although Luke is mainly concerned with preaching the gospel to the poor (Lk 4:18; 6:20; 7:22), his Gospel as a whole is directed to this man of high society who is now a disciple of the Lord.

Someone who holds a high position in the world is particularly exposed to the tricks and temptations of Satan and to the worries of life. These are all reasons why the seed of the Word remains without fruit (Lk 8:12-14). The fact that a whole part of the Bible is addressed to this one Gentile, especially one having such a status in the world, is a special proof of God's gracious care (cf. 1Cor 1:26). God knows what every human being needs and despises no one. He also wants to provide in the needs of this high-ranking man who is now humble and certainly feels his spiritual poverty despite his earthly status and wealth (cf. Jam 1:10).

Luke wants to convince the converted, non-Jewish Theophilus of the reliability of the Christian truth he has accepted. With this, Luke provides aftercare to this converted Gentile. The purpose of the evangelist is to give him a better understanding of "the Way". He is taught in the Christian truth, but he needs confirmation and foundation. This means that he needs the Scriptures, for certainty concerning faith is connected to the holy Scriptures, the Word of God. Without the Word we wouldn't have certainty about anything. If we want to serve and edify people who have (recently) come to faith, this can only be done by teaching them God's Word.

Lk 1:5-7 | Zacharias and Elizabeth

5 In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah; and he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. 6 They were both righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord. 7 But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both advanced in years.

Luke starts his account by pointing out that Herod is king of Judea. This means that the situation is completely different from what God has meant. There is no king from the tribe of Judah and certainly not the one King from the tribe of Judah. The people came under foreign domination because God had to surrender His people into the hands of enemies because of their sins. This means that when the Lord Jesus is born, there is someone on the throne who has wrongfully taken this place, no matter to what extent God has allowed this because His people have left Him.

These two circumstances, that the people have turned their backs on God and that a stranger reigns over them, characterize the time when the Lord Jesus comes on earth. Yet in that dark time, when the people massively forget God, there are people who are faithful to Him. In the first two chapters of this Gospel we meet several people who do have a heart for God. In them we learn to know the God-fearing remnant of Israel, from whom Christ, according to the flesh, came forth.

Luke writes his Gospel for all men, but in his description he acts according to the principle “to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom 1:16). In the first two chapters he shows that grace first comes to the faithful remnant. This remnant we see represented in seven persons or groups of persons: Zacharias and Elizabeth, Joseph and Mary, the shepherds, Simeon and Anna.

The first of this remnant are Zacharias, meaning ‘Yahweh remembers’, and Elizabeth, meaning ‘my God is oath swearing’. Both names speak of the faithfulness of God. Zacharias is a priest. He belongs to the division of Abijah, which is the eighth division (1Chr 24:5,10). It is no coincidence that it is the eighth division. The number eight speaks of a new beginning. His wife also comes from the lineage of priests. Zacharias has sought and found a wife who, like him, belongs to a lineage that is connected with God.

This is an important indication for those who are looking for a partner. Scripture is clear that a believer can only marry “in the Lord” (1Cor 7:39), that is with someone who also knows the Lord Jesus as Savior. Scripture also clearly forbids a believer to marry someone who does not know Christ (2Cor 6:14-18). Moreover, should anyone who wants to serve the Lord himself, be willing to marry someone who does not want to?

In his investigation Luke found out what kind of people Zacharias and Elizabeth are. He can give a wonderful testimony of them. They are not perfect people. Yet he does not write about the wrong things they have done, but about the overall impression they give. They are people who live for God and they want to give Him to what He is entitled. To do so, they strictly observe “all the commandments and requirements of the Lord”, that is Yahweh. Their way of life must have stood out amidst the deviated and sinful people.

Despite their impeccable life, they have no child. Yet God has promised that by faithfulness to His commandments He will bless the womb (Deu 28:1-4). Zacharias and his wife did not blame Him, they did not revolt because of not getting children. Their trust in God is rewarded with a blessing for which they have long prayed (verse 13), but no longer count on.

God blesses in a way that reveals the weakness of the instrument, a weakness that, in human thought, takes away all hope. Elizabeth had an example in other God-fearing women who were also barren and where God also gave the blessing of conceiving a child when all hope was gone. The way God sometimes goes with faithful people is not always easy to understand. Yet God is worthy of all trust that He always has blessing for those who put their trust in Him.

Lk 1:8-10 | The Priestly Service of Zacharias

8 Now it happened [that] while he was performing his priestly service before God in the [appointed] order of his division, 9 according to the custom of the priestly office, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. 10 And the whole multitude of the people were in prayer outside at the hour of the incense offering.

The priestly division to which Zacharias belongs is on duty. At that time, there were approximately 18,000 priests, divided into twenty-four divisions. Each division came in turn to Jerusalem to serve there. Every day the lot determined which priest who had not done so before, was allowed to burn incense. Given the large number of priests, each priest would have this privilege only once in his lifetime.

How many times Zacharias will have been in Jerusalem in the turn of his division? And every day the lot was cast. Every day, Zacharias will have prayed that he should now have the privilege to burn incense. Each time it had been cast and so far each time it had not fallen on him. So he waited for it, just as he waited for a son and always in vain. Then, finally, the lot falls on the old man. He may burn incense.

This is a privilege and a beautiful and at the same time responsible task. He must represent the people and may approach God. Zacharias was probably one of the few priests who did this work with devotion to God

and love for the people. The priesthood as a whole is in great decay. The attitude of the chief priests toward the Lord Jesus shows how much the priesthood is not focused on God but on themselves. It is not about whether God gets what is due to Him, but whether they themselves can benefit from it. Zacharias is an exception to this practice.

Because he is faithful, God can inform him about His plans. He wants to give Zacharias insight into this. Faithfully fulfilling the task we have been given is always, even today, one of the conditions for receiving and understanding communications from God. We will see later that faith is also needed.

The lot has determined that Zacharias may burn incense. There is still the question of the lot here. God then used that to make known His sovereign will. That fits in with an Old Testament situation. When the Lord Jesus has gone to heaven, the lot is used for the last time. That is in the case of choosing an apostle instead of Judas (Acts 1:26). That is even before the Holy Spirit is poured out and has come to earth to guide the believers. Once the Holy Spirit is here, we no longer read anywhere about the use of the lot. From His coming on earth the Holy Spirit guides the believers in making decisions.

Zacharias must enter the temple of the Lord, Yahweh, to “burn incense”. The incense offering symbolically represents the Lord Jesus in the loveliness He has for God. Thus the believer may now tell God how excellent He is and thus, as a priest in a spiritual sense, burn incense in a spiritual way. When the offering of incense is brought, the priest stands in its scent. In the same way the believer is pleasant in Who Christ is for God. Incense is a picture of the prayers of the saints (Psa 141:2; Rev 5:8) and it is a picture of the personal glory of the Lord Jesus (Rev 8:3). Our prayers are only pleasing to God through Him (Heb 13:15).

Zacharias works in the temple on earth in accordance with the law. In the course of this Gospel we see the transition from law to grace, from earth to heaven. The Gospel ends with the good news for all nations and a Christ Who is taken up into heaven to perform His high priestly service there.

This Gospel begins with a scene in the temple and ends with a scene in the temple. In the first chapter we see a mute priest. In the last chapter we find

people who are anything but mute. They praise and worship God as people destined to be priests in a new dispensation, that of the church. This Gospel begins with a believer who cannot speak, it ends with believers who cannot stop praising.

The fact that the whole multitude of the people is outside is the typical characteristic of the Old Testament. The mass is thus in prayer. Prayer is common in this Gospel. Eight times we find the Lord Jesus in prayer (Lk 3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18,29; 11:1; 22:41; 23:34a). The people are in prayer, which does not mean that they have a real longing for God. Yet there will also be faithful believers present who are praying in real reverence. They realize that God can only deal with them on the basis of the incense offering. Prayer is part of their religion. They may not approach God themselves. It has to be done via a mediator.

Wherever in professing Christianity someone occupies a position between man and God, it is holding to this Old Testament situation. It is the privilege of the believer that he may now approach God himself. Every believer is a priest and is called to bring spiritual sacrifices (1Pet 2:5).

Lk 1:11-17 | The Birth of John Announced

11 And an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense. 12 Zacharias was troubled when he saw [the angel], and fear gripped him. 13 But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John. 14 You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. 15 For he will be great in the sight of the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb. 16 And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. 17 It is he who will go [as a forerunner] before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

For many years, the daily incense offering was brought. Zacharias has never heard of anything unusual happening during the offering of the incense. Then, when it is his turn, it happens: Zacharias is visited by an

angel from heaven. Such a visit with a message for people on earth was a long time ago. An angel “went down at certain seasons” for the healing of all kinds of diseases (Jn 5:4). That was certainly a gracious intervention by God, but now an angel is coming for a far more glorious purpose, for he announces the birth of the predecessor of the Messiah.

The angel takes place to the right of the altar of incense. This emphasizes the connection between his message and the altar of incense. The message he brings is connected to the power of the incense offering. Only because Christ is so pleasing to God, God can make this visit to the earth and communicate His plans. The fact that the angel stands to the *right* of the altar also has a meaning. The right side speaks of favor (Mt 25:33-34) and power, the place where the Lord Jesus is, at God’s right hand. The message is about the favor of God that He grants to people and about the power He has to actually grant that favor.

Zacharias has prayed many times in his life and has become accustomed to the holiness of God through his priesthood. Yet he’s troubled and gets scared of this visit from heaven. We sometimes have the same experience. We can be faithful to the Lord, read His Word and speak with Him, and yet be troubled when He suddenly shows us something of Himself. How familiar are we really with Him?

The angel reassures him and encourages him that his petition has been heard. The pious priest often prayed for the blessing of a child, but so far the answer has not been given. Now an angel comes to tell him that his prayers, which have been sent up so long seemingly in vain, have been heard.

The angel does not speak of ‘your petitions’, but of “your petition”. All the petitions of Zacharias formed one petition for God. The answer to a prayer that has been sent to God in sincerity many times must sometimes be waited for a long time. Sometimes it seems as if God does not hear. Here we see that He does not forget all these petitions, but waits in His wisdom with the answer until the time He has determined.

The child being announced must be named “John”, which means ‘Yahweh is gracious’. Thus, every answer to a petition is an expression of the Lord’s grace. The angel does not only announce the birth of a son with the name

that this son should have. He also announces what the birth of this son will mean for Zacharias and many others. His son will be one who causes happiness and joy. When God answers prayers, the result is happiness.

Not only his parents and other people will rejoice over John. Especially God will rejoice over him. John will be a Nazirite, completely separated for God. It will be the joy of the Holy Spirit to guide this son throughout his ministry. The answer to each of our prayers is also a great joy for God. We may give Him what He gives us. We do this when we use what He gives us to His glory.

The effect of his separated life and his powerful message will be that many of the sons of God's people who have departed as a whole will turn back to the Lord their God. John will be a special instrument for restoring the broken relationship between the people and God.

Not only will he restore the relationship between many of Israel and God, but also between people. Therefore he will go out before the Lord Jesus, He is Yahweh, sent by Him as His ambassador. His Sender can be seen in him. He does not come up in his own strength and with an invented story. His performance will be reminiscent of Elijah (Mal 4:5).

When we see Elijah at Mount Carmel (1Kgs 18:20-46), we see his spirit and power manifested there in a special way. What an unshakeable and fervent zeal for the glory of the LORD, the God of Israel! And what a result! The broken relationship between Israel and the LORD is being restored when we hear the people shouting: "The LORD, He is God; the LORD, He is God" (1Kgs 18:39). John's call for repentance has such spiritual power that he is compared here with Elijah who led the people back to the LORD, Yahweh.

By forsaking God there is no unity in Israel, but division. Everything in Israel is broken. Sin always brings such disruptions. John is sent "TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN", that is, what he will be used for by God is to reunite them in love (Mal 4:6). He will do this by telling them that their mind is one of disobedience. Instead, he will teach them "the attitude of the righteous". Disobedience must be condemned and instead teaching must be given in what is pleasing to God.

The purpose of his performance is to prepare for the Lord, Yahweh, that is the Lord Jesus, a people ready to receive Him. In this respect God wants to equip every believer to do a service like that of John. Like John, we too live in a time of transition. It is an end time and at the same time a time that announces a new beginning. Judgment is about to come in the coming of Jesus Christ. We must point out to people that He comes and that only through repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ one can endure the day of His coming and be saved from judgment.

Lk 1:18-23 | The Unbelief of Zacharias

18 Zacharias said to the angel, "How will I know this [for certain]? For I am an old man and my wife is advanced in years." 19 The angel answered and said to him, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. 20 And behold, you shall be silent and unable to speak until the day when these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their proper time." 21 The people were waiting for Zacharias, and were wondering at his delay in the temple. 22 But when he came out, he was unable to speak to them; and they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple; and he kept making signs to them, and remained mute. 23 When the days of his priestly service were ended, he went back home.

Zacharias does not believe the angel at his word. He shows himself to be an 'unbelieving believer'. He ignores everything the angel says about the announced son and asks for a sign (cf. 1Cor 1:22a) to confirm that God has indeed answered his prayers. What do his prayers mean then? Did he pray in faith that God is able to do what he has asked? Do we trust God when we pray? How is our relationship with Him and how do we know God?

It is significant that a man who has lived with God for so long and has been in His presence so many times, doubts a message from heaven. He doubts that God is able to change the course of nature where necessary. The Scriptures, that Zacharias knows, bear witness to this in the examples of Sarah, Rebekah and Hannah. What about our faith in Scripture?

The angel's response sounds almost indignant. Does Zacharias know who he is dealing with? The angel is not personally offended, but the reaction

of Zacharias is an insult to God. Gabriel points this out when he declares that he *stands* (present tense) in the presence of God, not that he *stood* (past tense) in the presence of God. He is aware of God's presence and that he is the spokesman of God. Doubting his words is doubting what God says. He has said nothing but what God has told him. Therefore, Zacharia's doubt is proof of his unbelief.

We also don't like it when someone does not believe our words, how much more an angel who speaks on behalf of God and how much more God Himself when He speaks. Often we do not read the Scripture with sufficient intimacy in our hearts. We read the Scripture as if we wanted to become familiar with words and phrases. But if, by reading the Scripture, I do not enter into the presence of God with my heart and conscience, I have not learned the lesson that the Scripture would like to teach me. Zacharias is not in the presence of God with his heart and conscience, so he cannot believe that what is said comes from God.

Zacharias receives the requested sign, but it is a sign of judgment. The sign he receives fits his unbelief, just as speaking fits faith (2Cor 4:13). The priestly service is silenced by unbelief. However, it is a temporary judgment. The words of God will be fulfilled in their time, despite his unbelief. The punishment will be removed by mercy at the right time.

While the conversation takes place in the temple house, the people outside are waiting for Zacharias. The people are not only literally outside the temple house, they are also outside the announcements made in the temple. They are not used to a priest staying in the temple house that long. Something must have happened.

When the priest appears, he cannot give them the usual blessing. Between the mass on the temple square there will have been several faithful, people who all expect the salvation of Jerusalem (Lk 2:38). The muteness of Zacharias is also a sign for the people, that all may reflect on it. Zacharias makes the gesture that they can go. He himself remains mute. He keeps on fulfilling his service the prescribed time. When the service of his division is ended, he goes home.

Lk 1:24-25 | Elizabeth Becomes Pregnant

24 After these days Elizabeth his wife became pregnant, and she kept herself in seclusion for five months, saying, 25 "This is the way the Lord has dealt with me in the days when He looked [with favor] upon [me], to take away my disgrace among men."

The Lord fulfills His word and Elizabeth becomes pregnant. When she notices she is pregnant, she keeps herself in seclusion for five months. This is not because she is ashamed, but because she wants to honor the Lord for five months for His wonderful deed. She is conscious of His looking with favor upon her. After all, she was barren. She suffered from the defamation she had among the people because of her childlessness. Now the Lord has taken that away from her. For this she wants to honor Him.

Lk 1:26-30 | Gabriel Is Sent to Mary

26 Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, 27 to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. 28 And coming in, he said to her, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord [is] with you." 29 But she was very perplexed at [this] statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was. 30 The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God."

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, Gabriel is sent back to earth. God determines the right time of and for everything. The time is His. He never rushes. There must be a space of six months between the birth of the Lord Jesus and that of His predecessor. When heaven opens again to send a messenger to earth, the goal this time is not the temple in Jerusalem, but Nazareth. This place would have been the last place man had chosen for the fulfillment of God's plan, a place of which the name alone is sufficient to condemn those who come from it (Jn 1:45-46).

The angel must go to a virgin with a message, a special message. That he is sent to a virgin is in the forefront. Further on the name of the virgin is mentioned. She's not someone the people of the world talk about. She is unknown to the world, but God knows her. He has chosen her to become the mother of His Son.

Therefore it is important that she is a virgin and that her husband comes from the house of David. Thus will be fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah who spoke of a virgin who will become pregnant (Isa 7:14). Also, all prophecies shall be fulfilled that speak that Someone from the house of David, namely the Son of David, shall reign on the throne of the LORD, Yahweh, in Jerusalem (1Chr 29:23; 2Sam 7:12-16; Psa 89:3-4).

That no one knows Joseph and Mary is proof of how decayed the house of David is. Joseph is not a prince, he is just a simple carpenter. Here God finds the atmosphere in which His promises can be fulfilled.

The angel visits Mary at home. He comes with his message to her in her private life and not in the temple, as with Zacharias. It shows how close God comes to people with His announcements. The angel greets her. He assures her that the Lord, Yahweh, is with her. He also calls her "favored one". It makes Mary special among all women of the whole world that she has been chosen by God to become the mother of the Lord Jesus.

This can only be the result of the grace of God. In herself she is no more than any other woman. Yet God chooses her because she is someone who is aware of the grace of God. From this greeting the roman-catholic church produced the idolatrous idea that Mary would be full of grace and could act as mediator. However, in herself she is a sinful woman who also needs her Son as Savior for her sins. To become as such the mother of the Messiah is nothing but God's grace.

We do not read that she is troubled by the *appearance* of the angel, like Zacharias (verse 12), but that she is perplexed at his *statement*. The angel's greeting leads her to think about it. She can't grasp this, but she doesn't reject it in unbelief. This marks her God-fearing mind.

The angel reassures her. He assures her of the favor she has found with God. That is, she has searched for it, like once Noah (Gen 6:8). The favor given to her to become the mother of the Messiah goes far beyond the grace she found with God as a sinner. It will have been her wish to become the mother of the Lord Jesus, as it will have been of every God-fearing virgin in Israel who is of the descendants of David (Dan 11:37a).

Lk 1:31-35 | The Birth of Christ Announced

31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; 33 and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end." 34 Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" 35 The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.

What is written in verse 31 makes it clear that the Lord Jesus is true Man, for it is announced here that He will be born of a woman (Gal 4:4). He is her Son. The name she must give Him shows that He is Yahweh. It has been told to Zacharias that Elizabeth will become pregnant and give birth to a son as the answer to their prayer. That makes it clear that God is faithful and proves His goodness to His people who are waiting for Him. What is said to Mary is an act of sovereign favor. She has found favor with God. She will become pregnant despite the fact that she is not married. She will give birth to a Son through a sovereign act of God.

Just like the angel told Zacharias how to call his son, the angel tells Mary how to call her Son. His name will be "Jesus", which means "Yahweh is salvation", or "Yahweh is Savior". The name "Jesus" was common in Israel, but Mary knows that her Son will fully live up to that Name.

The angel continues to tell her more about this wonderful Son by explaining His Name. This shows that He is more than just true Man. In the first place He is really "great" like no other person is. He is great in Himself. This is different from John who is said to be great "in the sight of the Lord" (verse 15). No person can be compared to Him. We will see in this Gospel that He lives perfectly to God's glory in everything He does and says. That makes a person really great.

In His Person He is the "Son of the Most High". This makes us aware of the fact that His position is also exalted above every conceivable power on earth. In that position the believers are also connected with Him, for in this very Gospel they are also called "sons of the Most High" (Lk 6:35). In that position He will also sit on the throne of His father David that God

will give Him. That will be His own throne. The Lord Jesus doesn't yet sit down on His throne, but on the throne of His Father (Rev 3:21).

When He sits down on His own throne, He will reign over the house of Jacob, that is all Israel, the twelve tribes, and not only the house of Judah. The fact that Luke speaks of "Jacob" and not of "Israel" is reminiscent of the troubles God had with this people. Jacob is the name for the people in their weakness and often self-willed actions.

The Lord Jesus will not reign in weakness and temporary with the passing power of a perishable life, as has been the case for every earthly ruler before Him. He will be King "forever". He has no successor. His kingship, His reign, will have no end (Dan 7:14) and will therefore never be taken over by another.

Mary does not ask, as Zacharias did, for a sign, but for an explanation. Her question does not come from unbelief, but is according to the thoughts of God. That is why she gets an answer. In the case of Zacharias it was only about the exercise of the extraordinary power of God in the ordinary, natural course of events. Mary, however, does not ask *if* it will happen, but she asks with holy confidence *how* it will happen, because it must happen outside the ordinary, natural course of events. She is not in doubt about the fulfillment itself. This, by the way, shows the obviousness of no sexual intercourse before marriage. She can't imagine how she will get pregnant anyway.

In the answer she receives, we hear the revelation of God regarding the wonder of the conception of the Lord Jesus. We hear about the reality of the virginal birth and the completely supernatural character of Christ becoming Man. He will not be begotten by a man, but by God. The Man Christ Jesus shall be the Seed of the woman (Gen 3:15), not of a man. Mary will become pregnant through the working of God the Holy Spirit Who will come over her like a shadow. This overshadowing means that the glory of God will come over her in a way which we see later on the mountain of glorification, when a cloud overshadows Peter, John and James (Lk 9:34; cf. Exo 40:35).

As a result, God is the Father of the Lord Jesus as Man and He is also called the Son of God as Man. He was not begotten by a sinful man as Joseph is

as well, but by God. That is why He has a body that is as limited and weak as that of any other person, but without a sinful nature which makes it impossible for Him to sin. He Who is born is therefore “the holy Child”, Who is completely separated for God. He takes His place among men, but at the same time He is the totally other One. He is the sinless One, the righteous One.

Lk 1:36-38 | Encouragement for Mary

36 And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month. 37 For nothing will be impossible with God.” 38 And Mary said, “Behold, the bonds slave of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.

As an extra encouragement the angel says that Elizabeth has also conceived a son, although she is old and has always been barren. Gabriel tells Mary that Elizabeth is pregnant, and he does so to strengthen Mary in her faith in view of what he said to her. For Mary this is proof that God is at work. He is busy to perform great things. She is allowed to hear about it and God even uses her for it, as He uses Elizabeth.

God uses weak instruments to do great things, so that it turns out that it is His work and not that of people. The angel also speaks of Elizabeth because the Son of Mary and the son of Elizabeth, however completely different they may be, are also closely related. Elizabeth’s son is the predecessor of the Son of Mary.

Elizabeth’s pregnancy despite her advanced age and continued barrenness is proof that nothing is impossible with Him. He is able to give life where it is not humanly possible. He is the God Who is busy to bring a turn in the fate of His people in a way that goes beyond human thought.

Mary believes and submits herself to the Lord. God’s wonderful intervention did not lead her to self-exaltation, but to humility. She calls herself “the bonds slave of the Lord”. Whenever there is an awareness of the grace that God grants, the result is the readiness to be fully available to serve. The greatness of this wonder brings God so close to her that she forgets herself.

The angel has brought his message and leaves.

Lk 1:39-45 | Mary With Elizabeth

39 Now at this time Mary arose and went in a hurry to the hill country, to a city of Judah, 40 and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. 41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. 42 And she cried out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed [are] you among women, and blessed [is] the fruit of your womb! 43 And how has it [happened] to me, that the mother of my Lord would come to me? 44 For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy. 45 And blessed [is] she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord."

Mary is full of everything she has heard. She must speak about it. With whom can she do this better than with her who has also been so visited by God? The angel has told her about Elizabeth. That arouses the desire to go to her. Experiences with the Lord, discoveries from His Word, ask for fellowship, ask to be shared with those who recognize it, and rejoice about it. Mary goes in a hurry to the hill country. This symbolically suggests that fellowship about the things of the Lord is related to heaven, exalted from the earth. What happens between Mary and Elizabeth is a wonderful example of fellowship in the Holy Spirit.

Her goal is to share her experiences and what she has heard with Elizabeth. For this she has to go to the house of Zacharias, because there is Elizabeth. This couple did not live separated from each other. Maybe she has been with Elizabeth more often before and a greeting has taken place. The greeting with which Mary greets Elizabeth this time, however, is different from all other times. It is not the greeting that takes place when two family members meet after a long time. The reason for both of them is a visit from heaven and Divine announcements made to both of them. So this time there is no need exchanging all kinds of courtesies. Immediately there is fellowship.

Through God's work in both women there is an extraordinary inner bond between them. John reacts in Elizabeth's womb to the greeting of Mary, and Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit. This is a scene of the most intimate fellowship in response to the things God is doing in view of the coming of His Son into the world. If hearts are full of His work in His Son,

it is the result of the work of the Spirit Who at the same time receives all the freedom to fill hearts. Then we experience fellowship in the way God finds joy in it.

Elizabeth does not think of the great wonder of her own pregnancy and the special son she will give birth to, but she is full of the favor Mary has received and the fruit of Mary's womb. This is truly the result of being filled with the Holy Spirit. Then all attention is focused on the Lord Jesus and what He does and has done. He is the subject of the conversation. This is the true fellowship of the saints.

Mary is blessed by God because among all women it has been given to her to become the mother of the Messiah. Also the fruit of her womb is blessed, but in a very different way. That fruit receives no blessing as a subject of favor, but is the object of blessing and praise. Mary does not deserve praise, the fruit of her womb does. The fruit of her womb is Christ. He, of Whom Solomon says that the heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain Him (1Kgs 8:27), dwells in the womb of the virgin of Nazareth.

Later He will be three days and three nights in the womb of the earth. Just as He comes out of the mother womb immaculately, He comes out of the tomb immaculately. He is completely unique among people. He is Man *and* God in one Person. He is God revealed in the flesh. Therefore He is the object of the praise of men.

Elizabeth is also impressed that the mother "of my Lord" comes to her. She accepts in faith that the Child in Mary's womb is her personal Lord. It is not about Mary, but about her Child, although there is a close connection between Mary and the Child. We hear this personal "my Lord" (cf. Jos 5:14; Psa 110:1) said by three other persons in the New Testament. We hear it from the mouth of Mary Magdalene (Jn 20:13), Thomas (Jn 20:28) and Paul (Phil 3:8). It is said by two women and two men.

Elizabeth tells how the words of greeting spoken by Mary caused a reaction with the child in her womb. She even noticed that the child leaped in her womb "for joy". The greeting caused joy in this unborn child. This is at the same time a thorough judgment on those who think they can abort an unborn child because it would not be a person.

Finally, Elizabeth expresses her full faith in what the Lord has said to Mary. She praises Mary blessed, not for who Mary is in herself, but because Mary has believed. This faith in what God has said may also characterize us. After all, we have what God has said to us in His Word. If we believe that, we too will be blessed.

Lk 1:46-47 | The Song of Praise of Mary

46 *And Mary said:*

"My soul exalts the Lord,

47 And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.

After the praise of Elizabeth comes the praise of Mary. Her praise has much in common with the praise of Hannah on the occasion of the birth of Samuel (1Sam 2:1-10). After the praise of Mary, Luke mentions five more in the first two chapters, so that we find a total of seven praises. We hear about the praise of Zacharias (verses 67-79), of the angels (Lk 2:14), of the shepherds (Lk 2:20), of Simeon (Lk 2:29-32) and of Anna (Lk 2:38). These are all, except of the angels, expressions of the personal faith overwhelmed by the goodness of the Lord. If that is the case, a praise is inevitably.

Of Mary is not mentioned that she is filled with the Holy Spirit as we read of Elizabeth (verse 41). This does not mean that she is not filled with the Holy Spirit, but that her expressions reflect even more than Elizabeth's her personal experience of the things that has been told to her. She speaks about the feelings of her soul and her mind.

With her soul she exalts the Lord. The Lord cannot become greater through our praise, but He can become great for our souls. This exaltation has nothing to do with something small that is placed under a microscope and then made great. It is much more something here like, for example, a huge star that is so far away that it seems small. Looking at it through a telescope does not make the star greater, but brings its greatness closer, it is easier to see how great the star is. Thus can our soul exalt the Lord. We can sing of everything in which He is great, such as His grace and mercy. Thus we express something of His greatness in our world in which He seems so small and insignificant.

When we think of all the favors that He has done to us, a song of praise arises in our souls. His lovingkindness sets our soul in motion, feelings of gratitude are inevitable. We exalt Him, while we still fall so far short of His true greatness. Paul longed that Christ would be exalted in his body (Phil 1:20). There it is about making visible Who Christ is through him, that through his physical actions others will see Christ, that He is brought closer to people. Here it is about the expressions of the soul, the need to tell God and others Who He is for me personally. How little do we do so, because we are so little impressed by all the goodness and grace of God that He has proven in the gift of His Son. Let Mary be an encouragement for us to exalt the Lord more and more.

Not only her soul is involved in her song of praise, also her mind is. A song of praise is not just an emotional expression, but there are spiritual considerations. Her expression of joy lies in the fact that she has a Savior in God. She says that although she is the mother of the Lord Jesus, she also needs Him as Savior.

In the expression of her feelings she is also a picture of the faithful remnant that will react in the same way when Christ comes to His people for the second time. The character of the thoughts that fill the heart of Mary and the application thereof, are entirely Jewish. It's the only way to do it. It is with it as with many psalms and also as with the song of praise of Hannah (1Sam 2:1-10). At the same time, these expressions of gratitude give us so much for our own souls, for us who, by grace, may know the great truths of Christendom. We may also know God as Savior. Thus He is mentioned several times in the New Testament (1Tim 2:3; Tit 1:3; 3:4).

However, we are not in a relationship with Him as Yahweh, the LORD, the God of the covenant with Israel, but we may know Him as our Father and call Him "Abba, Father" by the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6). This is the result of the coming of the Lord Jesus, in Whom God has revealed Himself as the triune God: as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Does that bring our soul to a constant song of praise?

Lk 1:48-50 | Reason of the Song of Praise

| 48 *"For He has had regard for the humble state of His bonds slave;*

For behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed.

49 "For the Mighty One has done great things for me;

And holy is His name.

*50 "AND HIS MERCY IS UPON GENERATION AFTER GENERATION
TOWARD THOSE WHO FEAR HIM.*

Mary is aware of her own humble state and that God has had regard for her precisely for that reason. She is deeply impressed by His actions toward her personally. When she says that all generations will count her blessed, it is not to exalt herself, but it has its reason in what God has done to her, what He has made of her. She is someone by whom God is honored and not the object of worship that the roman-catholic church has made of her.

She sings of God as "the Mighty One". The awareness of our own humble state and the awareness of what God has done to us will make us sing of Him as "the Mighty One". Only He was able to do this to us in His omnipotence. This is what the remnant of Israel will experience when He brings it from tribulation into the blessing of the kingdom of peace.

However, He is not only powerful, He is also "holy". All His actions toward us are based on His holiness. He can never give any blessing to any person if that person does not answer to His holiness. This guarantees at the same time the immutability and security of the blessing. His Name is holy, He blesses where He has dealt with sin. He did so in the Son Whom He promised to give.

The blessing He gives is not only bound to His holy Name, but also to His "mercy". God, in His mercy, looks after miserable people who cannot survive without Him, and are aware of this. He doesn't withheld His mercy from those who fear Him. As long as there are men on the earth who cry to Him in their need, He will show His mercy. This applies to the remnant that is in distress; this applies to the sinner who is in distress; this applies to the believer who is in distress. He never ceases to be the Merciful.

Lk 1:51-53 | The Future Sung About as Fulfilled

51 "He has done mighty deeds with His arm;

He has scattered [those who were] proud in the thoughts of their heart.

52 "He has brought down rulers from [their] thrones,

And has exalted those who were humble.

53 *"HE HAS FILLED THE HUNGRY WITH GOOD THINGS;*

And sent away the rich empty-handed.

What Mary sings of in these verses only becomes reality in the realm of peace, but faith already sees this situation ahead. Mary sings of the mighty deeds done with His arm. He's going to concern Himself with His people to carry out His plans. What He is going to do goes against the pride of man. The proud think they have the matter under control, but when God goes to work, He will scatter that proudness. None of it will remain. This applies to His people Israel, who are going their way in unbelief, and it applies to the people of the world, who believe that they can control everything. In both cases, the folly of their heart's deliberations are revealed.

Despite all the intellectual and financial efforts, the chaos in the world is getting worse in all areas. Yet, in his pride, man thinks that he can get the matter under control. However, God will intervene in the world affairs in His time, as He has done so often in small, in secret, only visible to faith.

Faith sees that through Him the kings reign (Pro 8:15-16; Rom 13:1). He appoints them and deposes them (Hos 13:11). He has brought down from the throne powerful people like Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar and exalted a shepherd boy like David. Thus will He overthrow the throne of satan and exalt His Servant Jesus before all eyes. This is the language of faith, while the world thinks it can decide for itself who rules it.

It gives rest to the believer when he remembers that the rulers would not have any power if God had not given them. The Lord Jesus bears witness to this (Jn 19:11). This thought will support the remnant when the anti-christ comes to power and he fiercely persecutes the faithful. All believers who sigh under a God-hostile reign may know this.

Not only the rulers are under His authority, also the circumstances in which the believers find themselves are under His authority. He will put an end to all the social misery resulting from persecution. He will reverse the roles. Those who suffer need will be satisfied, and those who enrich themselves at the expense of others will lose everything.

Lk 1:54-55 | God Fulfills His Promises

*54 "He has given help to Israel His servant,
In remembrance of His mercy,
55 As He spoke to our fathers,
To Abraham and his descendants forever."*

What God is about to do is proof that He has not forgotten His servant Israel. It looked like that because the people had been in misery for so long. But He is concerned with His people. He has always been full of mercy for them, but now is the time, the fullness of time, to remember His mercy, to express it. Faith continues to look forward to this.

Mary, faith, the faithful remnant, knows that the basis of God's actions is His Word. What He has promised, He will do. His promised blessing will come. Even if it turns out that the coming of His Son to bring that blessing fills the measure of the wickedness of the people, the promises remain. He will fulfill them.

Lk 1:56 | Mary Returns to Her Home

56 And Mary stayed with her about three months, and [then] returned to her home.

By the time John is born, Mary returns to her home. She has spent three months with Elizabeth. These have been months of fellowship, of sharing the good things God is going to give. What a grace that God gives such periods in the lives of His children on earth.

Lk 1:57-66 | The Birth of John the Baptist

57 Now the time had come for Elizabeth to give birth, and she gave birth to a son. 58 Her neighbors and her relatives heard that the Lord had displayed His great mercy toward her; and they were rejoicing with her. 59 And it happened that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to call him Zacharias, after his father. 60 But his mother answered and said, "No indeed; but he shall be called John." 61 And they said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who is called by that name." 62 And they made signs to his father, as to what he wanted him called. 63 And he asked for a tablet and wrote as follows, "His name is John." And they were all astonished. 64 And

at once his mouth was opened and his tongue [loosed], and he [began] to speak in praise of God. 65 Fear came on all those living around them; and all these matters were being talked about in all the hill country of Judea. 66 All who heard them kept them in mind, saying, "What then will this child [turn out to] be?" For the hand of the Lord was certainly with him.

The wonder of Elizabeth's pregnancy takes place naturally. In a natural way, John's life also develops in the womb of his mother. When she has completed the time of her pregnancy, she gives birth to her child. It was known that it would be a son. Her joy at the birth of this son is great. Her neighbors and family members share in this joy. All recognize that the birth of this son is due to the mercy of the Lord.

They do not see it as just an act of mercy, but as an act that in a special way expresses the mercy of the Lord. The Lord has shown His mercy to Elizabeth in a great way through the birth of John. This great mercy is the cause of joy. His mercy returns again and again in this section (verses 50,54,58,72). His great mercy should always bring us to great joy, whether it be shown to ourselves or to others.

John is circumcised according to the law on the eighth day (Gen 17:12; Lev 12:3). On that occasion, those who circumcise him also give him his name. They call him Zacharias. That's his father's name and that's why he should get that name. But they do not know the special calling of this son. If we are not taught by God, we proceed according to our habits. Elizabeth was taught by God and gives her son the name that the angel told them. When she pronounces the name "John", she speaks about the grace of God, because John means 'Yahweh is gracious'.

The others are not convinced. They hear about the grace of God, but they do not grasp it. They do not acknowledge that that name is more than a name to maintain habits. By clinging to their habits, the special meaning of his name escapes them. Then they go and ask his father. He must say what his son will be called. Zacharias still can't speak. That's why he asks for a tablet to write on. Then he writes the name of his son. That is John and not his name, Zacharias. This proves his faith.

He knows this will be his only son and yet he does not give him his own name. By doing so, he renounces his right to his child and acknowledges

God's right to him. By giving a name that has no relationship with himself or his family, Zacharias acknowledges that this child originates from God and that he himself has no right to him. He dedicates him to God.

The others are all astonished. They do not share in the faith of the meaning of that name. However, they do acknowledge that something special is going on. Many people can be impressed of a certain act of God in that way, but without bowing before that God and acknowledging that He is at work.

The moment when Zacharias, in obedience and faith, writes down the name 'John', is the moment of the end of the discipline of his muteness. Unbelief has made him mute; faith opens his mouth. He recognizes the grace of God. As soon as he can open his mouth again and use his tongue, the first thing he does is: praising God. The remnant will also do so when the discipline of God in the great tribulation is over and they acknowledge the grace of God.

All who hear of these things fear. They notice things that go beyond their understanding, things they can neither explain nor deny. If a person has to deal with such things, and he cannot see the Lord's hand in them because of a lack of faith, fear strikes him. It is not anxiety, but awe. In any case, it provides a lot of material for conversation.

The events surrounding the birth of John make a deep impression. All believe that this child is something special. They perceive that the hand of the Lord is with this boy. John is one of whom you notice that the Lord is with him. Do the people know us like that?

Lk 1:67-73 | God Remembers His Covenant

67 And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying:

68 "Blessed [be] the Lord God of Israel,

For He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people,

69 And has raised up a horn of salvation for us

In the house of David His servant —

70 As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old —

71 Salvation FROM OUR ENEMIES,

And FROM THE HAND OF ALL WHO HATE US;

72 To show mercy toward our fathers,

And to remember His holy covenant,

73 The oath which He swore to Abraham our father,

After his wife Elizabeth (verse 41), Zacharias is now filled with the Holy Spirit through Whom he is going to prophesy. It will not have been difficult for the Holy Spirit to make Zacharias speak. Zacharias has been able to think for more than nine months.

The birth of his son is the reason for his prophecy, but its content is not his son. Although he also devotes a few words to him, the content of his prophecy is the unborn Christ of God. This is always the fruit of the work of the Holy Spirit, Who always glorifies Christ.

Zacharias praises Yahweh, the God of Israel, because He stood up for His people. He speaks of the coming of Christ as if it had already taken place. This is a general characteristic of prophecy: it speaks of events as already fulfilled, while historically they are still in the future. All the events he mentions in the first part of his song of praise (verses 68-75) will only be fully fulfilled at the second coming of Christ.

He says that God has visited His people. After all God had to leave His people because of their unfaithfulness (Eze 10:18-19; 11:23), but He is now returning to them again in the Person of His Son. He also speaks about the fact that God has accomplished redemption for His people. That will first of all be the redemption from their sins through His work on the cross at His first coming. It will then also be salvation from their enemies by defeating them at His second coming.

His victorious performance is related to the re-establishment of the decayed house of David. The "horn" speaks of power. The power of salvation that He will show is the result of His covenant with "the house of David His servant". All His actions that will result in Him saving and blessing His people are a fulfillment of all that He has said long before by the mouth of His holy prophets.

In his prophecy Zacharias looks forward to events that will save the people of God by delivering them from their enemies and all who hate them. God's people have so many enemies and people who hate them. The tribulation

and persecution are tremendously great and the desire for deliverance is equally great. Christ will save them by judging their enemies. That is what the God-fearing Jew looks forward to. We also have enemies. However, we do not look forward to Christ saving us from them by killing them, but by taking us up to Himself. Zacharias acknowledges that the salvation from the power of their enemies is an act of mercy.

This action of God is the result of His remembrance of “His holy covenant”. He has committed Himself through a covenant to bless His people. In this remembrance of His holy covenant, the meaning of the name ‘Zacharias’ is fulfilled. Zacharias means ‘Yahweh has remembered’. The Holy Spirit inspires him to trust in the unconditional promise to Abraham, as Mary did (verse 55). In the swearing of God the meaning of the name ‘Elizabeth’ is fulfilled. Elizabeth means ‘God has sworn’. That God has sworn is the extra guarantee He gives that He fulfills His promises (Heb 6:13-18).

Lk 1:74-75 | God’s Purpose With Salvation

*74 To grant us that we, being rescued from the hand of our enemies,
Might serve Him without fear,
75 In holiness and righteousness before Him all our days.*

God has a purpose with the salvation of His people from the hand of their enemies. He wants His people, and us, to serve Him without fear. God *grants* this, He is a Giver. If He has saved us from the power of our enemies, it means that we no longer need to fear them. We don’t have to be afraid of Him either. Serving Him without fear is connected with love (1Jn 4:18). Fear and love are incompatible, they exclude each other. He who is afraid of God, shows that he does not truly know His love.

When His people are rescued by Him, so that they may serve Him without fear, He places them before Him. To be there, He makes sure that the people meet to His holiness and righteousness. And not for a while, but for all their days. God’s love goes much further than just serving Him without fear, however great that may be. They may be before Him, that is in His direct presence. That is the blessing of the kingdom of peace.

For us Christians, these concepts go much further. We may know that we already now are in the world “as He is” (1Jn 4:17). That is, the believers

have the same place as Christ. If I have righteousness, I have it in Him; if I have holiness, I have it in Him; if I have life, I have it in Him; so it is with the glory, the inheritance, the love. God blesses us not only *through* Christ, but also *with* Him and not in relation to the earth during the kingdom of peace, but already spiritually now and soon in heaven and forever.

In spiritual terms, we have “put on the new man, which according to God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth” (Eph 4:24). “Holiness” means separated to God, while we are surrounded by evil. “Righteousness” means that we give each one what is due to him, both to God and to men.

Lk 1:76-79 | Prophecy About John

76 *“And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;
For you will go on BEFORE THE LORD TO PREPARE HIS WAYS;
77 To give to His people [the] knowledge of salvation
By the forgiveness of their sins,
78 Because of the tender mercy of our God,
With which the Sunrise from on high will visit us,
79 TO SHINE UPON THOSE WHO SIT IN DARKNESS AND THE
SHADOW OF DEATH,
To guide our feet into the way of peace.”*

In these verses Zacharias addresses the child John. While the old man has the boy in his arms and looks him in the face, he speaks these words to him. These are the first words we have from Zacharias to him in Scripture. He speaks to John about the great privilege of being a prophet of the Most High. John may prepare the ways of the Lord Who will be born (Isa 40:3). This “Most High”, that is the LORD, Yahweh, is the Lord Jesus. The “Most High” is the name of God in the realm of peace, where He is above all, and everything is subjected to Him.

Zacharias tells his son how he will be the forerunner of the Messiah. He will be so by preparing the way in the hearts of people. He knows that the only way to help “His people”, that is the people of the Most High, will be to teach them how to receive forgiveness of their sins and thereby become partaker of the salvation offered by God. For this he will preach

the baptism of repentance. His preaching is based on “the tender mercy” of God, that is the “mercy of God’s intestines”, as it literally says, which becomes so very tangible in the coming of Christ.

“The Sunrise from on high” is a special description for Christ. His coming is truly the morning light of a new day. Every earthly sunrise happens before the human eye from downward to upward, but the rise of Christ is from upward to downward. Zacharias describes the coming of the Sunrise as the shining of light in the darkness and the shadow of death (Isa 9:2; Mt 4:16). The people are in darkness, without light, and the only view they have is death. That is the misery of the people. The coming of the Lord Jesus offers light and sight in that state.

Where light comes, a way becomes clear. That way is the way of peace, of peace with God and with one another. First they did not know the way of peace (Rom 3:17). Through Christ and through the blood of the cross they can get peace with God and then put their feet on the way of peace. It is the way of life, where the shadow of death is gone. On that way their feet can be ‘guided’, that is, God determines the direction of their lives.

Anyone who is at peace with God can go that way, while the feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace (Eph 6:15). This peace is heavenly, it is the peace of God (Phil 4:7). If we have this peace, it will be visible in our walk that we live from this peace. Then we bring all that is in our heart to God. Then we can rest in every circumstance in which He brings us. In this, the Lord Jesus is our example (Mt 11:25-30).

The peace of God is characterized by the rest of God on His throne, unaffected by all the turmoil on earth. The devil will do everything to try to take away our peace. Just as with Job, he will use all kinds of (unpleasant) circumstances for this. In heaven there is nothing that makes us restless and lose our peace. The testimony of the heavenly reality will be seen on earth especially in the peace that we radiate amidst all the turmoil.

Lk 1:80 | Preparatory Years of John

80 And the child continued to grow and to become strong in spirit, and he lived in the deserts until the day of his public appearance to Israel.

In this verse we have the summary of the life of John until the beginning of his service. God occupies Himself with him in the silence of the deserts to prepare him for his serious preaching of repentance, which he will have to preach in the coming days. It is a spiritual preparation for an action against a people who have deviated far from God.

He is not given the task to form a political party and thus to make known God's thoughts to God's people. God does not teach him all kinds of fighting methods and then form an army to chase away the enemy. The real enemy is in the heart. Therefore, the heart must be reached. For this, John must learn to trust only in God.

Luke 2

Lk 2:1-5 | The Census

1 Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. 2 This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city. 4 Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, 5 in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child.

After the various announcements that God has made by an angel as a pre-preparation for the sending of His Son, it's going to happen: God is going to send "His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom 8:3). He brings the firstborn Son into the world (Heb 1:6). In those days of preparation God not only speaks through one of the most powerful angels of heaven, Gabriel, but He also works through the most powerful man on earth, "Caesar Augustus". Gabriel loved doing what God told him to do. Caesar Augustus does not have the slightest idea that God is using him.

Caesar Augustus orders a decree that a census should be taken of all the inhabited earth over which he reigned. He does so with a view to paying taxes. The fact that this emperor has the power to do so makes the state of affairs both in Israel and in the world clear. Caesar Augustus reigns in Israel. It shows that supremacy lies in the hands of the nations, as announced by Daniel (Dan 2:37; cf. Neh 9:36), and it shows the absence of the throne of God on earth.

Yet, as has already been indicated, we see in an impressive way Who really rules. The heathen ruler Augustus does not take God into account in any way. He wants to exercise control over all people. He seeks His own honor and riches, not the honor of God. We see how God uses this proud plan of this heathen ruler to fulfill His own plan.

When it comes to the interests and glory of the Lord Jesus, the man Augustus with all his power and imperial glory is only an instrument in the

hand of God to fulfill His counsels. That it really is true that God has His hand in this is shown by the fact that the census does not take place for the time being at all when God's counsel concerning the birth of His Son is fulfilled. God turns the heart of a king like channels of water (Pro 21:1), that they may do what suits Him. How great it is for us too to know that God is above everything and works all things according to the counsel of His will, to carry out His glorious plans that are for the blessing of His people.

No one opposes the emperor's decree. They all travel to the city where they were born. Everyone must obey. This is the power of the emperor, who is in distant Rome. It shows the complete humiliation and service of God's people. Because of their sins they are slaves of the Gentiles with their bodies and goods (Neh 9:36-37).

Now comes the true meaning of God with this census ordered by the emperor. The order also applies to the inhabitants of Judea. That is why Joseph also goes on a journey. He is but a servant of the emperor and must do what he says. This descendant of King David has as much to obey this command as any other Israelite. No exception is made for him. Yet his obedience to this command only fulfills God's wonderful counsel. This is because the Savior-King will be born in the city where this event must take place according to the testimony of God.

Luke describes in detail where Joseph comes from, where he goes and why. To let this Joseph go there, God sets in motion all the inhabited earth that is under the control of a heathen monarch. God could just as well have told Joseph to move to Bethlehem. But the circumstances in which God's actions take place must impress upon us God's supreme authority that He uses for the good of His people. He works out His plan, without people and sometimes His own knowing how He does this. In retrospect, His own see how He has governed everything to their well-being.

Mary also has to go to Bethlehem. Joseph has not yet married her, but it has been established that they belong together. Mary is with child according to the word of the angel. In her she bears the Lord Jesus.

Lk 2:6-7 | The Birth of the Lord Jesus

6 While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. 7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

The Lord Jesus in the womb of Mary has gone through the development that every human being goes through. This process lasted nine months. Then the day comes when the Savior can be born. The birth of Christ, His coming into the world, is an event of unprecedented significance for faith. God has become Man and thereby partakes of His creation. The Creator visits His creation in a way that only God could think of and carry out. The Son of God humbles Himself and becomes Man (Phil 2:7-8).

How completely different is the Lord from, for example, Theudas who was “claiming to be somebody” (Acts 5:36). Christ does not take the form of an angel and visits the people in that form, as He has done more often before. He also does not come as an adult Man, like Adam. He also does not come with an angelic host to bring down rulers from the throne and take His rightful place there. No, He is born as a helpless Baby. Is there anything weaker than a newborn baby? Thus the Lord comes and partakes as a child of all the weaknesses and situations of human life.

And where is He born? Not in a palace, but in a stable. As a result of the census, the inn is full. The rich have secured a place there, so that Christ is born in a stable. No one wishes to make way for the high-pregnant Mary who carries the Savior in her womb. Nobody pays attention to her and the Child in her womb. Everything speaks of poverty and ignorance. It is also a testimony that there is no place in the world for God, nor for what is of God. As a result, much more perfect is expressed the love that brings Him to earth.

The word “inn” used here means “guest room”, a simple room with room for the cattle in the middle. This word occurs once more. The Lord Jesus uses the same word “guest room” when He indicates where He wants to eat the Passover with His disciples (Mk 14:14). There He calls it “My guest room”. There is no place for Him or for the faithful in the inn of this world. But there is an inn where believers are welcome, an upper room, where He invites His own to be with Him. That is His own inn.

Lk 2:8-12 | Great Joy for the Shepherds

8 In the same region there were [some] shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; 11 for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 12 This [will be] a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

In Matthew 2, in connection with the birth of the Lord Jesus, we meet the great men of the world (Herod) and the religious men in high regard (scribes). However, there is total ignorance among them about the born Christ. They hear of it through wise men from the east, from far beyond the people of Israel. Luke shows us that the shepherds are the first to hear the news of the birth of Christ.

Shepherds were not highly regarded at that time. Especially the night watchmen were often illiterate people. But it is precisely to them that an angel appears to make known to them the great event of the birth of Christ. Shepherds are people who do work that the Lord Jesus also does. He is the good Shepherd. They are busy with the flock and watch over it. Thus the Lord Jesus is busy with His flock, His people.

For the third time in these first chapters an angel appears to people with the message about the coming of the Lord Jesus. Just like Zacharias, the shepherds are frightened. Angels always make a big impression. They are not sweet appearances. He appeared with Zacharias, he entered with Mary, here he stands with them. The angel is suddenly there.

Now there is something more present. There is also the glory of the Lord Himself that shines around them. It is the glory of God in the cloud. God's glory can come to people because the glory of God is present in the born Child. Therefore John, the evangelist, can say about the Lord Jesus Whom he and the other disciples saw when He was with them: "We saw His glory" (Jn 1:14). The glory of God has come to His people. In the dark night, the wonderful light of the presence of Yahweh shines. He appears to His people in glorious grace and not to consume them.

The angel reassures them. They need not be afraid, because he comes with a message of great joy. That joy is not only for them, but for all the people. It must have been a great joy also for the angel to proclaim this message. Happiness is also a characteristic of this Gospel. We heard about it twice in the beginning (Lk 1:14,47) and we will hear it more often. Luke also ends with it (Lk 24:52). The coming of a God Who so gracefully comes to man, can only cause great joy. Not that all people share in it, but they can all get a share it. The offer goes to all, to all the people.

The cause of joy is that “today”, at this moment, “a Savior”, a Redeemer is born, not a judge or legislator. Nor is it a general announcement of the Savior’s birth, but the angel says He is born “for you”. This major event is personal to them. They may know that they are the objects of God’s grace, and every man may know that. In this Savior the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men (Tit 2:11), whether young or old, rich or poor, sick or healthy, strong or weak. For all He has made the Savior to be born.

The Savior is none other than “Christ”, which means “Anointed”, Who at the same time is the “Lord”, that is Yahweh, the God of the covenant. The angel also mentions the place of birth. However, he does not say “Bethlehem”, but “the city of David”. That means He is the promised Son of David, the born King. In all these names mentioned by the angel, there is a fullness of glory of Him Who is born.

The angel gives them a sign by which they will know that he is speaking the truth. People who have expected a Messiah Who is a mighty warrior hero, beautifully dressed and sitting down on a throne, will be embarrassed. In that way He will certainly come back again. That will be to their horror. He has also given a sign for this. That sign will come, namely when He appears for the second time, then in majesty (Mt 24:30). The sign the angel gives here unfolds the spirit in which He now comes to His people and to people in general. The sign is that they will find the mighty Person, just described by the angel, in a Child Who is in the poorest conditions: wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger, a feeding trough.

Lk 2:13-14 | Glory, Peace, Pleasure

13 And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

14 "Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased."

When the angel speaks about his Creator and the wonder He has become Man and the circumstances in which this happens, a crowd of angels joins him. Heaven bursts open, as it were, because it cannot remain silent when it sees such a great glory. God is revealed in the flesh and is seen here by the angels who now see their Creator for the first time (1Tim 3:16). They have a deep interest in this. They are like the cherubim on the ark who also, to symbolize that deep interest, look down with their faces toward the mercy seat (Exo 25:20).

All angels praise God. The angels are occupied with this event, on which the fate of the universe and the fulfillment of God's counsels depends. For He has chosen the weak to shame the strong. By sending a crowd of angels to this despised, small group of night watchmen, God shows that He passes by all the high-ranking persons in Jerusalem.

With the coming of the Lord Jesus, three things become visible. First of all, it brings *glory to God in the highest*. God's honor is set in the full light. In Christ's coming, the love, wisdom and power of God are revealed. It is the proof of a power that rises above sin and of a love that manifests itself in the midst of sin. It is God's wisdom to fulfill His eternal counsel in this way. This is an exaltation of good over evil that can only be found in God and that glorifies Him. He overcomes evil, sin, through the good, the Lord Jesus.

The second consequence of the presence of Him Who reveals God on earth is that there will be *peace on earth*. That is the purpose of His coming, however much He, because He will be rejected, will also be a cause of division and struggle. These heavenly praisers of God are not concerned with the latter. They are busy with the fact of His presence and its consequences as they will once be fully realized in the realm of peace. He Who will work that, is the Person Who is now present.

The third consequence of His presence on earth is *the pleasure, the affection of God with men*. The fact that the Lord Jesus became Man proves God's pleasure with people. He did not take hold of angels, but He takes hold of the descendants of Abraham (Heb 2:16, Darby Translation). People are the

objects of God's infinite love and grace. The life revealed in Christ is the light of and for men (Jn 1:4). It is wonderful to see how these holy beings praise the exaltation of a creature other than them to this exalted place, through the incarnation of the Word, without jealousy. It is about the glory of God and that is enough for them.

Lk 2:15-20 | The Shepherds See the Child and Testify

15 When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds [began] saying to one another, "Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us." 16 So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger. 17 When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child. 18 And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds. 19 But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart. 20 The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.

When the angels have accomplished their task, they return to heaven. Then the shepherds come into motion. They urge each other to go to Bethlehem. They know that Bethlehem is the city of David. In these simple Israelites to whom the angel of the Lord was sent, faith is present and active. The Lord has made things known to them and that brings them to action. They want to see what they have been told.

They react totally different from the religious leaders when they hear from the born King. The leaders put themselves in the service of the enemy and a mass slaughter among the babies of Bethlehem is the result (Mt 2:16-18). The shepherds go to worship. As fast as they can, they go to Bethlehem. There they find Mary and Joseph and the Baby lying in the manger. They see nothing spectacular, but the Baby they see is God's salvation that has come to the people. However, it is in a way that can only be seen by faith.

They leave again when they have seen "this Child". Nothing is said about Mary and Joseph. It is about the Child. Now that they have seen Him, they are going to testify. The Divine testimony they have received from the angel has now been experienced personally in Him Whom they have seen.

Now they can no longer keep to themselves what has been made known to them and what they have seen themselves. They have to talk about this with others. The content of their message is the word, “just as had been told them”.

All who hear what the shepherds say, wonder but it doesn't make people go to the manger to see the Child. It is too common, even shameful, for the Messiah to come to them in this way.

Mary's faith treasures everything she experiences (cf. verse 51). She thinks about it in her heart. For her these are not transient impressions. It is too clear that God is at work and that the birth of her Child is special and will have special consequences. That is what she is thinking and that is what faith is occupied with.

The shepherds are impressed by what they have seen. When they return to their flock, they do nothing but glorify and praise God. They have heard and seen so much beauty. It was all in line with what the angel had told them. This is a wonderful effect of faith in the word, in what has been spoken to them. They do not give it any meaning of their own, but accept it as it has been said. This is the source of the glorification of God and the praise of Him. It will be the same with us if we accept in faith what we read in God's Word. We can only praise Him for what He has shown us in His Word.

Lk 2:21 | Circumcision of the Lord Jesus

21 And when eight days had passed, before His circumcision, His name was [then] called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.

The Lord Jesus is a Man from Israel, a Jew. Therefore the laws are of application to Him. He Who is born of a woman is born under the law (Gal 4:4). He subdues Himself to laws He Himself has given. This means that He is circumcised (Lk 1:59; Gen 17:12; Lev 12:3). Because He has been circumcised, He is obliged to keep the whole law (Gal 5:3). He has done so. When He is circumcised, He also receives the name “Jesus”, which means “Yahweh is salvation”. That's how the angel said it and that's how it happens.

His circumcision has a much richer meaning than just showing His submission to the law. His circumcision also has a spiritual meaning. It looks forward to what will happen to Him on the cross of Calvary and what has actually happened. The circumcision on the cross refers to death under the judgment of God (Col 2:11) by which He truly effected salvation. Thus there can be a new beginning for any man who accepts in faith that Christ has also bore the judgment of God on his sins for him.

The eighth day speaks of that new beginning. It speaks of the new creation of all those who participate in the circumcision of Christ. His circumcision is the foundation that there will be more people of pleasure. God wants sons with whom He is pleased.

Lk 2:22-24 | The Lord Jesus sanctified to the Lord

22 And when the days for their purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord 23 (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "EVERY [firstborn] MALE THAT OPENS THE WOMB SHALL BE CALLED HOLY TO THE LORD"), 24 and to offer a sacrifice according to what was said in the Law of the Lord, "A PAIR OF TURTLEDOVES OR TWO YOUNG PIGEONS."

After the circumcision, the days for purification take place. When Joseph and Mary have undergone the purification ritual (Lev 12:1-6), they take Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord in the temple. Luke is the evangelist of the temple. He begins his Gospel with a scene in the temple and ends his Gospel with it.

The Lord Jesus is the firstborn Son of Mary. Therefore also with Him must be done according to the prescription from Exodus 13 (Exo 13:2,12,15). However, He is not only literally the firstborn Son of Mary, He is also in the full sense of the word the Firstborn of all people and the whole creation (Col 1:15; Heb 1:6) because He is the most important Person. As a result of His circumcision on the cross He is also the Firstborn from the dead (Col 1:18) and therefore also the Firstborn among many brethren (Rom 8:29).

It must have been a great joy for God when Mary presented her Son to Him. God already saw all that in Him. God saw that His Son would bring

many sons to glory (Heb 2:10). The Gospel according to Luke is the Gospel of sonship, of sons of God's pleasure.

At the sanctification there must also be offered a sacrifice. Joseph and Mary also do so. The sacrifice they offer shows the poor circumstances in which Christ is born (Lev 12:8). His parents offer the sacrifice of the poor. At the same time, these sacrifices make way for the true sacrifice that the Lord Jesus will be. His sacrifice is the foundation upon which worship can take place. We are in the temple, which is the place of worship. Worship can only take place on the basis of the sacrifice of Christ and can only take place by those who, as sons of God's good pleasure, are connected to the One Son of God's pleasure.

Lk 2:25-28 | Simeon Takes the Child Into His Arms

25 And there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him. 26 And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. 27 And he came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to carry out for Him the custom of the Law, 28 then he took Him into his arms, and blessed God, and said,

After doing to the Lord Jesus what had to be done according to the law, the words "and there was" direct our gaze to "a man in Jerusalem". He is one of the many men in Jerusalem, but he is a man with special characteristics. His name is "Simeon", which means "hear". He has learned to listen to the voice of the Lord. This can also be seen in his life. He is "righteous" to other people and "devout" Godward. He lives with a view to the honor of God. That is why he also has love for God's people, who are in so terrible a condition. He is also a man with expectations for the future. He is "looking for the consolation of Israel", which he knows will come. He knows that from the Scriptures. The Holy Spirit likes to connect Himself with such a person.

In Simeon we see the God-fearing remnant that recognizes the Lord as the Coming One according to what the Spirit works in them. Among the remnant are those who are aware of the misery and decay of Israel, but who at

the same time are waiting for the God of Israel in faith for His unshakable faithfulness for the consolation of His people. They keep crying: "How long?" (Psa 6:3; 13:2; 35:17; 79:5; 89:46; 90:13; 94:3).

We see still more in Simeon. We see in him the Spirit of sonship. He who possesses the Spirit of sonship and is guided by Him is someone with whom God can have fellowship and share His thoughts. God can make His thoughts known to Simeon. Simeon expects the consolation of Israel and the first to be consoled is he himself. He believes all God's promises with a view to the consolation of Israel. He also believes the promise of God for him personally. It must have been a great encouragement for him to hear that he will see the Christ of the LORD, Yahweh, with his own eyes.

Simeon comes into the temple, not by a star or by a dream or by an angel, but by the Holy Spirit Who is upon him. He is led by the "Spirit of sonship" (Rom 8:15). A man like Simeon who is so guided by the Spirit comes into the temple at the right time. He comes into the temple and there walk Joseph and Mary with the Child Jesus.

He does not need to ask whether the Child that this couple has with them is the Christ of the Lord. The Spirit makes this clear to him. The shepherds have seen the angel and bow down before the Child. The wise men have seen the star and bow down before the Child. Simeon takes the Child into his arms. He embraces Him and encloses Him in His Heart. In his arms lies the salvation of the world and peace for the earth. In fact, whoever encloses the Child in his heart has the salvation and peace already in his heart, while there is no peace on earth yet. If you have Christ in your arms, you can only praise God.

Lk 2:29-32 | The Song of Praise of Simeon

29 *"Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace,
According to Your word;*
30 *For my eyes have seen Your salvation,*
31 *Which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples,*
32 *A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES,*
And the glory of Your people Israel."

When Simeon has the Child in his arms, he praises his Lord, his Master, of Whom he is a bond-servant. The Lord has fulfilled His word to him. He can now depart in peace. The law of Moses was never able to allow a sinful man to depart in peace. Simeon can depart in peace based on what his Master has said. It is not an imagination, but sober faith. It is “according to Your word”. It is not just a passionate desire or an optimistic hope, but complete certainty. There is nothing more certain than the testimonies of God and His Word. Now he has seen with his own eyes the fulfillment of what God has said to him. For it has been revealed to Simeon by God that he would not see death before he had seen the Christ of the Lord. It was promised to him and now he sees Him!

The peace in which he may depart according to the Word of the Lord, is not a matter for him alone. The salvation that is the ground of peace is also meant for others who will not see the Child, but believe in Him. For Paul writes: “The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men” (Tit 2:11). About this salvation as a matter for all nations and not only for Israel, we have not heard in a previous song of praise. That is why Simeon goes further than the others.

He speaks about how the nations lived in the darkness during the time God acknowledged Israel as His people. For the Gentiles these were “the times of ignorance” (Acts 17:30). At that time God did not punish their sinful deeds and made them go on their own ways (Acts 14:16) without interfering. But now, says the apostle, “God is ... declaring to men that all [people] everywhere should repent” (Acts 17:30). The apology for ignorance no longer applies. The light shines, the true light. Christ is that light and He is a light of revelation to the Gentiles. It is now the time of blindness for Israel, while the Gentiles who have been in the dark for so long are now being revealed. They emerge from their humiliating position.

Moreover, when God has accomplished His work among the Gentiles, this will also become true: “And the glory of Your people Israel.” The important verse 32 shows us the consequences of Israel rejecting the Messiah. It also shows what will happen in the future before they reach the place God has purposed for them. This is not the order we find in the prophets, where the Lord is seen as the glory of Israel Who also blesses the Gentiles, but where the Gentiles are subordinate to the chosen people. In this verse 32,

the order is reversed and very telling: “A light of revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of Your people Israel.”

Luke speaks of the present dispensation. The state of affairs predicted by the prophets follows this extraordinary period – that is, the time in which we live – in which the Gentiles have been revealed. Then He will raise Israel to the highest earthly glory above all other nations. Thus it is guaranteed in the wisdom of God that His goodness will always apply to the nations and that He also fulfills His old and special promises to Israel. During the present dispensation, these two things are necessarily separated.

Lk 2:33-35 | The Sword Through the Soul of Mary

33 And His father and mother were amazed at the things which were being said about Him. 34 And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother, “Behold, this [Child] is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed – 35 and a sword will pierce even your own soul – to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”

Joseph and Mary are called “His father and mother”. He is entrusted to them as parents. For them, He is a special Baby with a special task. They cannot understand how special He is and what His task encompasses. They hear in amazement what Simeon, under the guidance of God’s Spirit, says of Him.

Then we read that Simeon blesses “them”, that are Joseph and Mary and not the Child. He then has another word especially for Mary. Her Son will become the great touchstone for all in Israel (Isa 8:14). Many will fall over Him, but many will rise after they have fallen. The latter will happen in the future with a remnant (Rom 11:11-15).

In verses 31-32 we have heard the explanation of the certain fulfillment of God’s counsel in the Messiah. In it we listen to the joy of God’s own heart. In verses 34-35 the effect of the presentation of Jesus as the Messiah to Israel on earth is described. God tests the heart of man. As such, He will be a sign that is opposed.

We find three times that the Lord Jesus is a sign, each time in a different context, but each time connected to an event of enormous importance. The first sign is related to His coming in humiliation, the sign of the Child

in the manger (verse 12). The second sign is related to His rejection, His death, and His resurrection (Lk 2:34-35; 11:29-30). The third sign is related to His appearance in majesty (Mt 24:30).

In connection with the second sign, the sign that will be opposed, a sword will pass through the soul of Mary. When she sees how her Child is rejected and how the natural bonds of the Messiah with the people are broken and misunderstood, that will cause great sorrow in her soul. He will be rejected and killed to reveal the thoughts of many hearts, for He is light. Then it will become clear that people hate light and prefer darkness to light. In Him the counsels of God and the heart of man are revealed.

Lk 2:36-38 | Anna, the Prophetess

36 And there was a prophetess, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years and had lived with [her] husband seven years after her marriage, 37 and then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers. 38 At that very moment she came up and [began] giving thanks to God, and continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

After the special man Simeon, Luke brings forward a special woman. She also deserves special attention in connection with the birth of the Savior. She is “a prophetess”, that is someone who understands the thoughts of God and knows how to apply them to heart and conscience. She possesses the spirit of prophecy, and that is Christ (Rev 19:10). Her life revolves around Christ.

The names that are mentioned all have a beautiful meaning. Her own name is “Anna”, which means “grace”. She is a daughter of “Phanuel”, which means “face of God”, and she is from the tribe of “Asher”, which means “happy”. That she comes from Asher means that she does not belong to the two tribes Judah and Benjamin who returned to the land from the Babylonian exile, but that she belongs to the ten tribes that are still scattered. She represents the grace of God, which goes out to all twelve tribes.

She was married for only seven years and then became a widow, and she always remained so. [NB Luke has a special eye for widows. He writes in

his Gospel about five widows (Lk 2:36; 4:26; 7:12; 18:3; 21:2).] She has now grown old, but her mind power has remained. Because she feels the misery of Israel deeply, she calls “night and day” to the throne of God with the heart of a widow for a people to whom God is no longer a Husband. Just as she is, the people are a widow, but the people do not realize this, and do not want to realize it. They believe they can claim God for themselves (cf. Rev 18:7).

The whole existence of Anna is directed at God for the benefit of His people. To this end she fastens and prays constantly to God. Just as Simeon is in the temple at the right time, Anna comes there at the right time. She too does not need to be informed about the Child Simeon has in his arms. Through God’s Spirit she understands that she sees Christ.

Here those who fear God meet and speak to each other (Mal 3:16). Those who belong to the remnant know each other. Anna speaks to them. She announces that the Lord has visited His temple. They all looked in Jerusalem forward to the deliverance. Now the Savior is there, unknown to men, but a cause of great joy for the poor remnant. What an answer to their faith!

Lk 2:39-40 | Back in Nazareth

39 When they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city of Nazareth. 40 The Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.

After this special presentation of the Lord Jesus to Yahweh, Joseph and Mary return with the Child to the despised Nazareth in the dark north of Israel. He grows up there. After that place, which has a despicable sound, He calls Himself when He is in glory and brings Saul to a standstill in his raging against Him (Acts 22:8). He could not have been our Savior if He had received glory in Jerusalem. His place is among the poor of the flock throughout Israel.

The birth of a child changes the life of a family drastically. With such a Child in their family, this will certainly have been the case with Joseph and Mary. Nevertheless, the life of Joseph and Mary during the childhood and

adulthood of the Lord Jesus resumes its normal course. Joseph works as a carpenter. They also have children together (Mk 6:3).

As a summary of the first twelve years of the life of the Lord as Man, we are told that He is going through the ordinary development that is typical of man. He is truly Man and grows up as to spirit, soul and body. His whole life is a testimony of the grace of God which is upon Him. God's grace has appeared in Him and has come so close to the people that they experience Him daily, without Him standing out especially as Man. However, He will have been standing out by His perfection in all things.

Lk 2:41-45 | The Boy Jesus in Jerusalem

41 Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. 42 And when He became twelve, they went up [there] according to the custom of the Feast; 43 and as they were returning, after spending the full number of days, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. But His parents were unaware of it, 44 but supposed Him to be in the caravan, and went a day's journey; and they [began] looking for Him among their relatives and acquaintances. 45 When they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem looking for Him.

The law requires that the Israelites have annual feasts on the occasion of which they, that is, the men, must go to Jerusalem. One of them is the Passover (Exo 12:24-27; Deu 16:1-8). The parents of the Lord Jesus are pious Israelites and therefore go to the feast every year. When their Son has become twelve years old, He also goes with His parents to the feast.

His parents are used to going to the feast. There is nothing wrong with habits, it is wrong if something is done out of nothing but a habit. We have to know why we do something out of a habit, otherwise it becomes a hollow form and we don't realize that the Lord has departed from us. If we dutifully visit the meetings and take our place there as usual, we may do so with an empty heart. Then we do not realize that the Lord is not there.

When the days of the feast are over, the Lord Jesus stays behind in Jerusalem, without His parents knowing. To Him, to go to Jerusalem is not simply doing what the law prescribes. To Him it has a deeper meaning. Jerusalem and the temple are for Him places that are dear to Him. These are places chosen by Himself, where He made His Name dwell. There He

desires to stay. His parents do not know where His heart really is. What would be disobedience to any other child is perfection to Him.

His parents suppose Him to be in the caravan, which must have been quite numerous. After looking for Him for a day, they did not find Him. That's because they searched in the wrong places. It may also happen to us that we seek the Lord Jesus in the wrong places. This happens when we think that He is with us because we have a God-fearing family or that He is with acquaintances who know a lot about the Bible. But the point is whether we know Him personally and know that He does everything for the glory of God.

Because they can't find Him, they return to Jerusalem. They have lost their Son, they miss Him and they want Him back. That is a beautiful desire.

Lk 2:46-50 | In the Things of His Father

46 Then, after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. 47 And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers. 48 When they saw Him, they were astonished; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You treated us this way? Behold, Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You." 49 And He said to them, "Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father's [house]?" 50 But they did not understand the statement which He had made to them.

It still takes three days before Joseph and Mary find Him. It seems they didn't think of Jerusalem and the temple as places where He could be. They are not like Simeon and Anna who were brought there by the Spirit. The Lord Jesus abides where God is present and where God's Word is reflected upon, where people devote themselves day and night to the study of God's thoughts.

So little are they aware of what really moves Him, that they probably only go to the temple as the very last place to search as a possibility to find Him there. The astonishment must have been visible on their faces when they see Him sitting in the midst of the teachers of Israel. But consider His attitude toward the teachers, how appropriate it is for a twelve-year-old Boy, Who indeed is the eternal God. He listens to them and asks them

questions. Many years later they will ask Him their questions, but to tempt Him and find a reason to condemn Him.

Through this simple Boy, something is revealed to all who hear Him that they cannot explain, but that surprises them greatly. They see an ordinary Boy Who at the same time reveals supernatural features. He is the same Who gives Stephen the wisdom and the spirit to speak thereby in a way that his opponents cannot withstand (Acts 6:10). A little later the opponents of Stephen see how his face looks like the face of an angel (Acts 6:15). This is not the case with the Lord Jesus. There is nothing special about Him, He does not have “[stately] form or majesty” (Isa 53:2), but what He says makes a great impression.

His parents are surprised that He is at that place. Mary sighs a sigh of relief that they have finally found Him, and reproaches Him for letting them look for Him in this way. She speaks of Joseph as “Your Father”, indicating that she has forgotten Who His Father is. That’s at the same time the reason why she couldn’t find Him at first.

The answer He gives are the first words we hear from His mouth in the New Testament. These are words that make clear what His life is all about. His first words are that He is easy to find for those who know Him. Who knows what it is all about with Him, does not have to search for long. The problem with Mary and Joseph is that they have their own ideas about Who their Child is. They do not consider that He has come on earth with a commission and that He has constant contact with His Father to fulfill it.

The Lord Jesus is perfectly aware of His right way of doing things. He does not admonish His mother directly, but in gentle humbleness He reprimands her with questions that point out to her why He is on earth. If she had realized that, she would have known that He is in the temple. She herself came to Jerusalem because she knew God demanded it. She also left again because the obligations had been met. He is always in the things [‘house’ is not in the original text] of His Father and that is why He stayed there.

What He says, the questions He asks, doesn’t get through to them. This is because they are not focused enough on the things that occupy Him.

The questions that the Lord asks His parents are questions that children can always ask their parents. It is a questioning about why parents do things (cf. Exo 12:26; Jos 4:6). What do we answer when our children ask why we go to the church, or why we don't go? What do we answer when they ask us why we do read, or do not read, in the Bible? These are all questions that sometimes halt us as parents, to think about how our life with the Lord looks like.

Lk 2:51-52 | The Lord Jesus Grows Up

*51 And He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and He continued in subjection to them; and His mother treasured all [these] things in her heart.
52 And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.*

When the Lord's task in Jerusalem is over, He goes home with His parents. He goes down with them to Nazareth. That is more than just describing the fact that Nazareth is lower than Jerusalem. It marks the path which the Lord has gone in humiliation.

With regard to Joseph and Mary, He takes the appropriate place. He listens to the tasks He receives from His parents and performs them directly and perfectly without contradicting them. They must have wondered over and over again about their eldest Son because He does everything He is asked to do directly and without grumbling. They have also seen His development. He is so true Man, that He physically and mentally experiences the same growth that every person goes through.

God looks upon Him in favor. He develops in complete harmony with God and responds to everything God has said that a man must be. In everything He is focused on God. God's law is within Him; it is His delight to do God's will (Psa 40:8). Therefore He grows up perfectly in everything as the pure fruit of the law. That goes on for eighteen years.

He is also a welcome guest with the people. His presence is a blessing to all men. They experience His presence as a benefit. Here is Someone Who always has time and attention for them and is always willing to help.

Luke 3

Lk 3:1-2 | The Time of the Performance of John the Baptist

1 Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, 2 in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness.

In the previous scene, we see the Lord when He is twelve years old. Now we are eighteen years further in time. The service of the Lord Jesus is about to begin and will be introduced by John the baptist, just as the prophet Samuel was the predecessor of David. The date of the beginning of John's performance is given in connection with the heathen dominion over the people of God.

Judea is a province under the power of the empire of the nations. The other parts of Canaan are divided among different heads who are subject to that empire. At that moment, the people are in a chaotic state, both externally and in their hearts. It is God's will that His land should be ruled by His Messiah, the King-Priest (Zec 6:13). This situation was presented by God in the Old Testament in David and Levi.

However, both the kingship and the priesthood are in the hands of people who do not care about God, but only think of themselves. The emperor of the Roman Empire, represented by a governor, Pontius Pilate, reigns over God's land. Furthermore, there are several tetrarchs reigning. A tetrarch is a prince over a quarter of the land. This means that the empire will be even more fragmented than the two parts in which it was already divided. Two of these four princes belong to the Herod family, i.e. descendants of Esau. They may belong to a brother nation, but this brother nation is one of the greatest haters of God's people. We read about their hatred in the book of the prophet Obadiah.

There is not just the unusual heathen domination, also internally everything is in disorder. There are two high priests. Who ever heard that there were two high priests? Annas is the father-in-law of Caiaphas (Jn 18:13).

In the last chapters of this Gospel we see how all the leaders, political and religious, conspire to bring the Lord Jesus to the cross.

In the circumstances just described, the word of God comes to John. This is an event of great importance. For four hundred years no prophet had come to Israel with the word of God. The word of God comes to John in the wilderness and not to the religious leaders in the religious center Jerusalem. God can no longer go there with His word because the leaders determine their own course and have closed themselves off to His calling voice. The wilderness is the place that corresponds to the spiritual condition of the people. This is where the service of the prophet John begins. A prophet is especially sent by God when the people are in decay.

Lk 3:3-6 | The Service of John the Baptist

3 And he came into all the district around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins; 4 as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet,

*"THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS,
'MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD,
MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT.*

*5 'EVERY RAVINE WILL BE FILLED,
AND EVERY MOUNTAIN AND HILL WILL BE BROUGHT LOW;
THE CROOKED WILL BECOME STRAIGHT,
AND THE ROUGH ROADS SMOOTH;*

6 AND ALL FLESH WILL SEE THE SALVATION OF GOD."

Previous prophets have called for return to the law they have broken. John does not continue with that. He calls for repentance. They must understand that they are hopelessly lost on the basis of the law.

The area of his preaching is not the temple or Jerusalem. He has separated himself from the religious center. He preaches around the Jordan, the symbol of the death and the resurrection of the Christ of Whom he is the forerunner and to Whom he refers in his preaching. In his preaching

he calls for repentance to receive forgiveness of sins and to be baptized. Baptism joins someone to Christ, baptism places someone on His side.

There is, however, a difference between the baptism of John and Christian baptism. The baptism of John joins to a *living* Messiah. Christian baptism joins to a rejected and dead Christ (Rom 6:3). John baptizes in connection with repentance and forgiveness of sins. Only in this way can one be truly joined to Christ. Those who are baptized also distance themselves from the wicked people. They form a remnant that looks forward to Christ. The preaching and baptism of John are aimed at a spiritual preparation of the hearts to meet the Messiah.

John's action is foretold, not "in the book of Isaiah the prophet", but "in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet". By adding "of the words" Luke emphasizes that every word of that book is inspired. It is not just about the big picture, but about every word. We see that in this quotation. This prophecy is fulfilled with the coming of the Lord Jesus. John is just a voice. He disappears completely in relation to Him Whom he announces.

The quotation of Isaiah presents John as "one crying in the wilderness". And what is John crying? He calls upon the people to make ready the way of the Lord, that is Yahweh, the Name of God as the God of the covenant with His people. The Lord Jesus is Yahweh of the Old Testament. John calls upon the people to make themselves ready to receive Yahweh, Who will come in Christ. This making ready must take place in the heart and be worked out in practice in going straight paths. To this end, he preaches the baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

The coming of Christ has an extensive and far-reaching effect that is not limited to Israel. Luke, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, speaks of "every ravine" and of "every mountain" and of "all flesh". In Matthew, Mark and John the quotation does not go that far. But Luke, although he begins with the Jews, does not stop there. Therefore, in verses 5-6 the Holy Spirit adds special expressions of expansiveness and comprehensiveness. He Who comes is none less than God revealed in the flesh. Therefore, the salvation that comes through Him is not limited to Israel, but comes to "all flesh". This grace for all people is the special subject of Luke.

Lk 3:7-9 | The Preaching of John the Baptist

7 So he [began] saying to the crowds who were going out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Therefore bear fruits in keeping with repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father,' for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham. 9 Indeed the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; so every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

There are crowds coming to John, but that does not mean that he sees only a mass and has no eye for the individual. John does not speak to the crowds in general, he speaks to the individual. He makes the gospel a personal matter and guards against individuals being carried away by the mass into a choice that does not come from a true inner conviction.

His performance has nothing to do with the popular entertainment to which the gospel is unfortunately often lowered today. He addresses his non-flattering words to the crowds to make clear to them from whom they are actually descended. They have the devil as father. They do not need to think that they can boast of being descendants of Abraham (Jn 8:39) and that on that basis the coming wrath will pass them by. It is not like that. The clear language of John will not shy away the truly humbled among them, but rather confirm them in their conversion.

John points out that true repentance can be seen in the life that someone leads. Repentance involves fruits in keeping with repentance. Valuable fruits of repentance are speaking truth and doing things that are according to the will of God. Such fruits come from the new life that a person receives when he repents.

There are also people among his audience who want to be baptized because they think they are entitled to it. They are not converted, because they do not need it, they think. They belong to the descendants of Abraham, don't they? They belong to the chosen people of God, don't they? Then they are entitled to all blessings.

Such reasoning shows that there is no awareness of being a sinner and deserving hell. Pleading on origin does not give access to the blessing. To boast of superior privileges does not work with God (Jn 8:33,39-40). He

seeks truth in the innermost being (Psa 51:6a). Nor is God obliged to bless a man on the basis of what he claims. According to His sovereignty He can raise children from dead stones and credit them to Abraham. He does so in a certain sense with every person who repents (Rom 4:9-12). Not natural descent makes children of God, but only God's Spirit and God's Word (Jn 3:5). God raises His children from useless, dead material.

In his preaching, John points to the judgment that is about to come on the people. With the coming of Christ not only blessing, but also judgment is connected. Anyone who rejects Him, and thus produces no good fruit, will be cut off from life and thrown into the fire of hell. The axe is already laid at the root, that is to say, on the cause, the problem of the bad fruits. The root is not good and therefore the fruits are not good. Because the root is spoiled, there is only spoiled fruit or no fruit at all. There is nothing that can be done with the old men.

Lk 3:10-14 | Show Fruits of Repentance

10 And the crowds were questioning him, saying, "Then what shall we do?" 11 And he would answer and say to them, "The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none; and he who has food is to do likewise." 12 And [some] tax collectors also came to be baptized, and they said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" 13 And he said to them, "Collect no more than what you have been ordered to." 14 [Some] soldiers were questioning him, saying, "And [what about] us, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Do not take money from anyone by force, or accuse [anyone] falsely, and be content with your wages."

The preaching of John makes a deep impression on the crowds. They ask what they shall do, what fruits belong to repentance. To this question the various groups who come to John each receive the appropriate answer from him. However, in the various answers given by John, a common root of evil seems to emerge, that of greed, of money. How we deal with money is an excellent indicator of the mindset of our heart. If Christ is not Lord over our money and possessions, He is not our Lord.

The first group must share of their abundance with others. The second group should not rob others to enrich themselves. The third group must

be satisfied with what they have. To the crowds in general, John tells them to share their prosperity with others who have nothing.

This is an important indicator of the reality of repentance. If there is life from God, it will be evident from the giving away of our possessions to others. God is the giving God. He who has the Divine nature will act as He does. The rich young ruler is an illustration of the opposite (Lk 18:18-30).

A special group in the crowds is that of the tax collectors. They too have come to be baptized and they ask what is expected of them. That is a good question. Someone who has just come to repentance does not always know immediately how to behave in all things of everyday life. Often, through repentance, there will be a proper sense of what is appropriate, but sometimes it must be pointed out first. Then there will also be recognition and action will follow.

The characteristic evil of tax collectors is not their profession, but the way in which they practice it. They abuse their position and collect more than they are ordered to do. John tells them what to do. In the conversion of Zaccheus the tax collector we see an illustration of what John says here (Lk 19:1-10; cf. Lk 5:27-30). Zaccheus does even more than John tells the tax collectors here.

The soldiers form another special group that comes to John with the question of what to do. For the soldiers, too, their profession is not the characteristic evil, but the abuse of their power. They also clearly express their discontentment with their wages. Soldiers of an occupying power have power over others. The exercise of power often brings out the worst in man. Greed drives him to abuse his power to enrich himself at the expense of others. What they do is stealing, misappropriating someone else's property, using force and without sparing anyone. Such people have no conscience and will easily falsely accuse others to remain free of punishment themselves or to benefit from it.

In addition, it is important that they are content with their wages. Rebellion against the superior, the employer, is never an activity that belongs to conversion. Contentment is a hallmark of faith in a caring God and also prevents to take money from anyone by force.

Lk 3:15-17 | John Testifies of Christ

15 Now while the people were in a state of expectation and all were wondering in their hearts about John, as to whether he was the Christ, 16 John answered and said to them all, "As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 17 His winnowing fork is in His hand to thoroughly clear His threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into His barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

The people are so fascinated by this man and his preaching and they sense so well that this is special, that all are wondering in their hearts whether John might be the Christ. God's Spirit touches them all. The powerful preaching of John, performed without any fear of men, reminds all of Christ. It is God's purpose that every preaching brings Christ to the people. Not that they should think that the preacher is Christ. That the people wonder whether John is perhaps the Christ makes it clear that they have ideas about Christ that have not been worked by the Spirit. The shepherds and Simeon and Anna had no problem recognizing Christ.

John understands their wondering. He therefore immediately rejects any thought that he would be the Christ by talking about the difference between himself and Christ. Faithfully John points to Him Who comes after Him. He does not allow the people to think high of him for a moment. He points to himself as someone who baptizes with water. That is a symbolic act. What the Lord Jesus will do goes much further. He will prove His power by baptizing with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

Baptism with the Holy Spirit is what He does on Pentecost, when He forms the church by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The baptism of fire is what He will do when He comes to earth the second time. Then He will bring judgment on all the wicked. Fire is the judgment that consumes evil. In the light of that mighty Person John sees himself as not even fit to untie the thong of His sandals.

Christ will prove His power by making a perfect distinction between those who belong to Him and those who do not. He will separate the wheat from the chaff. The wheat, those who belong to Him, who have Him as their life

(Jn 12:24), He will gather in “His” barn, heaven. The chaff, the unbelievers, He will burn up with the unquenchable fire of hell.

Lk 3:18-20 | End of John’s Service

18 So with many other exhortations he preached the gospel to the people. 19 But when Herod the tetrarch was reprimanded by him because of Herodias, his brother’s wife, and because of all the wicked things which Herod had done, 20 Herod also added this to them all: he locked John up in prison.

John has preached many other exhortations to the people through which he preached the gospel to them. Here we see that preaching the gospel goes hand in hand with the preaching of exhortations. All the exhortations with which John preaches the gospel include denouncing the corrupt way of life of Herod, which manifested itself in many areas.

One of them Luke particularly mentions, that is his adulterous relationship with Herodias, his brother’s wife. John spares no one in his preaching, while its main purpose is to prepare every human being to accept Christ. John the baptist is loyal not only to the lowest classes of the people, but also to the highest class. His testimony for Christ is resolute; he cares nothing for his own honor, for his concern is to glorify the Lord.

After painting the faithful service of John, Luke mentions his imprisonment. Hereby John suffers for the sake of righteousness, for he is locked up in prison because of his righteousness. Historically, this only happens later, because John also baptized the Lord, about which the following verse speaks. But the end of the service of John is thus established. Luke does this to draw all attention now to Him in Whom “the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men” (Tit 2:11).

Lk 3:21-22 | The Baptism of the Lord Jesus

21 Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus was also baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened, 22 and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, “You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased.”

Of all the reports we have of the Lord’s baptism, only Luke mentions that He prays after His baptism. Prayer is the true expression of dependence.

It marks the perfection of the Lord Jesus as Man. As already said, Luke shows Him eight times in prayer, seven times on earth and one time lifted up from the earth on the cross (Lk 3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18; 9:29; 11:1; 22:41; 23:34).

By being baptized, the Lord takes His place among “the saints who are in the earth” (Psa 16:3), meaning the remnant that is expecting Him. From the first step these humbled believers take on the path of grace and life, they find the Lord Jesus with them there. And when He is there, it also means the favor and pleasure of the Father and the presence of the Holy Spirit. We see that when heaven is opened. All the attention of heaven goes out to this praying Man on earth. He has no object in heaven, like Stephen, He Himself is the object of heaven (Acts 7:55-56). Every time heaven opens, He is the object of the admiration of heaven (Jn 1:51; Rev 19:11).

For a moment, the Spirit becomes visible, the voice of the Father is heard, and the Son is tangible present. This is a wonderful revelation of the triune God. In the Son all the fullness of Deity dwells bodily on earth (Col 1:19). This fullness of Deity still dwells bodily in Him while He is in the glory of heaven (Col 2:9).

The Father speaks from heaven His personal pleasure in Him to Him: “You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased.” He also does so in Mark (Mk 1:11), while in Matthew He expresses His pleasure in His Son as a testimony to others: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased” (Mt 3:17). God gives this testimony when there is a danger that He will be put on an equal footing with sinful people. We see this also on the mountain of transfiguration (Lk 9:35). Christ takes His place as Man, but God ensures that we will keep seeing Him as the *unique* Man.

Lk 3:23-38 | Genealogy of the Lord Jesus

23 When He began His ministry, Jesus Himself was about thirty years of age, being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph, the son of Eli, 24 the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph, 25 the son of Mattathias, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Hesli, the son of Naggai, 26 the son of Maath, the son of Mattathias, the son of Semein, the son of Josech, the son of Joda, 27 the son of Joanan, the son of Rhesa, the son

of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri, 28 the son of Melchi, the son of Addi, the son of Cosam, the son of Elmadam, the son of Er, 29 the son of Joshua, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, 30 the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonam, the son of Eliakim, 31 the son of Melea, the son of Menna, the son of Mattatha, the son of Nathan, the son of David, 32 the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Salmon, the son of Nahshon, 33 the son of Amminadab, the son of Admin, the son of Ram, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah, 34 the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor, 35 the son of Serug, the son of Reu, the son of Peleg, the son of Heber, the son of Shelah, 36 the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech, 37 the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalaleel, the son of Cainan, 38 the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.

Luke mentions that the Lord Jesus is about thirty years of age when He begins His public service. In the Old Testament this is the age at which the Levites were allowed to start their public service (Num 4:3,23,30,35,39,43,47).

Then Luke gives the genealogy of the Lord Jesus. He starts this genealogy with the remark that it is supposed that He is the Son of Joseph. Joseph is His father, that is, His lawful father. This is important for the legal rights of the Lord Jesus to the throne of David. These rights are shown in the genealogy of Joseph that Matthew gives (Mt 1:1-17). If Luke then is giving the genealogy, this differs completely from the genealogy we have in the Gospel according to Matthew (Mt 1:6b-17) up to David in verse 31. This can only mean that we have here the genealogy that runs through Mary, as is generally accepted.

He is Man by His birth from Mary. This did not have to be proven by a genealogy. Why then this genealogy? Because this genealogy goes all the way back to Adam who in turn came forth from the hand of God. This emphasizes that the Lord Jesus also as Man is the Son of God. In this reasoning Paul could also say to the Athenians that we as men are – not: the children of God but – “offspring of God” (Acts 17:29 Darby Translation; Gen 1:27).

Furthermore, we see in all the names mentioned here how God has determined and maintained the line through the ages that led to His ultimate goal: the birth of His Son. God has worked through all these ancestors to bring this Man into the world at just the right time. The whole history before Him is a preparation for His coming.

Mary is a blessed woman among women, but also all these ancestors are favored to stand in the direct line through which the grace of God in His Son will take full shape.

Luke 4

Lk 4:1-2 | Tempted by the Devil

1 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness 2 for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And He ate nothing during those days, and when they had ended, He became hungry.

The Lord is baptized. The Holy Spirit, by Whom He was conceived and Who is always fully present in Him, has descended on Him as a sign that He can begin His service. Before He begins His service, He is led around by the Spirit, with Whom the Father, God, has sealed Him, in the wilderness (Jn 6:27). He is the true Son Who is led by the Spirit of sonship. He is not only *led to* the wilderness, but He is also, when He is in the wilderness, *led around in* the wilderness. The initiative of the temptations comes from the Spirit Who brings the Lord to the area where it should happen.

The Spirit does this to show us what the Man is according to God's thoughts and to be an example to us. The Lord is not tempted as the eternal Son, but as the Son of God Who is Man. Therefore He can be an example for us. The goal is to undergo the temptations under which Adam failed. Adam was tempted and failed, being in the most ideal circumstances. The Lord endures the temptations in the circumstances in which we find ourselves, not in those in which Adam was. By withstanding the temptations He has bound the strong man, the devil, and can begin His service work of delivering people from the power of the devil (Mk 3:27).

Luke does not give the temptations in historical order (as Matthew does), but in a moral order, i.e. an order according to the content of the temptations. This order corresponds to the order of the elements of the world as given by John in his first letter: "The lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life" (1Jn 2:16). The Lord is first tempted in view of His physical needs, then in view of the glory of the world, and finally the devil has a spiritual temptation for Him by proposing to Him to claim His right as Messiah. The first temptation is aimed at the lust of the

flesh, the second at the lust of the eyes, the third at the pride of life. The temptations of the devil concern the whole Man, His body, soul and spirit (cf. 1Thes 5:23, where the order is the other way around).

All these temptations have the effect on the Lord that His perfection shines all the more. He can say that the devil in Him finds no connecting point for sin (Jn 14:30). We cannot say that, but we can still stand like Him when temptations come our way. Victory is not achieved by thinking we are above it, but by following the example of the Lord in using the Word of God.

The Word of God should always be the normal guideline for the direction of our life in all our circumstances. That means we only act if it's God will and we act in trust in Him. That is true obedience and dependency. That is how the Lord acts. What can the devil do with a Man Who never goes outside the will of God, and for Whom God's will is the only motive to act?

The Lord Jesus was tempted by the devil for forty days. The three that are recorded for us are his last and most severe temptations. Here the devil does everything in his power to bring the Lord to an action that is independent of a command from His God. How weak has He become when He has eaten nothing for forty days? This is the choicest moment for the devil to come with his last temptations. Moses did not eat and drink forty days either, but he was alone with God all this time, without the devil having access to it (Exo 24:18; Deu 9:9,18). The Lord was of course with God all this time, but He was exposed to all the temptations of the devil.

Lk 4:3-4 | First Temptation

3 *And the devil said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread."* 4 *And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE.'"*

The devil introduces the first of his last three temptations with the words "if You are the Son of God". He challenges the Lord to prove this, as it were, and to do so by making bread out of the stone. The devil acknowledges the power of the Lord's word that He only has to say it to the stone, and the stone will change into bread. And did He not have an enormous

hunger? Then it's best to use your power to provide for that, isn't it? Later He would several times satisfy a large crowd with just a few loaves.

It is not about whether He can or cannot do it, but whether the Father wants it. This first temptation is related to the physical need for food that is also Christ's need. He is true Man and needs bread for His body. To be hungry is not a sin and also to eat to satisfy the hunger is not a sin.

As said, He has the power to make bread from this stone. Also the use of His power is not sin. But if He were to use that power for His own benefit and eat now, at the devil's insistence, He would sin. He would then eat, without a command from His Father. If He had eaten, He would have been guided by His physical need instead of His Father. He would have asserted His own will instead of being dependent on God's will.

How perfectly does He answer the devil with a quotation from God's Word (Deu 8:3). The Lord does not say to the devil: "I am God, and you are the devil, go away." This would not have been to the glory of God, nor would it have helped us. He takes the place that we also have. Like Him, we can only resist the temptations of the devil and chase him away by quoting the Word of God.

His answer to this first temptation shows that he takes the place before God that suits man, that is, the place of complete *dependence* on God. The natural life of man depends on eating bread. The spiritual life of man depends on accepting and obeying the Word of God. He listens every morning to what God has to say (Isa 50:4) and that determines what He does and speaks and where He goes; therein He finds His strength.

Many believers live from stones instead of bread. They also set a bad example for their children. If the Word is not our daily food, we should not expect our children to ask for it.

The Lord Jesus quotes something from the book of Deuteronomy every time. In that book the people have finished their wilderness journey and the promised land lies ahead of them. In that book God tells the people how He took care of them in the wilderness, what He wanted to teach them in the wilderness, and what wonderful blessings await them after the wilderness. God wants to shape their hearts through everything He says in this book so that they will all focus on Him alone.

He wishes to have a nation of sons with whom He can speak about what concerns His heart. And a son is for the good pleasure of God. We see this perfectly in *the Son*, but God also wants to see it in all His children. This requires that our life will be formed by the Word of God and that we live by it, and that we do not let our life be determined by physical needs, as if that's all that matters.

Lk 4:5-8 | Second Temptation

5 And he led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. 6 And the devil said to Him, "I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. 7 Therefore if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours." 8 Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD AND SERVE HIM ONLY.'"

For his second temptation the devil leads him "up". From this high place he shows Him all the kingdoms of the world. As if He is not omnipresent! But He is here Man and submits Himself to this temptation. We also see here the power of the devil who is able to show in a flash all ruling powers and the glory that goes with them. By the way, He can only exercise this power if Christ gives him the opportunity to do so.

The great temptation is that the devil offers Him all the power over all kingdoms and all the glory that comes with it to take them without having to suffer. How attractive that offer must have been for Someone Who is extremely weakened! The devil does not boast when he says that those kingdoms have been handed over to him. This has been the case since man gave him control over his life at the Fall. When he says he gives them to whomever he wishes, it is deception. In a limited sense it is so (cf. Rev 13:4), but in absolute terms it is a lie. For God is the supreme Ruler (Dan 4:25; Rom 13:1). He appoints kings and deposes them. However, the Lord does not dispute either of them.

The devil wants to give Him those kingdoms, but he asks for something in return. The devil never gives anything away without asking a price. That price is always: honor for himself. The devilish trick of his proposal is that if the Lord Jesus had done this and if He had taken those kingdoms for

Himself in this way, He would have been in the power of the devil at the same time, and the devil would really have had all dominion. What the devil gives, he has not lost. He who accepts anything from him, sells his soul to him.

To answer this second temptation, the Lord Jesus again quotes something from the Word of God and again from the book of Deuteronomy. The devil has suggested that He should worship him, but the Word of God states that all worship and service must be for God alone (Deu 6:13; 10:20). Through this answer, the Lord shows that the only thing that matters to Him is complete surrender to God. He also shows that in that light worldly power and majesty in themselves mean nothing to Him.

Worship of God is the highest calling of a man. God the Father wishes worshipers, for them He seeks (Jn 4:23-24). The book of Deuteronomy also deals specifically with a place of worship where God wants to meet His people as sons, so that they worship Him. Sons say "Abba, Father" (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:5-6). Knowing and enjoying that relationship makes all the glory of the world fade away.

Lk 4:9-12 | Third Temptation

9 And he led Him to Jerusalem and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here; 10 for it is written,

'HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU TO GUARD YOU,'

11 and,

'ON [their] HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP,

SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.'"

12 And Jesus answered and said to him, "It is said, 'YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.'"

For his third attempt to bring down the Lord Jesus, the devil leads him to the temple in Jerusalem. He lets himself be taken to the pinnacle of the temple. The devil proposes Him to throw Himself down. Again he precedes this proposal with the challenging words "if You are the Son of God". He says: 'If you really are, prove it.'

To reinforce his temptation, the devil now quotes something from God's Word himself. He says that if the Lord is indeed the Son of God, He can throw himself down, for He then may rely on the protective support of the angels of God (Psa 91:11). Is not He the object of the worship of the angels? If He would go into this, He would also gain the fame of the people on the temple square. They would certainly accept Him as the Messiah.

This temptation is in reality a temptation to self-exaltation in the things God has given. But with the Lord Jesus there is no seeking of Himself. He knows the Word too. He knows that the same psalm speaks of dwelling in the shelter of the Most High (Psa 91:1). That is the place He occupies, and so there is no thought with Him of tempting God. It is not necessary for Him to test God to see if what He has said is true.

In addition, the devil is always selective in his quotations from the Bible. The devil knows the Bible well. He quotes from it (Psa 91:11). We can be sure, however, that he always distorts verses or only partly quotes them when he quotes something from the Bible. Here he deliberately omits the words "to guard you in all your ways". The devil does not speak of "your ways", that are the ways of the Lord, Yahweh, for the Lord Jesus goes His way in obedience to Him.

The nature of the third temptation is to make Him doubt the faithfulness of God. It is a test if God will do what He said in His Word. In the answer He gives, which again comes from Scripture and again from the book of Deuteronomy, His complete trust in God appears (Deu 6:16). Israel has tested God at Rafidim (Exo 17:1,7). They did want to know whether God was with them or not, although the evidence had proved so abundant. The Lord withstands the temptation with the verse from Scripture that warns against tempting the Lord His God. We offend God if we don't trust Him on His Word, no matter how the circumstances may seem to indicate that God cannot be trusted.

Lk 4:13-15 | Continue in the Power of the Spirit

13 When the devil had finished every temptation, he left Him until an opportune time. 14 And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit,

and news about Him spread through all the surrounding district. 15 And He [began] teaching in their synagogues and was praised by all.

With these three temptations the devil has finished all his temptations. He can think of nothing more in which he could tempt the Lord still more. If the master tempter leaves, it means that he is the loser. Not that he ever admits it, but a powerful defeat has been inflicted on him. He knows that in this Man he has met his Superior. But he comes back, for he leaves Him only until an opportune time. The devil knows he is the loser, but he never gives up.

While the devil has left Him, the Lord continues in the power of the Spirit. The same Spirit Who led Him around in the wilderness and through the temptations of the devil now leads Him to begin His public service. He has lost none of the power of the Spirit in the temptations. He gloriously appears as the Victor to now begin His service work of grace among men. Such a life, so perfect to the glory of God, cannot go unnoticed. All the surrounding district speaks about Him.

Wherever He goes, He teaches “in their synagogues”, the places where the Jews come together to listen to the explanation of the law. Whenever the Lord teaches or preaches, it is to present God. The synagogue is ideally suited for this purpose and is therefore the first area of His service. He wants to teach to form people into His image so that they resemble Him and serve God in His example.

In what He teaches and does, the grace of God becomes visible. This grace becomes visible in two ways. We read about the *riches* of God’s grace (Eph 1:7) in connection with the forgiveness that God grants to a sinner. We also read about the *glory* of God’s grace (Eph 1:6), which goes a step further than the riches of God’s grace. The glory of God’s grace becomes visible when God makes the sinner a son whom He lifts up to His heart. This teaching of grace that comes from His mouth (verse 22) gives Him the praise of all who hear Him.

Lk 4:16-21 | The Scripture of Isaiah Fulfilled

16 And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. 17

And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written,

*18 "THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME,
BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE
POOR.*

*HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES,
AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND,
TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED,
19 TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD."*

20 And He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. 21 And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

The Lord comes again in Nazareth. That is the place where He has been brought up. This also included going to the synagogue on the Sabbath. He was accustomed to that. He still acts according to this good habit. He goes to the synagogue and stands up to read. He wants to teach those present, as always, from God's Word.

Whether He asked for it is not mentioned, but the book of the prophet Isaiah is handed to Him. In any case, He has led it this way, for He wanted that book because there is something in it about which He wants to teach those present. It is all described in human terms, that He "found the place where it was written", as if He had to search for it. He is God Who had let this passage written down Himself – like the whole book of Isaiah and the whole Word of God – but Luke presents Him as Man. That is also striking here.

He goes all the way to chapter 61 of the book, because that chapter describes the beautiful service He is about to perform in grace. From that chapter He reads out the first two verses (Isa 61:1-2). In the first words He reads, we see the trinity of God again. There it is about the Spirit, about the Lord, that is Yahweh, God, and about 'Me', that is He Himself, Christ.

God anointed Christ with His Holy Spirit. We saw this at His baptism in the Jordan (Lk 3:22). Anointing has to do with the preparation for a certain service. In the Old Testament, kings, priests and sometimes prophets were anointed for the service they were to perform. The Lord Jesus is all three.

He is the true King, the true Priest and the true Prophet. His anointing means His special equipment for His service as King, as Priest and as Prophet.

Then He reads that He was anointed by God with the Spirit to “preach the gospel to the poor”. That is His first task. The poor are those who are aware of their misery and call upon God for help. Luke speaks of “poor” where Isaiah speaks of “afflicted”. The afflicted is someone who has been overwhelmed by suffering and has therefore become small. He is broken and shattered by suffering. He is also broken in his inner being by the awareness of his sins. This creates the feeling of poverty where only God can offer help. He does this by sending Christ with “the gospel” for such poor in spirit. Gospel means “good news”. In Isaiah is written “good news” (Isa 61:1).

The “captives” to whom the Lord comes to preach release are those who are bound by chains of sin and the devil. Many are bound by the religiosity of the Pharisees, scribes and Sadducees. Therefore they are also “blind” and cannot see the true purposes of God Who always has in mind blessing for His people. They are also the “oppressed”, oppressed by the heavy burdens of sins and also by the heavy yoke that religious leaders impose on them. The Lord comes to set free those who feel this oppression and are therefore wounded in the heart.

He is sent to proclaim “the favorable year of the Lord [Yahweh]”. The “year” does not represent a specific date, but a period. This period lasts as long as He preaches the gospel to Israel, which is approximately three and a half years. Ultimately, this means the year in which everything promised by God to Israel and lost to them by their unfaithfulness will be returned to them. That will be the true year of jubilee with exuberant joy about this pleasure, a ‘year’ that will last thousand years. With this thought the Lord stops reading the quote from Isaiah.

What follows in the prophecy of Isaiah, is about the deliverance of Israel by the judgment that in revenge will be exercised on the enemies of the people. In the first place He has not come to exercise revenge. Secondly, He does not announce any promises of future deliverance, for He Himself is through His presence the fulfillment of the promises.

The Lord Jesus reads from the Word of God while standing. Respect for the Word has made Him stand. When He has read, He gives the book back to the attendant and sits down again. The way of reading out and the part read out have made a deep impression. No one is sleeping or stares bored to the ceiling. The eyes of all are fixed on Him. This is also a wonderful attitude for the church when she comes together around Him.

Then He begins to speak. He will explain the read words. Luke only passes on the core of it to us. The essence is that what He has just read out and what they have heard read out is fulfilled in their ears. It has yet to be accepted with their heart. In view of the part read and His explanation of it, the conclusion is simple: He applies this part just read to Himself. It presents Him as the One on Whom the Spirit is and Who does what is prophesied. In this way in Him the fullness of the grace of God is revealed to man.

Lk 4:22-24 | Words of Grace Not Accepted

" 22 And all were speaking well of Him, and wondering at the gracious words which were falling from His lips; and they were saying, "Is this not Joseph's son?" 23 And He said to them, "No doubt you will quote this proverb to Me, 'Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we heard was done at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well.'" 24 And He said, "Truly I say to you, no prophet is welcome in his hometown.

All speak well of Him, all speak about Him, He is the subject of their conversation. What they have heard is so completely different from what they always hear. They are familiar with the voice of the law. Now they hear something that has never been spoken in such a way before. They hear Someone speaking words of grace. That they acknowledge, they taste something of the riches of grace. Yet in Him they see no more than an ordinary person. They know Him as the Son of Joseph. How is it possible that this simple Man they saw growing up could speak such words?

Unfortunately, they are blind to the fact that He is God in the fullness of His Person. Only faith sees here the dependent Man Who is full of the Holy Spirit and acts and speaks in the power of the Spirit and abounds with grace for people. In order to possess that faith, it is necessary to first

see oneself as one who is poor in spirit who needs the gospel and then to appeal to it as one who is blind and captivated and oppressed.

This is how the people of Nazareth do not see themselves, and so they are wondering about these words of grace. It is not the wondering of a believer, but the wondering that comes from unbelief, in the sense that it cannot be possible for such a Person to speak such words. They stumble over Him because He is only a mere carpenter's son to them. The words of grace are wasted on them. Israel is totally unprepared for grace. They are God's chosen people, aren't they? But Luke puts everything and everyone on the basis of grace. Only through grace blessing is possible, both for God's people and for the Gentiles.

The Lord knows that they are impressed by the words of grace He has spoken, but that their hearts and consciences are not convinced. The cause is that they are looking for wonders. They have heard of things He did in Capernaum. They want Him to do such things with them as well. They want to see signs and wonders. He knows their hearts and knows what they will say to Him. He knows that they will challenge Him to stand up for himself (cf. Lk 23:39; Mt 27:40). They want Him to prove Himself by doing wonders and signs.

Wonders and signs, however, are never a goal in themselves, but are always a side issue. They support and guide the preaching to confirm it as a word that truly comes from God. He comes to bring the Word of God, and they will not accept it from Him Whom they think they know so well. The Lord thus shares in the common fate that all prophets have undergone. In the places where they should be best known, they are the least valued. In the rejection of all previous prophets He is already rejected. Now He Himself comes to His people and in His creation, but He is not known nor accepted. He came to preach the Lord's "favorable" year, but He is not "favored" (the same word) in His father town. If He is not "favored", there can be no "favorable year" from the Lord.

Lk 4:25-30 | Grace for the Gentiles

25 *But I say to you in truth, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months, when a great*

famine came over all the land; 26 and yet Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to Zarephath, [in the land] of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. 27 And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.” 28 And all [the people] in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things; 29 and they got up and drove Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw Him down the cliff. 30 But passing through their midst, He went His way.

The Lord illustrates God’s grace with two examples from their own Scriptures. In these cases it concerns sinners from the Gentiles who are receivers of grace. Through these examples, the true mind of their hearts becomes manifest. The first example of grace comes from the days of Elijah, and it comes from the time of three and a half years of drought which He indicates with the words that “the sky was shut up for three years and six months”, meaning that there was no rain (1Kgs 17:1,7). God withheld His blessing from His people. He did so because of the prayer of Elijah (Jam 5:17). Elijah prayed this prayer because the people had deviated so far from the LORD and he longed that the people would return to Him. Sometimes this requires drastic means.

It is not for nothing that the Lord Jesus remembers that time. Also now, the people have deviated far from God. Would they see the parallel and be open to grace now? When there was a period of great drought, Elijah was not sent to any one of the people of Israel. But outside the land there was a woman, a widow, who was open to God. Elijah was sent to her (1Kgs 17:9). Now God is sending His Son to all the people. Will they accept Him?

The Lord brings forward another example of grace, from the time of the prophet Elisha. Then there were many lepers in Israel, but no one turned to God to be cleansed. Following the testimony of a girl, a heathen leper called upon God’s grace in the prophet Elisha (2Kgs 5:1-14). And he was cleansed. Now God is sending His Son to all the people to cleanse them from the leprosy of their sins. Will they accept Him?

The reaction of all those who have just been wondering about the words of grace is shocking. When He has given His examples of shown grace to the Gentiles, they are all filled with rage. Grace for the Gentiles is for them an

impossibility, an utterly reprehensible thought. This is never possible. It makes it clear that they do not want to be dependent on grace. We always see this reaction in a religious, not born again human being: not accept grace himself and begrudge it to others.

Explanatory words of grace are good, but as soon as they notice that grace requires no other condition but the acknowledgment of the unworthiness of the recipient, they become furious. They think He says good things, but He should not think that they are standing at the bottom of grace. As if they are not better than the despised Gentiles! On this first occasion when grace is offered, it is definitely rejected. And not only rejected. They want to murder Him Who is the Bringer of grace. They throw Him out of the city and lead Him to the brow of the hill to throw Him down the cliff.

The Lord lets Himself be thrown out of the city and He lets Himself be carried away to the brow of the hill. Then He reveals in a perfectly meek way His Divine power and majesty. His service work must continue. Without any visible display of power He turns around. All let Him go and move aside. In complete peace He goes between them and departs. What a glory in Him! What a drama for Nazareth! Nowhere in the Gospels do we read that the Lord has been there again. It seems that He has left that city forever.

Lk 4:31-37 | Healing of a Demon-Possessed

31 And He came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and He was teaching them on the Sabbath; 32 and they were amazed at His teaching, for His message was with authority. 33 In the synagogue there was a man possessed by the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, 34 "Let us alone! What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!" 35 But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet and come out of him!" And when the demon had thrown him down in the midst [of the people], he came out of him without doing him any harm. 36 And amazement came upon them all, and they [began] talking with one another saying, "What is this message? For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits and they come out." 37 And the report about Him was spreading into every locality in the surrounding district.

The Lord goes down even further. First He went down from Jerusalem to Nazareth (Lk 2:51). Now he goes down from Nazareth to Capernaum. He Who has come from the highest height, visits the lowest place. By His presence Capernaum is exalted to heaven, but without the inhabitants benefiting spiritually (Mt 11:23).

He teaches the inhabitants of that city on the Sabbath. There too is amazement about His teachings because He speaks with authority. He is always out to speak the Word. The Word, not a wonder, forms the connection between the heart and God. That is the weapon with which He beats the enemy. A wonder cannot establish this connection, because the Word is directed to faith, while a wonder is done as a sign for unbelief.

God brings forth faith through the Word, just as He also gives food through the Word. This proves the immeasurable value of the Word of God. And when that Word is spoken through Christ, it is spoken with authority. All those who hear it are amazed. That is what people always are when we preach the Word with authority. It is not a word from men, but it is God's living and powerful Word, that performs its work in those who believe (1Thes 2:13). People can reject it, even deny its power, but that does not take away anything of the power of the Word.

We should not be surprised that people are wondering about the Lord and His teaching. In the synagogue the Word of God was brought in a very different way. It was brought by leaders who denied its power and only brought it in view of their own honor and in order to influence the people. This makes the synagogue a dead place, where people with an unclean spirit can be present undisturbed.

As soon as the Lord Jesus comes there, the demon cannot remain hidden and he reveals himself. The demon tells Who He is, something the people are blind to. The Lord however does not accept testimony of demons. He silences the demon and on His word of power the demon leaves his victim. Although the demon makes a final attempt at damaging his victim according to the nature of his corrupt being, he goes out without harming him.

All who witness this are filled with amazement. Before, there was wonder about the grace of His words (verse 22), now there is amazement about their authority and power. They speak not so much about the exorcism,

but about His word. What they have seen is the effect of His word. They see Someone Who speaks in a way that a person is delivered from the power of the devil.

The words and deeds of the Lord go through the whole environment like a wildfire. These are words and works they have never seen before. The Son of God makes it clear that He came to destroy the works of the devil (1Jn 3:8).

Lk 4:38-39 | Healing of Peter's Mother-In-Law

38 Then He got up and [left] the synagogue, and entered Simon's home. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Him to help her. 39 And standing over her, He rebuked the fever, and it left her; and she immediately got up and waited on them.

After His teaching and healing in the synagogue, the Lord leaves the synagogue. His next field of activity is the house of His disciple Simon Peter. Simon has his mother-in-law in his home. It must have been nice for his wife that her mother was with her. As a fisherman Peter was often gone and soon he will leave his wife for a long time because he will follow the Lord Jesus. Now his mother-in-law is seriously ill. She suffers from a high fever. But there is the Lord, and those who are in the home ask Him to help her. They bring their need to Him. This is a good example for us that we may always come to the Lord with our concerns about others, including the illnesses of our family members.

The Lord responds directly to their request. He takes place over her and He rebukes the fever. The fever obeys as if it were a person and leaves the sick person. Here too He overcomes by the power of His word. She is immediately healed and able to wait on them.

Fever is a disease that makes a person very active and that also costs a lot of energy, without any result from that activity and energy. It robs strength and does not yield anything. Fever causes confusion, the feverish one is unable to think well. When the fever has disappeared, there is peace and also strength and insight to do the right thing. Healing always aims to serve the Lord and His own. That's what Simon Peter's mother-in-law does.

Lk 4:40-41 | Other Healings

40 While the sun was setting, all those who had any [who were] sick with various diseases brought them to Him; and laying His hands on each one of them, He was healing them. 41 Demons also were coming out of many, shouting, "You are the Son of God!" But rebuking them, He would not allow them to speak, because they knew Him to be the Christ.

The power of God and the fullness of grace unfold wonderfully in the midst of much misery. All kinds of diseases and misery are brought to the Lord and all suffering find deliverance. Thus grace becomes visible in countless examples, for the essence of grace is that it flows out, without the question of whether someone deserves it or not. The Lord does not only physically deliver from diseases. He also delivers many from demons. The whole power of the enemy, all the sad consequences of sin, both for the body and for the mind, disappear before Him. He lays His hands on the sick. He never does that with demon-possessed people. He delivers them by the power of His word.

The demons bear witness of Him that He is the Son of God. But He absolutely does not want testimony from demons. Therefore, He rebukes them and forbids them to speak of Him as the Christ. Demons may be forced to acknowledge the truth about Christ, but they will never deny their character as deceivers toward humans. Demons only speak truth if they are forced to do so by God. However, their character remains that of the father of lies in whom there is no truth (Jn 8:44).

Lk 4:42-44 | Preaching to Other Cities

42 When day came, Jesus left and went to a secluded place; and the crowds were searching for Him, and came to Him and tried to keep Him from going away from them. 43 But He said to them, "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose." 44 So He kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

After a day full of activity that lasted into the night, the Lord goes out at the dawn of the day. He seeks solitude. He needs to be alone with His God. That time is not granted to Him. The crowds are so impressed by His wonders and words of grace that they search for Him. They want to stop Him,

for He must stay with them. That is a good desire. However, the motives are not good, because it is only about the advantage He brings. The Lord does not let Himself be deceived into staying with them. He does not seek honor for Himself, but wants to accomplish His work.

There are so many other cities He hasn't been to yet. He also has for them the joyful good news of "the kingdom of God". He must go there, for God has sent Him there. God's plan is to establish a kingdom in which the Son of Man will reign. That kingdom is called "the kingdom of God" because it belongs to God. The King Who will govern it is Christ Who is here on earth in humiliation, subjected to God, to form subjects for that kingdom. He does so, before the kingdom is established in glory, as if He Himself is a subject in it, which He is not.

When He has explained His decision that there are other cities He must go to, He continues to preach. He wants to bring God's Word to the people. He does so in the appropriate places, the synagogues.

Luke 5

Introduction

This chapter shows us in four phases how one becomes a follower after the example of the Lord Jesus. For this purpose, the events in this chapter are brought together, without Luke taking the chronological order into account. It begins with self-judgment (verses 1-11), followed by cleansing (verses 12-16) and forgiveness and strength (verses 17-25), after which the call to service can follow (verses 27-32). The chapter concludes with as a result of all previous events the presentation of the new which replaces the old (verses 35-39).

Lk 5:1-7 | An Amazing Catch of Fish

1 Now it happened that while the crowd was pressing around Him and listening to the word of God, He was standing by the lake of Gennesaret; 2 and He saw two boats lying at the edge of the lake; but the fishermen had gotten out of them and were washing their nets. 3 And He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little way from the land. And He sat down and [began] teaching the people from the boat. 4 When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." 5 Simon answered and said, "Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but I will do as You say [and] let down the nets." 6 When they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish, and their nets [began] to break; 7 so they signaled to their partners in the other boat for them to come and help them. And they came and filled both of the boats, so that they began to sink.

The Lord preaches the Word of God by the lake of Gennesaret. Because the crowd is pressing around Him, He is almost pushed into the sea. He then does not use His Divine power to keep people at a distance, as in Luke 4 (Lk 4:30), but He resorts to one of the two boats He sees lying there.

While He brings the Word of God, the fishermen are washing their nets. They apparently just came back from the catch. What do they come back

at a nice moment, although they are disappointed that working all night has yielded nothing. But they will experience great things. The Lord goes aboard one of the boats without asking. He is the Lord. It is the boat of Simon Peter. Simon does not ask Him what He does.

The Lord asks Simon to put out a little way from the land. Simon obeys immediately. He makes his boat and his strengths and his time available. He will be quite tired after a night of fishing, but if the Lord asks him, he will make an effort again. This is how Simon participates in the work of the Lord. He gives Him the opportunity to sit in his boat and teach the people from his boat. Do we also make available our resources, powers and time so that the Lord can do His work to bless others?

There comes an end to the Lord's speaking. He knows what the people are able to bear. Now it's time for something else. He is going to reward Simon for his cooperation. He tells him to put out into the deep water and let down his nets for a catch. It is not an *attempt* to catch something, because He already establishes the result.

As an experienced fisherman, Peter cannot help to point out to Him that they have fished all night, but that all their efforts have been fruitless. They did it as they always did and they are experienced fishermen. He knows that it won't work during the day if it doesn't work at night. Simon, however, begins his reaction with acknowledging the Lord as "Master", that is, his Superior. It is the title of someone who stands above others. The word used here for "master" is only found in this Gospel (Lk 5:5; 8:24,45; 9:33,49; 17:13).

This acknowledgment opens the way to blessing. Peter has already acknowledged that the old, tried and tested method does not work. Now he must do it the way the Lord indicates. Because the Master says so, he will let down the nets. This is faith in the Word of the Lord. The result of obedience is blessing, a great blessing. The Lord has put so many fish into their nets that they cannot keep the mass. Human resources are too small to receive the blessing that the Son of God gives.

There is so many fish that the other boat is also filled with fish. Both boats are filled to the brim with fish. The boats are so full that they begin to sink. The Son of God blesses with a full, overflowing measure.

After the resurrection of the Lord, Peter is again instructed to cast out the net and then the net is not torn (Jn 21:11). The fact that it is after the resurrection of the Lord Jesus indicates that the new has come. Only those who are numbered come into the net.

Lk 5:8-11 | Fishers of Men

8 But when Simon Peter saw [that], he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!" 9 For amazement had seized him and all his companions because of the catch of fish which they had taken; 10 and so also [were] James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men." 11 When they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him.

Simon Peter acknowledges that the Lord has brought the fish into the net. He suddenly finds himself facing the almighty and omniscient God. The proof of His power brings him at His feet. In His light he sees himself as a sinful person. He acknowledges that he cannot be with Him. At the same time, he is at the Lord's feet. He is close to Him. This makes him feel that the Lord will not send him away. He knows that the Lord accepts a broken spirit and does not despise a broken and a contrite heart (Psa 51:17). This conviction is the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit presents the greatness of Christ. A person who sees this will see himself as a sinner.

At the same time, the Holy Spirit also shows the attractiveness of Christ. He is the Man to Whom the word of Proverbs 19 applies perfectly: "What is desirable in a man is his kindness" (Pro 19:22a). This word can be put as a heading above this Gospel, that presents Him as Man. The Lord is full of kindness to receive convicted sinners. He longs for them. The man who sees this, knows that He does not repel a convicted sinner, but accepts him. Several have said that they have sinned or that they are a sinful man, but have not done so at the feet of the Lord Jesus, trusting in Him, and therefore they never have found peace.

Peter's boat sailed up the lake twice in a twenty-four hour period. One time at night, because then the chance of a good catch is greatest, and one time during the day, when the chance of a good catch is considerably smaller.

The environment is the same on both occasions, also the men and also the material. Only one thing is different: the second time Christ is on board. That makes the big difference in the result.

Amazement because of the great catch has seized Simon and all who are with him. It makes a deep impression on them. James and John are also mentioned by name. They are professional colleagues of Simon and even partners. They share in the catch and in the amazement. They will also be called by the Lord to follow Him at the same time as Peter.

A calling is always personal. Luke shows how the Lord calls Simon, but it also applies to the others. The Lord calms Simon, who is lying at His feet. He need not be afraid of His greatness. Seeing Christ and trusting His word means giving room to the perfect love that casts out fear (1Jn 4:18). At the same time, this is the right attitude with which the Lord can move forward. Therefore He then tells Peter that from this moment on he will become a fisher of man. Through Peter's personal experience, he can now go catching men by impressing them with the greatness of Christ and their own sinfulness.

The fishermen finish their daily work neatly, they pull the boats ashore. Then they leave everything and follow Him. It's written down so simple, but what an event! The encounter with the Lord Jesus and His calling have resulted in an enormous change in their life. There is no consideration, no request to say goodbye first. The calling of the Lord is decisive. They can leave the consequences to Him.

Lk 5:12-16 | Cleansing of a Leper

12 While He was in one of the cities, behold, [there was] a man covered with leprosy; and when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and implored Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean." 13 And He stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." And immediately the leprosy left him. 14 And He ordered him to tell no one, "But go and show yourself to the priest and make an offering for your cleansing, just as Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." 15 But the news about Him was spreading even farther, and large crowds were gathering to hear [Him] and to

be healed of their sicknesses. 16 But Jesus Himself would [often] slip away to the wilderness and pray.

Acknowledgment of sins, as we have seen with Peter in the previous history, is not enough. It is the first necessary step, but it must be followed by something else. There must also be knowledge of cleansing. We learn this in the healing of the leper. Therefore, the first thing the disciples experience in following the Lord is the encounter with “a man covered with leprosy”. Leprosy is a picture of the sins in which man lives. The man is *covered* with leprosy. He has come to the point that there is nothing clean on him. In this condition he can be declared clean (Lev 13:12-13).

In the picture he is the sinner who no longer seeks excuse for his sins. He acknowledges that he is hopelessly lost. The only thing he can hope for is the Lord’s grace. The law can only diagnose leprosy and set the conditions for someone who has been cleansed of leprosy. It is impossible for the law to cleanse a leper from his leprosy. That is the great power of grace that is present in Christ.

When the leper sees Him, he falls on his face and begs Him to make him clean. The leper is convinced that the Lord *can* do it, but he does not know if He *is willing* to do it. The man does not appeal to His grace in vain. The Lord touches him and speaks with Divine authority: “I am willing; be cleansed.” On this command the leprosy immediately leaves him. Here grace works cleansing, as first with Peter the conviction of sin (verse 8). Thus, the Lord is able to solve the problem of sins in the life of every human being and to cleanse him of his sins. Therefore He has accomplished the work on the cross.

In the offering the man has to make for his cleansing, he gives testimony of this. He may not give publicity to his healing. However, the Lord wants a testimony of cleansing to be given to the religious leaders. Therefore He sends the man to the priests. The priests will have to acknowledge what happened to the leper. In so doing, they will have to acknowledge the intervention of God, that is to say, that the Lord Jesus is God. After all, who can cleanse leprosy but God alone (2Kgs 5:7)? In the offering the man has to make, he also honors God for the cleansing.

The healing of the leper will not have gone unnoticed. Anyone who knew him will have seen him healed. As a result, the Lord is spoken of in an ever wider environment. Many want to hear Him and be healed by Him of their diseases. Grace attracts people. Grace also flows generously from Him.

The Lord, as the dependent Man, also takes time for fellowship with God in prayer. To do so, He withdraws into loneliness. After that, He will serve man again.

Lk 5:17-26 | Healing of a Paralyzed Man

17 One day He was teaching; and there were [some] Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting [there], who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and [from] Jerusalem; and the power of the Lord was [present] for Him to perform healing. 18 And [some] men [were] carrying on a bed a man who was paralyzed; and they were trying to bring him in and to set him down in front of Him. 19 But not finding any [way] to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down through the tiles with his stretcher, into the middle [of the crowd], in front of Jesus. 20 Seeing their faith, He said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven you." 21 The scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, "Who is this [man] who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?" 22 But Jesus, aware of their reasonings, answered and said to them, "Why are you reasoning in your hearts? 23 Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins have been forgiven you,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? 24 But, so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins,"—He said to the paralytic—"I say to you, get up, and pick up your stretcher and go home." 25 Immediately he got up before them, and picked up what he had been lying on, and went home glorifying God. 26 They were all struck with astonishment and [began] glorifying God; and they were filled with fear, saying, "We have seen remarkable things today."

The Lord continues to serve people. We see that in this history, where a new element emerges that is important for the formation of subjects of the kingdom. The two previous histories are about something to be taken away: fear because of sin and leprosy as a picture of sin. In this history it is also about something that is taken away, but also about something that is given. Sins are forgiven and strength is given.

When the Lord is somewhere, always something happens. What happens results from His teaching. First the circumstances are painted. The Lord is teaching. Among His audience are Pharisees and teachers of the law. They have come from far and wide to hear Him. Also, the power of the Lord is present to perform healing. It is a scene full of spiritual life.

Then we see four men who want to bring their paralyzed friend on a bed to the Lord. These men care about the paralyzed. They transport him on a bed or a stretcher, which means that they do not drag him to the Lord, but use a means that is pleasant for the paralyzed. They also know that the only chance of healing is to be found with Him. That is why he has to go there. They work for their friend and act in faith in Christ.

When they reach the place where He is, they find a crowd that is blocking the way to Him. Often people form a blockade to go to Christ. But their faith is persevering and inventive. If not in the usual way, through the door, then in an unusual way, through the roof. The friends break open the roof and let the bed with their paralyzed friend sink down in front of the Lord. There they wanted to bring him and there he is.

The Lord Jesus followed in His spirit all the actions of the friends. He knows and sees their faith. He answers their faith by speaking these wonderful and beneficent words of forgiveness to their friend. He sees their friend's true problem and He solves it first. It is possible that his paralysis is the result of a certain sin. The leper in the previous history needed cleansing. This man needs forgiveness. Leprosy means that contact with others is *not allowed*, because a leper is an outcast. In this person we see that sin paralyzes, so that contact with others is *not possible*.

This word about forgiveness of sins causes the scribes and Pharisees to resist. They hear something that sounds slanderous to their ears. This does not fit in their theology. Only God can forgive sins. Who does this Man think He is? It is obvious that Someone is speaking here Who presumes Himself to be God. In their observation, that only God can forgive sins, they are absolutely right. At the same time, with all their theological knowledge, they are completely blind to the glory of the Lord Jesus, that He, Who stands before them, is truly God. They do not need to speak out loud their aversion of Him to let Him know what is going on in them. As

the true God He knows the deliberations of their hearts. By pronouncing this, He proves Who He is.

He puts them in place with some questions. "Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins have been forgiven you,' or to say, 'Get up and walk?'" (verse 23). For these people, both the one and the other is impossible. For Him it is both possible. Only God can forgive sins. The Lord Jesus forgives them. He is God, but He forgives them as the Son of Man, as He Who is on earth to bring there the mercy of God. He does not only forgive, He also heals. In this way He shows that He is the Messiah, for He fulfills what is written in Psalm 103: "Who pardons all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases" (Psa 103:3). He is the proof that God visits His people.

He orders the man to pick up his stretcher and go home. The result is immediate. The man stands up before their eyes. With the words the Lord speaks, He also gives the strength to the man to obey. The man is not going to sit down and discuss whether he will be able to do it or not. He believes His word and acts.

The Pharisees and teachers of the law observe it. They cannot deny this wonder, but it does not change anything to their enmity. They don't repent through it. The forgiven and healed man carries with him the full result of what the Lord has done. His heart is delivered and his body healed. He is now carrying the stretcher that carried him. The Lord has forgiven him his sins and given him strength to walk. Thus he goes to his home, glorifying God. How enthusiastic will he have told at home about everything the Lord Jesus said and did! The first area where God's glory must be mentioned is the area where we are "at home".

All those who have seen what has happened are filled with fear. They glorify God, and fear fills them. In their inner being they do not partake of Christ. They hear words with their ears and perceive events with their eyes, but it has no effect in their heart. All they say is that they have seen remarkable things today. They are people of the day. The impressions have faded away again tomorrow.

Lk 5:27-32 | The Calling of Levi

27 After that He went out and noticed a tax collector named Levi sitting in the tax booth, and He said to him, "Follow Me." 28 And he left everything behind,

and got up and [began] to follow Him. 29 And Levi gave a big reception for Him in his house; and there was a great crowd of tax collectors and other [people] who were reclining [at the table] with them. 30 The Pharisees and their scribes [began] grumbling at His disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with the tax collectors and sinners?" 31 And Jesus answered and said to them, "[It is] not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick. 32 I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."

The Lord leaves the house where He has taught the Word and healed a paralyzed man. Outside he sees a tax collector sitting. His name is Levi, the same as the later evangelist Matthew. Levi is sitting in the tax booth. He is collecting money. That is his job and he likes to do it. Tax collectors have the opportunity to benefit themselves very much if they collect the tax on behalf of the Romans.

While Levi is collecting money or waiting for people to pay taxes, the Lord calls him. The Lord knows him. He knows that his heart is empty, even though he has so much money. Then He says to him: "Follow me." That is a liberating call. As soon as Levi hears the calling voice, his heart and his spirit are turned away from the money.

The order that Luke writes down is remarkable. First we read that Levi leaves everything *behind*, that is, his heart abandons the money. Then we read that he *gets up* and *follows* the Lord. After the lessons of self-condemnation in Peter (verse 8), of cleansing the leper (verse 13) and of forgiveness which gives strength to the walk in the paralyzed man (verse 24), we see here the fourth that grace does: it gives a new, attractive object in the Person of Christ.

Levi also immediately shows that he is converted. We see in him the result of following the Lord. He has changed from someone who takes from others to someone who gives to others (Psa 112:9). He who has received grace now also shows grace to others. The object of his service is the Lord. He gives a big reception "for Him" in his house. He makes his house available to Him. The Lord Jesus is the center and attraction point for others who are also attracted by Him.

In Levi's actions, the Pharisees and scribes see another reason to say something to the detriment of the Lord Jesus. They grumble against the

disciples. They do not address the Lord Himself directly, but they address His disciples. In their eyes they are as bad as their Master. Of course they mean it as criticism of Him. They do not understand anything about the reception that Levi organized. They grumble because of the company in which the disciples find themselves. How can they, as people who say they want to live for God, eat together with such low sunken persons? This is how people who have no sense of grace react. They exalt themselves and look down on others.

The Lord answers them. He points out that, as healthy people, they do not need help from a physician. You don't call a physician if you feel healthy. They feel good, they are not leprous or paralyzed, they do not feel like a sinner and do not seek help. The people who are in a bad state and are aware of this, do need the help of a physician. He is the great Physician. He has no message for those who believe of themselves that they are righteous.

For sinners who realize how miserable they are, He has a message. He presents the way of salvation to them by telling them that they will be saved if they repent from their sinful way and believe in Him. The Lord does not turn the sinners who come to conversion into new law keepers, but into attendants of the bridegroom [literally "sons of the bridal-chamber"] and fresh wineskins in which the wine of joy is poured, as we find presented in the following verses.

The Pharisees have no eye for that. They are like the older son who does not want to take part in the feast because of the return of the youngest son and therefore willingly stays outside the house of music and dance (Lk 15:25,28).

Lk 5:33-35 | Fasting

33 And they said to Him, "The disciples of John often fast and offer prayers, the [disciples] of the Pharisees also do the same, but Yours eat and drink." 34 And Jesus said to them, "You cannot make the attendants of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them, can you? 35 But [the] days will come; and when the bridegroom is taken away from them, then they will fast in those days."

The stubborn righteous do not acknowledge they are defeated. They have another question for Him. They know that John has disciples and that he has given his disciples strict living conditions, including fasting and offering prayers. This is entirely in keeping with their thinking, for this is also how they teach their own disciples. Now when they look at His disciples, they see a behavior that is not appropriate in their eyes. His disciples do nothing but eat and drink. Just look at the big reception that Levi made and in which they did partake well.

This too is a reaction of people who don't understand anything of grace. People of the law always begrudge the freedom in which the Lord leads His disciples. By the way, in the next section (Lk 6:1) we see that this kind of meals is not a daily meal for the disciples, because there we see that they are hungry. Freedom which the Lord gives never leads to debauchery, but to an enjoyment of what He gives. Those who live in freedom refuse to accept food from the hand of the devil, as the Lord Jesus has shown when He was tempted in the wilderness (Lk 4:4).

The Lord explains why He does not let His disciples fast. The reason is that He is with them. He is the Bridegroom. The bride is not mentioned. He does talk about the attendants of the bridegroom. These are His disciples. The Lord points out that there will come days when He will not be with them. By this He means the days of His death and His stay in the tomb as He will have been expelled from the world. These will be days of deep sorrow for His disciples (Jn 16:16-22). Then they will fast.

Lk 5:36-39 | Old and New Things

36 And He was also telling them a parable: "No one tears a piece of cloth from a new garment and puts it on an old garment; otherwise he will both tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old. 37 And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled out, and the skins will be ruined. 38 But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. 39 And no one, after drinking old [wine] wishes for new; for he says, 'The old is good [enough].'"

To make clear to His opponents the difference between His service and that of John and the whole Old Testament, He speaks to them in a parable.

He compares what He says and what He has come to bring on earth, with a new garment. This new garment does not match the old one. The old is Judaism in which everything is regulated by the law. The law has not brought blessing to the people, but loss of blessing and condemnation; for the law has been broken by the people.

The Lord has not come to tell people to keep to the law. He could have done that, for He Himself kept the law perfectly. But if He had taught the people the law, nothing would have changed to man's nature. Man, with his whole being, is a lawbreaker and therefore guilty of punishment. He can only receive blessing if he is approached on a totally different basis, namely on the basis of grace. That grace Christ came to bring. In Him the grace of God appeared, bringing salvation to all men (Tit 2:11). This grace is the essence of Christendom, just as the law is the essence of Judaism.

It is impossible to insert the new garment of Christendom into the old garment of Judaism. They completely exclude each other. The new must replace the old and not be linked to it. It is as with the old covenant that must be replaced by the new covenant (Heb 8:13). Law and grace do not go together. Where attempts are made to mix law and grace, neither is taken seriously and both are violated. Then law is no longer law, and grace ceases to be grace. In grace the power and the joy of the Spirit, of which wine is a picture, is active, just as in the law the power of man is active.

The new wine of the Spirit cannot be done in the old packaging. The old packaging represents a person who lives on the basis of the law. The power of the Spirit of God in grace cannot be locked up within the statutes of the law. The old things are the forms of man according to the flesh. The new is the power of God according to the Holy Spirit. The old man must make way for the new man.

The new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. This means that the new power and joy of the Holy Spirit only suits those who have received the grace for lost sinners. They no longer try to be righteous before God on the basis of the law, for they have realized that life according to the law is impossible because man is a sinner. For those who acknowledge this, Christ has come with His grace. He who has accepted grace is a new creation, a new skin, in which the Holy Spirit as a fresh wine brings strength and joy.

The Lord knows how difficult it is for a human being, and certainly for a Jew, to depend on grace alone. It means that man condemns himself and acknowledges that he is not able to do anything good. It is very difficult for a person to come to that conclusion. Much rather he wants to achieve himself, commit himself to keep the law, earn the salvation himself. As long as he says “the old is good [enough]”, he rejects grace.

The Bridegroom is present and although this should have been a cause of joy, because the power of God is present, man prefers the old because it makes man important. The power of God doesn't do that. The old is so familiar that we are afraid to hand it in to get instead something new that is unknown. We only hand in the old if we recognize the Lord in the new. The standard should not be how we have always seen it, but the standard should be the light that God gives through His Word. If we shut ourselves off from the power of God's Word we will freeze in traditions.

Luke 6

Lk 6:1-5 | Picking Heads of Grain on a Sabbath

1 Now it happened that He was passing through [some] grainfields on a Sabbath; and His disciples were picking the heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands, and eating [the grain]. 2 But some of the Pharisees said, "Why do you do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" 3 And Jesus answering them said, "Have you not even read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him, 4 how he entered the house of God, and took and ate the consecrated bread which is not lawful for any to eat except the priests alone, and gave it to his companions?" 5 And He was saying to them, "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

The Lord's teaching about the old and the new is illustrated in this and the following history. Both histories are about something that happens on a Sabbath. The Sabbath is pre-eminently something that belongs to the law, the old. The Lord will show here how the new works.

God has given the Sabbath as a sign of the covenant. He never meant that day as a day that prevents His grace. This is already evident from the fact that God gave the Sabbath even before the Fall. He meant that day as a blessing. However, the Pharisees and scribes have made it a day that has become a yoke. The Lord maintains the Sabbath, He does not abolish it, but uses it as a day of blessing and grace, as it should always have been according to God's purpose.

The first history takes place on the "second-first Sabbath" (Darby Translation). Most likely this refers to the first Sabbath after the second day of the unleavened bread. The second-first Sabbath (cf. Lev 23:9-14) indicates that the first sheaf of the harvest has already been waved and so the disciples are free to eat from the ears. It is the first Sabbath day after waving the first sheaf before Yahweh. No true Israelite would have considered it lawful to eat fresh grains before Yahweh had received His share in the offering to Him of that first sheaf.

On that day, the Lord walks with His disciples through the grainfields, that is, among the blessings of God, from which the disciples eat – it does not say that the Lord did so as well. This is absolutely permissible because the first sheaf of the harvest has already been waved before the LORD, Yahweh, and because the law permits it (Deu 23:25). The Pharisees think differently. They have made their own laws, including what is and especially what is not allowed on the Sabbath. They therefore make remarks about the disciples' behavior.

The Lord stands up for His disciples. In His answer He shows two things: the position He has and His Person. His position corresponds to that of David who is fleeing from Saul. The Lord refers to that history here (1Sam 21:1-9). David was the anointed king of God, but rejected. It was not God's purpose that His anointed would suffer at the expense of complying with formal laws. God Who gave these statutes stands above the statutes set by Him.

In the same way, the entire Israelite system has become defective as a result of the rejection of the King, the true David. The Pharisees are concerned about side issues while rejecting Christ. Luke points out the similarity with the history of King David. The position of the Lord is exactly like that of David after his anointing and before he ascended the throne. David was in such extraordinary difficulties that he was given the holy bread to eat.

When the anointed king and his followers lack what is urgently needed, God, as it were, refuses to hold on to the ritual. How can He accept the people's *consecrated bread* as food for His priests, when His king, with those who follow him, are threatened with death? In the same position is the great Son of David with His disciples. This is clear from the hunger of the Anointed and His faithful followers.

The Lord points to that history in questioning form. He asks questions that require their spiritual judgment of a situation. By responding to this, either said loud or unspoken in their hearts, they show whether they live with God or whether they only take people into account, namely themselves.

The Lord Himself gives the answer. In this answer He points to Who He is. He is the Son of Man to Whom God has subjected all things. He does not claim the right to it yet, but that does not mean that He does not have

it. As such He is Lord over all things, including the Sabbath. In addition, as Yahweh, and that He is, He Himself instituted the Sabbath. It is clear that He is emphasizing His Person here. The Sabbath cannot limit Him in His goodness. On the contrary, the Sabbath is at His disposal to show His goodness. This we see in the next history.

Lk 6:6-11 | Healing a Withered Hand

6 On another Sabbath He entered the synagogue and was teaching; and there was a man there whose right hand was withered. 7 The scribes and the Pharisees were watching Him closely [to see] if He healed on the Sabbath, so that they might find [reason] to accuse Him. 8 But He knew what they were thinking, and He said to the man with the withered hand, "Get up and come forward!" And he got up and came forward. 9 And Jesus said to them, "I ask you, is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or to destroy it?" 10 After looking around at them all, He said to him, "Stretch out your hand!" And he did [so]; and his hand was restored. 11 But they themselves were filled with rage, and discussed together what they might do to Jesus.

Once again, the Sabbath is discussed. Now not in connection with Christ's position or Person, but with His power. He has the power to heal in grace, and He exercises that power, whether His opponents like it or not. He entered a synagogue "on another Sabbath" than those of the previous verses. There He is teaching. Where He comes, there is no question whether He is allowed to. He is there and teaches. There is also a man there with a withered right hand. This man cannot enjoy the fruit of the land. He cannot pick the heads of grain and rub them in his hands (verse 1).

The scribes and the Pharisees are also present. They see the Lord and they see the man with the withered hand. They know the goodness and power of the Lord and expect that He is going to heal. They are waiting for that, because then they have an accusation against Him. They do not listen to His teaching, but they are waiting in suspense whether He will indeed heal, for then they can seize Him.

The Lord accepts their unspoken challenge. He lets the man take a place that is visible to all. The man obeys and comes forward. With this he takes place next to the Lord and opposite the religious leaders. He also sees that

the eyes of all are on him. This does not prevent him from expecting everything from the Lord. He keeps his eye on Him and on His goodness.

Before the Lord heals the man, He asks the religious leaders a question about doing good or evil on the Sabbath. He tells them that it is about saving or destroying a life. It is about the life of the man. That life is only real life when he can enjoy unlimited enjoyment of what God has given in blessings in the land.

The Lord looks around at them all. With His all-seeing eyes He looks them in the eyes one by one. He wants to involve all in His act of grace and healing. It must be clear to all that this act has something to say for everyone of them. All have to think about whether His deed is good or evil. Then He tells the man to stretch out his hand. The man does not wonder if he can do it, not even what hand he should stretch out. He obeys, resulting in the restoration of his hand. This made him a son of the bridal-chamber and he shares in the blessing and joy of sons of the bridal-chamber.

The conscience of the religious leaders is thus hardened that the showing of grace makes them filled with rage. It leads them to deliberations on how to eliminate Christ.

Lk 6:12-16 | Twelve Disciples Chosen

12 It was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God. 13 And when day came, He called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles: 14 Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James and John; and Philip and Bartholomew; 15 and Matthew and Thomas; James [the son] of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot; 16 Judas [the son] of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

Faced with the increasing hatred of the leaders, the Lord seeks solitude for fellowship with His God. So He did when all sought Him to be healed (Lk 5:15-16). In all circumstances prayer is the refuge of this dependent Man. Instead of being held back by the hatred of religious leaders, the Lord increases the instruments of grace. He involves others in this work because He wants to reach all people with the gospel through them.

He calls His disciples to Himself after a night of prayer. None of the prophets sent by God to His people has called others to him to send them out afterward. He can do that by virtue of His majesty, but He does it as the dependent Man. He knows the will of His Father. Therefore He is not mistaken when He chooses Judas Iscariot.

He surrounds Himself here with hearts that are faithful to God, the called ones of His mercy. He calls them "apostles", which means "sent ones". He will send them out. He does this a few chapters further and also after He has gone to heaven. As the apostles of the Lamb, they will continue what He began.

In every list of the twelve disciples we have in the Gospels, Simon is mentioned first. The Lord gives him the name Peter. That indicates the authority of the Lord. Persons above others have the power to give or change names (Gen 2:19; Dan 1:6-7). The second is his brother Andrew. It is beautiful to serve the Lord with a brother. There is a *family* relationship, a *religious* relationship and a *service* relationship. We also see these three relationships with the next two disciples, the brothers James and John.

Philip is mentioned as fifth in each enumeration and thus heads the second group of four disciples. This second group consists in each enumeration of the twelve disciples of the same four disciples, whereby the order of the disciples changes. Bartholomew is probably the same as Nathanael who was brought to the Lord by Philip (Jn 1:45-50; 21:2). As a result, there will have been a close relationship between them. Matthew is the author of the Gospel, also known as Levi, the former tax collector. Thomas is also called Didymus, i.e. the twin (Jn 21:2). That seems to indicate that he has a twin brother. Of his brother we know nothing, of Thomas we know that he has followed the Lord.

James, the son of Alphaeus, is the first of the third group of four disciples. In that group is also Simon, the Zealot. The Zealots were followers of Judas the Galilean, who declared that taxes should only be paid to God and not to the Romans. It is remarkable that the Lord makes both Matthew, who collected taxes for the Romans, and Simon, who opposed this, His disciples. Those who are enemies by nature, become friends in their love for the Lord. The Lord also calls Judas. In view of him, he will certainly

have spoken with his Father in prayer. When Judas is called, he is not yet a traitor, but he will be.

Lk 6:17-19 | The Lord Heals Many

17 Jesus came down with them and stood on a level place; and [there was] a large crowd of His disciples, and a great throng of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon, 18 who had come to hear Him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were being cured. 19 And all the people were trying to touch Him, for power was coming from Him and healing [them] all.

The Lord descends “with them”, that is, with the disciples He has just chosen to be apostles. It is not written that they come down with Him, but He comes down with them. What a proof of mercy! The Lord is always ready to descend with us, to go with us to fulfill the task He has given. He comes down with them because He will send them out to do what He does: speak words of grace. They must therefore learn from Him what message He brings. They should not only take that message to themselves as knowledge, but His words should first do their formative work in themselves. His words are life-changing words.

He chooses a level place, where the great crowd that is with Him can see and hear Him. That crowd comes from Judaea and Jerusalem, where the ministry of the apostles must begin after He went to heaven (Acts 1:8). There are also people from outside of Israel, from the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon. Grace is not limited to Israel, but is meant for all men, to the end of the earth.

The great crowd has come “to hear Him”, that is the first. His words are a blessing to listen to. Its value is great and the crowd acknowledges that. The great crowd has also come to be healed of their diseases. They are not only interested in His words. The Lord is merciful and provides for their need.

Also those who were tormented by unclean spirits are healed. They had opened themselves up to the unclean spirits and had been deceived by these demonic powers that appealed to their unclean desires. Then they experienced that they had surrendered to tormentors, from which they

could not any more free themselves. The Lord is merciful and He answers a call upon Him for deliverance. It seems as if the whole crowd consists of sick people.

They all want to touch Him to be cured. The power of the Lord is noticeable present and they want to benefit from that. Without setting any conditions He heals all who touch Him. Previously, His power has become visible to show the healing effect of His teachings to the flocked Pharisees and scribes (Lk 5:17). Now there is power to heal in the presence of His disciples whom He will send out and whom He will teach sound and sound making words in the following verses (1Tim 6:3).

Lk 6:20-23 | 'Blessed'

20 And turning His gaze toward His disciples, He [began] to say, "Blessed [are] you [who are] poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. 21 Blessed [are] you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed [are] you who weep now, for you shall laugh. 22 Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. 23 Be glad in that day and leap [for joy], for behold, your reward is great in heaven. For in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets.

These 'Beatitudes' are very similar to those of Matthew 5-7. Yet here it is probably another occasion and another crowd. The Lord will have said things of the same content on several occasions, but in words that are fitting for each of those occasions. All preachers who speak about the same subjects on different occasions, will do so in slightly different ways each time.

In this speech, the Lord points out the character that His teaching will form in those who accept it. He speaks first of all to His disciples, while the crowds hear what He says (Lk 7:1). He lifts up His eyes upon (Darby Translation) His disciples, that is to say, that He as a Master, takes a lower place. The teaching He gives is perfectly put into practice in and through Him. He does not hand over teaching material, but a lifestyle, a behavior in which becomes visible Who God is Who came to man in humiliation in Christ.

The difference with the Sermon on the Mount in the Gospel according to Matthew is evident from the form of address used by the Lord. Here He addresses Himself directly to His disciples. He speaks to them and says in view of the kingdom of God that it is “yours”. In Matthew he does not speak *to* any particular class, but *about* a particular class, and says that the kingdom of heaven is “theirs” (Mt 5:3).

In the Gospel according to Matthew He speaks of the characteristics of those who are subjects in the kingdom of heaven, a kingdom that has been delayed by the rejection of the King, but which will be established when He returns. Meanwhile, the kingdom has been established in a hidden form, as He makes clear in the parables in Matthew 13. In the Sermon on the Mount, He holds out to those who are in that kingdom, as it were, the constitution of that kingdom to which they must adhere. In the Gospel according to Luke, He points to a special characteristic of those who belong to Him, namely their relationship with Him. In the description He gives here of His disciples, He appears to presume His rejection as an accomplished fact. They share in His rejection.

In the first ones He calls blessed, the difference to what is written in Matthew is clearly expressed. Luke mentions that the Lord addresses His disciples personally and directly: “Blessed [are] you [who are] poor.” Matthew does not do that. He writes from the Lord’s mouth: “Blessed are the poor in spirit” which is general and has to do with the mind.

His followers are poor in all respects. They have neither great imagination nor great wealth. They resemble Him Who became poor for our sake (2Cor 8:9). They may be poor now, but soon they will have the whole kingdom of God as their true wealth. This prospect is the reason why the poor disciple may consider himself blessed.

The true disciple is also hungry, but the Lord says about this that he is “blessed”. In Matthew He links hunger also to ‘thirst’ and ‘for righteousness’. In Luke it is general again. Disciples are hungry for all that is of God and what they do not see in the world surrounding them. The world is not hungry for God, but casts Him out. The world pursues its own interests at the expense of everything and everyone. God is not taken into account at all.

The disciple is hungry for the time when God will reign through Christ on earth. Then he will be satisfied. All his desires for what is of God will be satisfied. The whole situation on earth cannot make the disciple happy. He suffers from it; it grieves him. However, this situation does not continue endlessly. When God reigns on earth through Christ, the disciple will laugh.

Because God does not yet rule in Christ on earth, but has been rejected, this will also be part of the disciples of Christ. The people will hate them, and will ostracize and insult them. Their name will be mentioned with contempt. And all this because they belong to the rejected Son of Man. The Lord calls them blessed. It is a blessed fate to share in the reproach that is His part.

They need not grieve about what people will do to them for His sake. On the contrary, they should rejoice about that. They did so (Acts 5:41) and many after them. What people do to them for His sake makes them glad on earth, while the thought of reward in heaven may make them extra glad. In the suffering inflicted upon them, they become partakers of the prophets who suffered from the fathers of these persecutors. People who persecute do what their ancestors have already done.

Lk 6:24-26 | 'Woe'

24 But woe to you who are rich, for you are receiving your comfort in full. 25 Woe to you who are well-fed now, for you shall be hungry. Woe [to you] who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. 26 Woe [to you] when all men speak well of you, for their fathers used to treat the false prophets in the same way.

Here the Lord speaks of an opposite class of people. They are people about whom He pronounces the "woe". We do not hear this in the Sermon on the Mount. These are the people of the world who indulge in her joys and pleasures. He pronounces the "woe" over them, as He pronounces the "blessed" about the others. The difference is made by whether or not to follow Him. Although it is about a different class of people, He still speaks to "you". He wants to impress that on the disciples.

He speaks of the rich as opposed to the poor in verse 20. The poor are the poor in the general sense of the word. In the same way, the rich are the rich

in a general sense. Not only the material rich, but also those who are rich in spiritual abilities and therefore can look down upon others. They do not need any consolation later on, for they already live with the 'comforting' thought that they have succeeded in everything and have done so without God.

The same applies to those who are satisfied. They have everything their heart desires. They also think that they have been there for others so that they also experience full inner satisfaction. They can't solve all the misery in the world, but they did what they could. But they don't think of God. By doing so they pass over the fact that all the misery in the world is the result of man's sin that is also in them.

There will come a time when their complacency will be over. Also all those who see life as a big laughing party will be sobered. We can think of carnival. People save a year for it, live for it and throw off all bonds when the time has come. For them, the whole life should be carnival. They disregard God's rights over man. Nor do they remember that through man's sin the world has rejected the Son of God.

Those who do not live in connection with Christ can laugh for a short time, but will grieve and cry forever. The only comfort these people have is the life they enjoy on earth right now. The believers, on the other hand, will be comforted with eternal consolation when they are with the Lord Jesus (Lk 16:25).

The Lord warns that a true disciple is not appreciated by all men. Being appreciated by all men is in strong contrast to those whose names are rejected as evil for the sake of the Son of Man (verse 22). If all people speak well of someone, that person is someone who is flattering everyone and does good everywhere and thinks he is a friend to everyone. He will not tell someone that he is doing wrong, and certainly he will not preach God's judgment on sin. Such people are like the false prophets who say what the people like to hear (Mic 2:11). Such prophets are loved by the people, but not by God.

Lk 6:27-30 | Love Your Enemies

27 *"But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. 29 Whoever*

er hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also; and whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either. 30 Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back.

The following are indications as to how the disciples can show the spirit of the grace of the Lord. He does not yet send His disciples, but prepares them for it. It starts with love. That is the only right mind in which grace can be shown. Love comes from the heart of God and is manifested in Christ. God and Christ are to be seen first and foremost in these verses. Only if there is an inner connection with the Lord Jesus, the disciple can also fulfill these things, because then the love of God is poured into his heart (Rom 5:5). Love becomes visible at the most when it expresses itself against enemies. Love that can flow to and even embrace an enemy is not human, but Divine.

The Lord speaks to His disciples as “you who hear”. It starts with hearing Him. Love for the Lord is apparent from hearing Him. Out of the love we see in Him, good can be done to people who hate us. In the following, the Lord speaks of various channels through which love can flow, according to the nature of the enmity we encounter. Any form of enmity gives occasion to a certain expression of love. These things cannot be put into practice by people who want it, but do not know Him Who has put it perfectly into practice and do not have Him as their life.

Blessing is wishing good to others. To do so for those who wish us evil is true imitation of Christ. When the Lord is on the cross, He asks His Father to forgive those who have crucified Him (Lk 23:34a). That is seeking blessing for those who curse you. When people reproach us, we pray for them. The Lord does not say that we should pray for ourselves, but for them. What shall we pray for them?

The disciple who walks in love does not seek retribution if he is abused, but is prepared to undergo even more abuse. He does not stand up for his rights, but allows everything been taken away from him and is prepared to give more. This is not the naive and irresponsible dealing with our life and our possessions, but the reaction to hatred and defamation because of our connection with the Lord Jesus. Thus He reacted to what was done to Him.

A disciple who walks in love gives when asked for it. He gives, because God is a Giver and because the Lord Jesus gave Himself and he has learned to know that for himself. If anything is taken from him, if he is expropriated because he belongs to Christ, he will not stand up for his rights, even if he had them. Thus it has happened that Christians have been deprived of the opportunity to study, or to start a business where others could. Christ never exercised His right to kingship. It has been taken away from Him, and He has accepted it.

Lk 6:31-36 | Be Merciful

31 Treat others the same way you want them to treat you. 32 If you love those who love you, what credit is [that] to you? For even sinners love those who love them. 33 If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is [that] to you? For even sinners do the same. 34 If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is [that] to you? Even sinners lend to sinners in order to receive back the same [amount]. 35 But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil [men]. 36 Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

The disciple is out to do good to others. He does not think in negative terms. He doesn't think: What I don't want others to do to me, I don't do to others either. He thinks in positive terms: What I want others to do to me, I want to do to others. This is also true of God and Christ. The Lord Jesus began to do good and then He could count on man to do good to Him.

The Lord concentrates on the previous by pointing out that it is not about the behavior of disciples among themselves. If there is love – and there should be – then it is not difficult to love. This does not give rise to any special feelings of gratitude to others. It is something that is also found among sinners. Here it is not about the characteristic of having feelings of love. It is about cases in which love is revealed when the other person does not expect it.

Also when it is about doing good it should not happen as a kind of recompense to those who have done good to us. Then there is no reason why the other person should be grateful. The people in the world act in the same

way. When we lend money to someone who is in need of money and we do so with in mind the hope that we will earn something from it, when there will be a quid pro quo in any form, we have not lent selflessly, out of love. We are no better than sinners who only lend when they are sure that they will get back at least the amount they have lend.

It is about loving and doing good and lending to enemies. If we do it as the Lord meant and has done it Himself, we will receive a great reward. Moreover, we will then be real sons of the Most High. God has given love, done good, lent. When we do that, we are like Him. "Most High" is the glorious Name of God in the realm of peace, when He has laid all powers at the feet of the Son of Man. God is already the Most High. His exaltedness above all things is expressed in a special way in His exaltedness above evil.

What encouragement for disciples who are surrounded by evil and sometimes think they will be overcome by it. The Most High is exalted above it. He shows this exaltation in His mercy, which is His full goodness over the ungrateful and the evil ones instead of destroying them. If we do this, we are real sons who look like their Father. This is sonship as the Lord means it, sonship that is to the Father's delight. Even reward is linked to this behavior.

The Lord summarizes the foregoing in one word: mercy. All people have a need for mercy. The Father has taken care of the disciples. In the awareness of that mercy, the followers of the Lord can go to all those around them to practice the previous teaching. Sons do not feel exalted above others and don't judge. This mind and attitude are presented in the following section.

Lk 6:37-42 | Judging Others

37 "Do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned. 38 Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, [and] running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return." 39 And He also spoke a parable to them: "A blind man cannot guide a blind man, can he? Will they not both fall into a pit? 40 A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher. 41 Why do you look at the speck that is in your

brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? 42 Or how can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye.

When the previous teaching is taken to heart, there is another danger. This danger is feeling better than others, feeling above others. God did not act like this in this world. If the disciple forgets that, a spirit of criticism gets hold of him who expresses itself in criticizing everything that does not correspond to this former teaching.

The Lord warns His disciples of a haughty spirit, the self-imagination to be able to judge everything and to think to have to do it. Judging is the forming of a strong opinion about something someone does and of which is judged that it is not good, without the disciple being entitled to this judgment. Condemnation is the rejecting of someone who, in the opinion of the disciple, is not acting correctly. The disciple must count on being judged and condemned, as he judges and condemns.

The Lord says it in negative form. If you don't do it, it won't happen to you either. Therefore, we must let go of our own opinions about others, give freedom to others and leave them to the Lord. We will experience that ourselves as a true liberation. Always thinking you have to judge and condemn everything is bondage. If we learn to let go, we will live in true freedom, that is to be able to serve the Lord as He likes. Instead of criticizing others, we should give others. If we do that, we will also receive recompense, and in an impressively abundant manner.

The Lord takes an example from the market. Someone who bought grain bought it in a measure. The merchant put the grain in it. He could do it loosely, but he could also try to do as much as he could do in it by pressing and shaking the grain. He could even put a head on it, so that the measure would overflow. Thus will God deal with us in abundance. We will receive from God beyond what we really have deserved. The general principle is that we are done, as we have done ourselves. This goes for both exercising criticism and giving.

In a parable, the Lord Jesus speaks of making God's own features visible. We cannot see God, but His sons can be seen. They can be real sons, those who are made seeing by Christ and therefore know God and can show His features. However, it may also be about those who presume to be connected with God. They say they know Him and show themselves up as leaders for others. The Lord addresses us on our confession, on what we pretend to be and show to others. Do we think we see and are able to lead others? In any case, a blind person cannot lead a blind person. A blind person is someone who has no view of Christ.

If we do not see Him and don't look like Him, we can never show the right way to anyone else. We will die, with those who follow us. That can be our children, that can be fellow Christians. A pupil should not pretend to be above his teacher. A real pupil wants to look like his teacher, like a real son wants to look like his father. And that not just a little, in some aspects, but in everything. "Fully trained" is one who is fully taught and formed entirely by the teaching of the teacher and therefore resembles him. He will be like his teacher in everything in which he is formed by this teacher. Christ was and is perfect, and we grow up to Him in all things, to the measure of the full growth of the fullness of Christ's perfection (Eph 4:13; Col 1:28).

Perhaps our problem is not so much that we are blind. We see, we know the Lord, but our problem may be that we see so little of Him. We may not be blind, but we are severely limited in our vision and that without noticing it ourselves. We even think we see so sharply that we can notice the speck in our brother's eye. It is only tragic that we do not realize that we have a log in our own eye. The Lord uses this exaggeration to indicate how blind we can be to our own deficits, while others see them clearly. And we just think that we can judge the small deficit in our brother's life very clearly.

We need to know two things: Who the Lord is and who we ourselves are. A person who does not see the log in his own eye has not turned his eye to the Teacher and does not know himself. It goes even further. There is not only the presence of the log in the own eye and despite of it perceiving the speck in the eye of the other. There is also the presumption to remove the speck from the eye of the brother without even the slightest sense of the log in the own eye.

Disciples can be completely blind to their own ostentatious mistakes that irritate many around them. It is truly astonishing how such people easily point to a small obnoxiousness in a fellow disciple which irritates them and, moreover, also offer to remove what they consider to be an irritating obnoxiousness. The Lord calls such disciples hypocrites. They should first look at themselves. Only when they have seen and judged themselves in God's light they will be able to help someone else.

Lk 6:43-45 | Each Tree Has Its Own Fruit

43 For there is no good tree which produces bad fruit, nor, on the other hand, a bad tree which produces good fruit. 44 For each tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they pick grapes from a briar bush. 45 The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil [man] out of the evil [treasure] brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart.

A practice like that of the man with the log is bad fruit. The man is not a good tree. Because he is a bad tree, he does not produce good fruit. The self-judgment of the previous verses is applied to the trees. Judging oneself not only ensures that good fruit can come, but above all that the person himself becomes a good tree. A tree is known not only for its good or bad fruits, but also for its *own* fruit. Each tree produces that fruit that is in accordance with its own nature. The Christian bears the fruits of the nature of Christ. It's about the heart and about real obedience in practice.

True goodness can only come from a good heart. From the tree and the fruit, the Lord passes on to the heart. When Christ is cherished as the good treasure in it, good comes forth from that heart. Such a person is a good person. The reverse is that someone who does not have Christ as a good treasure in his heart, he is an evil one. In his heart is an evil treasure. He thinks only of himself. What comes out of him is evil.

What treasure a person has in his heart is evident from the words he speaks. Someone who is characterized by continuous criticism, who always talks negatively about others, is an evil person. The disciple who has learned from the Teacher is out to do good to others. That will be clear from what he says. He will say good things about the Lord Jesus and about

His own and wants to be of help for others, just as the Lord Jesus was a help for others. For example, the believers in Rome were people of whom Paul could say they were “full of goodness” (Rom 15:14), whereas he had previously said that man does not do good by nature (Rom 3:12).

Lk 6:46-49 | Two Foundations

46 “Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say? 47 Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and acts on them, I will show you whom he is like: 48 he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation on the rock; and when a flood occurred, the torrent burst against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. 49 But the one who has heard and has not acted [accordingly], is like a man who built a house on the ground without any foundation; and the torrent burst against it and immediately it collapsed, and the ruin of that house was great.”

It comes down to whether we really acknowledge the Lord as Lord. We can address Him as “Lord, Lord” and call Him “Lord” with the mouth in an exaggerate way, but if we do not do what He says, it is a lie. In this respect, it is not about what we confess, but what we do, what we show in our life.

The Lord indicates what the true disciple resembles who listens to His words and acts accordingly. He illustrates this with an appealing example. The disciple who hears the words of the Teacher will show this by working hard to create a good foundation for his life house. Such a person is deeply convinced of the dangers that threaten his life. In order to have a reliable foundation for his life house, he digs deep. He is not superficial, but digs away everything in his life that offers no support. He wants a good foundation. Only the rock offers that. The rock is a picture of Christ (Mt 16:18; 1Cor 10:4). He is the foundation (1Cor 3:11).

If a disciple has built his house thereupon, there may be torrents and floods of water, but his house will not shake. It is well built because it stands on the rock. There has been dug deep into the soul, all sinfulness has come to the surface and has been confessed and judged in God’s light. Whoever has dug deep has learned to say: “Wretched man that I am!” (Rom 7:24). Then he comes to the rock: “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Rom 7:25a). Then there is no more condemnation (Rom 8:1). The

words of Christ are the rock. By paying heed to His words, we survive every attack by the opponent. If anyone proves his faith in obedience, he will never be moved or ashamed.

However, there are also people who listen to the words of Christ but do not act on them. They are not committed to digging and deepening. They build their house “on the ground” because they believe that the “ground”, that is to say the earthly things, provides sufficient basis for their life. When the torrents come, it turns out that these things do not offer a foundation. That life house collapses and the destruction of that house is great. It becomes a ruin.

We can also apply the ‘house’ to the ‘house’ of professing Christianity (cf. 2Tim 2:20) and the ‘house’ of Israel (cf. Heb 8:8). The words “who has heard and has not acted [accordingly]” indicate exactly what has characterized Christians and Jews. If the Lord returns in glory, the hardest blow of judgment will not hit the heathen nations who have never heard the Word of God, but the professing Jews and the professing Christians to whom the Word of God has come to a rich extend. They heard the gospel, but did not obey it.

Luke 7

Lk 7:1-10 | A Centurion of Capernaum

1 When He had completed all His discourse in the hearing of the people, He went to Capernaum. 2 And a centurion's slave, who was highly regarded by him, was sick and about to die. 3 When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders asking Him to come and save the life of his slave. 4 When they came to Jesus, they earnestly implored Him, saying, "He is worthy for You to grant this to him; 5 for he loves our nation and it was he who built us our synagogue." 6 Now Jesus [started] on His way with them; and when He was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to Him, "Lord, do not trouble Yourself further, for I am not worthy for You to come under my roof; 7 for this reason I did not even consider myself worthy to come to You, but [just] say the word, and my servant will be healed. 8 For I also am a man placed under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it." 9 Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled at him, and turned and said to the crowd that was following Him, "I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such great faith." 10 When those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave in good health.

The Lord has finished His teaching for His disciples, but the people have listened also. They too have been addressed by Him. The words, *His* words, are words of spirit and life (Jn 6:63). When we hear His words, we cannot remain neutral.

Then the Lord enters Capernaum. In the history Luke describes, we see what faith in His word means in practice, and that with a heathen centurion. In Capernaum is a centurion who has a slave who is highly regarded by him. That is a touching relationship. Normally, a slave was a 'thing'. That the slave is highly regarded by the centurion says something about the centurion and it says something about the slave.

Now this slave is sick and even about to die. The centurion will have done all kinds of things to get his sick slave healthy, but nothing has helped. In

his extreme distress, he resorts to the Lord Jesus, Who has just entered the city. He has already heard of Him. He looks high up to Him, as it appears further on (verse 6). Therefore he does not go to the Lord himself, but sends elders of the Jews to Him. This is an acknowledgment of the election of that people as the mediator between God and the Gentiles. Using the elders of the Jews to get the blessing of the Lord is a picture of what will happen in the future, when the nations will acknowledge that God is with His people (Zec 8:23).

These elders are impressed by the power of Christ. They believe that He is able to heal the sick slave. They beg Him to do it because according to their judgment the centurion is worth it. They give a good testimony of him. This is not a confession by force. Both their faith in the Lord Jesus and their appreciation for the centurion is real, but they judge the heathen entirely according to his love for them. That is typically Jewish. Instead of seeing that their own law condemns them, they see themselves as above the Gentiles. They are 'I' oriented.

The centurion loves God and he loves the people of God. This is evident from his building of the synagogue. God's Spirit has already touched him. We see how he not only uses the elders, but also his friends, who speak more the language of his own heart. When he let speak the pure feelings of his heart and lets his friends intercede as his second envoy, he says: "Lord, do not trouble Yourself further, for I am not worthy for You to come under my roof." Here we see two things: the deep awareness he has of the glory of the Lord Jesus and the corresponding deep awareness of his own smallness. The centurion sees himself as not worthy (cf. verses 4-5).

The elders have highlighted his building of their synagogue as a merit. The centurion himself did not appeal to his building of the synagogue for the Jews as a merit which would have made him acceptable to the Lord and would have Him to act. He fully relies on the authority of the Lord's Word and His grace to provide for his needs. For us it must also be sufficient that He "says the word". It is faith that simply takes Him at His word, without regard to feeling or experience.

He sees in Christ a Person Who has authority over all things, just as he himself has authority over his soldiers and slaves. He also sees in the Lord

a Person Who is under the authority of Another, just as he is. He knows nothing about the Messiah, but in Christ he recognizes the dependence on God and the power of God. This is not just any thought, this is faith, and there is no such faith in Israel.

Luke also mentions the great result of the faith of the centurion. The elders and friends see the sick slave in good health when they come home. From this acting of the Lord a great testimony has gone forth. Many are witnesses to it. There will also have been faith and much gratitude toward Him.

Lk 7:11-17 | The Young Man of Nain

11 Soon afterwards He went to a city called Nain; and His disciples were going along with Him, accompanied by a large crowd. 12 Now as He approached the gate of the city, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and a sizeable crowd from the city was with her. 13 When the Lord saw her, He felt compassion for her, and said to her, "Do not weep." 14 And He came up and touched the coffin; and the bearers came to a halt. And He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise!" 15 The dead man sat up and began to speak. And [Jesus] gave him back to his mother. 16 Fear gripped them all, and they [began] glorifying God, saying, "A great prophet has arisen among us!" and, "God has visited His people!" 17 This report concerning Him went out all over Judea and in all the surrounding district.

The grace of God in Christ continues its way. On that way also lies Nain. The Lord goes there, with in His entourage two kinds of people: many of His disciples and a large crowd. As He and the many people around Him approach the city gate, a procession meets him with a dead man in their midst. It is the only begotten son of his mother, a widow. Israel is like that widow, without a husband. Israel has an only begotten Son on Whom it should have placed its hope. And He is the One Who will die, and with Him all hope of the people will disappear. Israel itself will kill Him.

Together with the widow are also many people. Thus the two large groups of people meet here. The center of the one crowd is Life. The center of the other crowd is death. The Lord sees the mother, the widow. She is deprived of her last support and joy. Her husband had already died and now she has to bring her son to the tomb. It's taking place at the city gate,

the place where justice is spoken. Here there is a confrontation between life and death. One of the two crowds will have to give way to the other. Who has the right of passage?

Humanly speaking, death has the last word. Death has the right on its side. For death is the righteous wages of sin, isn't it (Rom 6:23)? However, when death is confronted with Life, death loses its right and any claim to it. Luke notes that "the Lord" sees the mother. He, the Lord, has authority over life and death. Death will have to give way to the claims of Him Who was dead and has become alive again for all eternity (Rev 1:18).

When the Lord sees her – and He knows all her life and her grief – "He felt compassion for her". This word 'compassion' occurs three times in Luke: with the Samaritan for the man who fell into the hands of robbers (Lk 10:33), with the father for his youngest son when he sees him coming from afar (Lk 15:20) and here in verse 13. Then the Lord speaks the comforting words: "Do not weep." He really can say that because He is the Source of all consolation. He speaks these words to her, without any audible appeal by the widow to Him. He acts from His own fullness of grace. We don't see faith in this woman, we only see grace and compassion on the part of the Lord.

Then He Who is the life approaches. He touches the coffin and the bearers come to a halt. Why does He touch the coffin? Because He identifies Himself with it. That coffin is His coffin. It looks forward to His death which He will taste for others through which He can give life to others. Every other human being is being defiled by this touch, but with Him it is the other way around. Whatever He touches becomes clean through His cleanness. We have seen that by the touch of the leper (Lk 5:13). By the touch of the dead we see that His mighty hand brings death to a halt.

Then He speaks words of life. He addresses the dead and the dead obey. He who died is a young man, a man who, in the power of his life, has been caught in the grip of death. Death must let go of its grip on this young man when he hears the Son of God say with authority: "I say to you, arise!" (cf. Jn 5:25).

The result is there immediately. The dead person sits up. The first expression of life is that he begins to speak. This is also the result of every

conversion. If anyone has passed from death to life, he will testify of it. Then the Lord gives him to his mother. He knows what the young man needs and He knows what the mother needs. He puts them both back in the relationship they had before death intervened. He has established the family ties.

He does not command the young man to follow Him. The young man must be there for his mother. That is the task which the Lord gives him. And the mother gets back her comfort and support. It says so remarkably that He *gives* him to her, He is the Giver of every good gift. Once Israel will receive back the only begotten Son. That is when He is risen from the dead and returns to His people.

What is happening here again makes a great impression and God is glorified. All see that God is present in Christ and that God in Him visits His people. To them He is no more than a great prophet, someone in the row of other great prophets. They do not see that He is the Messiah. Yet what He has done causes "this report concerning Him" to be known in a wider area that God has visited His people.

Lk 7:18-23 | The Question of John the Baptist

18 The disciples of John reported to him about all these things. 19 Summoning two of his disciples, John sent them to the Lord, saying, "Are You the Expected One, or do we look for someone else?" 20 When the men came to Him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to You, to ask, 'Are You the Expected One, or do we look for someone else?'" 21 At that very time He cured many [people] of diseases and afflictions and evil spirits; and He gave sight to many [who were] blind. 22 And He answered and said to them, "Go and report to John what you have seen and heard: [the] BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT, [the] lame walk, [the] lepers are cleansed, and [the] deaf hear, [the] dead are raised up, [the] POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM. 23 Blessed is he who does not take offense at Me."

Also the disciples of John the baptist hear everything that is told of the Lord Jesus. Maybe some have seen Him perform deeds themselves. They report this to John in prison. When John hears all this, he becomes confused. He is in prison, and the Lord Whom he has announced is on a tour,

on which He does all kinds of wonders. Is He establishing the kingdom, and forgetting His forerunner? He announced Him, pointed out to Him and baptized Him. So why does He not deliver him? He wants to know Who it is about Whom he hears such things. With that question he sends two of his disciples to the Lord.

John has not lost his faith, but has been confused. In itself, it is good that he goes with it to the Lord, to the right address. The Lord receives the disciples. They say whom they come from and why John sent them. The question is simple. Is He the promised Messiah or should they look forward to the true Messiah? The question may be understandable, but it originates from false expectations. Luke says that when the question is asked, the Lord is busy doing an abundance of benefits. The question is answered by everything He is doing, by what He shows.

This is part of the answer the Lord gives to the disciples of John. He does not say: "Tell John that I am the Messiah." They can tell him what they have seen with their own eyes and what they have heard with their own ears. He points to His actions and His message. But isn't that exactly what John heard say in prison and what made him so doubtful? What does that add to what John already knew?

Indeed, the Lord has no other message for John than He has for all the people, but He brings it to him in a new and fresh way. He did not come to exercise justice, but to prove mercy. A wrong view of His actions or wrong thoughts about how He should act sometimes makes us doubt Him.

The Lord says "blessed" to those who do not reject Him because He does not meet their expectations. Whoever follows Him and trusts Him, even though he sometimes does not understand why things go this way, is blessed. John did not reject Him, but the Lord wants to use these words to tell John that he may continue to believe that he has announced the Messiah. John does not need to doubt that, despite his imprisonment.

Lk 7:24-30 | The Lord Speaks About John

24 When the messengers of John had left, He began to speak to the crowds about John, "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? 25 But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft cloth-

ing? Those who are splendidly clothed and live in luxury are [found] in royal palaces! 26 But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and one who is more than a prophet. 27 This is the one about whom it is written, 'BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY BEFORE YOU.'

28 I say to you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." 29 When all the people and the tax collectors heard [this], they acknowledged God's justice, having been baptized with the baptism of John. 30 But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God's purpose for themselves, not having been baptized by John.

After the message the Lord has *for* John, He has a word *about* John to the crowds. The crowds should not think that John is a doubter who has called anything and now has lost faith in his own message.

The Lord addresses the crowds in their conscience. When they went to John in the wilderness, why did they do that? What did they want to see? Did they see a doubting man, a weak man, who once said this and then again something else? A man who lets circumstances dictate his words, just like a reed bends to where the wind is blowing? Hadn't his preaching been powerful? And what have they done with it? Or did they think they went to see a man who looked beautiful, impressive as an appearance because of the shine of his clothes? If they had thought so, they should not have gone to the wilderness, but to a palace. The preaching of John and his whole performance testified of great power and sobriety.

But what were they going to see? A prophet, right? Well, they have seen him. But that should not have been the end of it all. Above all, they should have *listened* to his preaching and acted accordingly! The man they have seen in the wilderness is a special prophet. The Lord wants to forcefully remind the crowds of the reality of John's performance, for He wants to reach their conscience so that they will accept *Him*.

John is not just a prophet. His performance is foretold in Scripture. It has been written about him that he was sent out as messenger ahead of "You", that is Yahweh, that is the Messiah, to prepare His way. Do the crowds know that? And did not John designate Him as the Messiah, and did He

not prove in His words and deeds that He is? And what do they do with Him? Do they accept Him as Messiah through conversion and repentance, as John preached, or do they just want to take advantage of His goodness?

After the Lord has shown how special John is that he was announced as a prophet in the Scriptures, He says that never a greater prophet was born than John. John surpasses all previous prophets. All have announced the coming of the Messiah, but only John has been able to point out to the Messiah with his finger and say: He is the One. Of all the prophets he is the only one who has been able to preach that the kingdom *has come near*.

Then the Lord compares John the baptist with all who are in the kingdom of God and says that the least in the kingdom of God is greater than this greatest prophet ever born of women. How is that possible? We can only understand this if we consider that this is not a comparison between *persons*, but a comparison of *position*. It is about the contrast between the position of the believers in the Old Testament and that of the believers in the New Testament.

“Greater” has nothing to do with the person, but with the position. If it were a comparison of the person, which member of the church would dare to compare himself with John the baptist? All the prophets and the law prophesied until to John (Mt 11:13), for with the coming and rejection of Christ a new era has dawned. The kingdom of God was not established in power and majesty, but in a hidden form. Every man who converts, joins a Christ rejected on earth and is connected to a Lord in heaven. This is the part of the church.

The church is not like John the friend of the Bridegroom (Jn 3:29), but the bride. Everyone who belongs to the church is greater than he is. John did not belong to the kingdom of God, which is the kingdom God establishes and over which He appoints a Man, the Son of Man, as Head. This could only happen after the Son of Man had taken His place in glory. Therefore the kingdom was not there before that time.

All the Lord’s words about John the baptist find agreement with all who were baptized by John. They justify God, that is to say, they speak right of God and acknowledge the righteousness of God in the performance of

John. They justify God in His judgment of them. That is why they were baptized by John.

Luke mentions the tax collectors separately. For this class of people, the Lord's words about John are a great encouragement. They must go against the flow in two respects. They are hated for their profession and now they also have openly joined the Messiah. The wise and intelligent, however, the learned and great ones, the Pharisees and scribes, have rejected God's purpose for themselves. They refuse to accept the preparatory work of John the baptist.

Lk 7:31-35 | Playing the Flute or Singing a Dirge

31 "To what then shall I compare the men of this generation, and what are they like? 32 They are like children who sit in the market place and call to one another, and they say, 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not weep.' 33 For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, 'He has a demon!' 34 The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' 35 Yet wisdom is vindicated by all her children."

The Lord takes His hearers with Him in His discourse when He asks Himself aloud with whom He could compare them, so that they will see to whom they are equal and recognize themselves in it. He speaks of them as "the men of this generation", that is, the people of a certain kind, people with certain characteristics. How can be made clear to them what kind of people they are?

He sketches the scene of playing children. Some have played on the market, they have given a performance and others have watched. When they are finished, however, there is no applause, but also no 'boo' shouting. There is no reaction at all. They remain indecisive. Whatever God calls for, they do not like it. When God offers joy in Christ, they do not want to dance. When God calls for mourning, they do not want to weep. When God calls for righteousness, it is too severe for man. When He calls for mercy, it is too easy for Him. Whatever path God takes, man doesn't want any of it. He despises grace and recoils from the law.

John the baptist sang dirges for them because of their sins. His coming and way of life were in keeping with his preaching. When he came without eating bread and drinking wine with them, they said: "He has a demon." But how could he eat and drink with them, when he had to preach against them because they were living in their sins? His preaching would become powerless if he just celebrated with them. But they did not respond to his preaching.

Then comes the Lord Jesus. He played the flute for them, He played the lovely music of grace. But there has been no dance of joy as a reaction. The Son of Man eats and drinks. He wants fellowship with penitent sinners, but they also condemn that attitude. They point to Him as "a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners". And that too becomes a reason not to believe. For people who don't want to, it's never good. Yet, unintentionally, they compliment the Lord by calling Him a friend of repentant tax collectors and sinners.

However, there are also those who have believed the preaching of John the baptist and have acknowledged the Lord Jesus as the Messiah. They are the vindication of wisdom. True wisdom will come to light automatically when it comes to light in those who have been raised and shaped by it. Wisdom is seen in these children. The wisdom of God is proven in all who have accepted Christ as the only possibility to be saved. He is the wisdom of God (1Cor 1:30). He is the only way. There is no other way to salvation. Whoever believes Him says that God is righteous to save sinners in this way. One of the children in whom wisdom is vindicated is the woman we meet in the following history.

Lk 7:36-38 | A Woman Who Is a Sinner Comes to the Lord

36 Now one of the Pharisees was requesting Him to dine with him, and He entered the Pharisee's house and reclined [at the table]. 37 And there was a woman in the city who was a sinner; and when she learned that He was reclining [at the table] in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster vial of perfume, 38 and standing behind [Him] at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears, and kept wiping them with the hair of her head, and kissing His feet and anointing them with the perfume.

The Lord is confronted with two persons. One is a man with an impeccable walk of life, a theologian. The other is a sinner, someone openly known as such. This confrontation takes place in the house of a Pharisee who wants to see the Lord up close and has asked Him to dine with him. The Lord accepts the invitation, for there He must do a service of grace and teach grace.

A sinner seeking forgiveness, seeks Him. No doubt she has confessed her sins to God, but she has no knowledge of forgiveness. She feels He is full of grace and she knows she has to be with Him to get forgiveness. She finds Him. She is not deterred by the knowledge that she has to enter the house of a Pharisee. It's about Him and He's there. Then she must be there too. A repentant sinner and a Savior belong together. She is prepared for the meeting because she has an alabaster vial of perfume. Her tribute to the Savior and the appeal to His grace begin with tears. She takes the humblest place, at His feet.

Five times in this gospel we find people at the Lord's feet, each time with its own characteristic. Here is a sinner who is sent away in peace. We also see a former demon-possessed man sitting at the feet of the Lord who is sent from there to testify of Him (Lk 8:35). We come across Jairus, a man in deep sorrow, who throws himself at the Lord's feet and finds comfort there (Lk 8:41). We meet Mary who sits at the Lord's feet and is introduced by Him into His thoughts and enjoys the good part there (Lk 10:39). Finally, we find a healed leper at the Lord's feet, a place where he brings worship (Lk 17:16).

With her tears, the woman begins to wet the Lord's feet and she dries them off with the hairs of her head. Then she kisses His feet intimately and anoints them with the perfume. She is deeply impressed by His feet, for these are feet that bring her peace (Isa 52:7). She is looking for that because she knows she is a sinner.

Her tears speak of her repentance. The hair of her head, which is long enough to dry his feet with it, speaks of her dedication (1Cor 11:15). Her kisses speak of her love. The perfume speaks of worship. The woman has Godly knowledge of Christ. For her this knowledge is not a doctrine, but has a deep effect in her heart. She feels Who He is. Grace gives a deep

conviction of what sin is, with the inseparable awareness that God is good. Whoever so attaches himself to the Lord Jesus finds the true light.

Lk 7:39-43 | The Lord Has Something to Say to Simon

39 Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet He would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him, that she is a sinner." 40 And Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he replied, "Say it, Teacher." 41 "A moneylender had two debtors: one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. So which of them will love him more?" 43 Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more." And He said to him, "You have judged correctly."

Not only the woman is revealed in the light. Simon is also in the light and is revealed. With him we see the opposite of what characterizes the woman. With him there is no faith. God is revealed in the flesh in his house and he sees nothing. He observes coolly and possibly triumphantly that the Lord cannot be a prophet, otherwise He would have known who is touching Him. For this Pharisee there is nothing worse than being touched by a sinner. But Simon did not touch the Lord Jesus either, as the Lord confronts him later with!

Simon thinks the Lord does not know what kind of woman it is that touches Him. Simon also does not know that the Lord knows both the woman and him completely. The Lord responds to something Simon thinks. He knows the thoughts of every human being. He has something to say to Simon what is for him personally. Simon takes the right attitude. He is curious what the Lord has to say. That is indeed why he invited Him. He also calls Him "Teacher", not because he acknowledges Him as such for himself, but because the Lord is known as such.

In a parable the Lord presents three people to Simon. One is a moneylender or creditor, the other two are debtors, but with a different debt. One has a great debt, the other a small debt. Neither the debtor with the great debt nor the debtor with the small debt is able to pay. Then the moneylender

graciously forgives them both their debts. The question to Simon is which of both debtors will love the moneylender more.

The Lord wants to teach Simon through this parable that while he may have committed less sins than the woman, he is as incapable of paying as the woman is and therefore, like her, in need of forgiving compassion. Moneylender do not generally evoke feelings of love, but forgiveness does. Even Simon can judge that correctly. He therefore gives the right answer.

Lk 7:44-46 | The Lord Compares Simon With the Woman

44 Turning toward the woman, He said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has wet My feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. 45 You gave Me no kiss; but she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss My feet. 46 You did not anoint My head with oil, but she anointed My feet with perfume.

Then the Lord speaks to Simon about the woman. Without her having been aware of it, this poor woman was the only one to act as would be appropriate in this circumstance. This is because she values the all-encompassing importance of Him Who is present there. If the God-Savior is present, what significance do Simon and his house have? The Lord's presence makes everything else forgotten.

The Lord looks at the woman and teaches Simon a great lesson. He points Simon to the woman. Certainly, he has seen her, but with totally different eyes than the Lord. The Lord is now going to tell Simon how He sees her and appreciates what she has done to Him. He also tells how He sees Simon and how He experienced what Simon did not do.

He came into his house, but Simon withheld all customary kindness from Him as a Guest. He did not discover in Him what the woman has discovered in Him, and remained indifferent and cold toward Him. The Lord has missed what Simon only as the host should have done to Him. The woman has more than excellently compensated for this, to Simon's great shame.

The woman's tears have been a great refreshment for Him on His weary journey through the wilderness. There is nothing more invigorating to the Savior than expressions of sincere repentance for sins. Drying His feet with her hair is also an act He greatly appreciates. He sees her longing

for dedication. By drying the tears with her hair, her tears are absorbed in her hair, they are as it were identified with it. This is an indication that in her dedication the woman has always remained aware of her origins. In the kissing of His feet she has shown her love in the most intimate way and persistently, while with Simon there was only coldness. The Lord also missed Simon anointing His head, but the woman more than made up for this by anointing His feet with perfume.

Lk 7:47-50 | The Woman Goes in Peace

47 For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little." 48 Then He said to her, "Your sins have been forgiven." 49 Those who were reclining [at the table] with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this [man] who even forgives sins?" 50 And He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

The Lord concludes His teaching to Simon by declaring that the woman has acted out of love for Him and that she loved Him much. The multitude of her sins had led her to Him, for she knew that she could get forgiveness from Him for all her sins. Her love for the Lord was great because she knew that His love was greater than all her sins. That is why she gets what she is looking for: forgiveness of her many sins.

What she has seen in the Lord, what He is for sinners like her, has by grace made her heart willing to go to Him and has awakened in her the love she had for Him. She thought only of Him. He had taken possession of her heart to the exclusion of all other influences. Therefore she had entered the house of the haughty Pharisee, for He was there. His presence answered every difficulty. She saw what He was for sinners and that the most wretched and lowest sunken human being found refuge with Him.

By grace, the poor woman has felt that there is a heart that she can trust when there is nothing else left. And that is the heart of God! God conceals the transgression and seeks love by it, He arouses love by it (Pro 17:9a). This love is in the woman's heart and that is why she came to the Lord Jesus to ask Him for the fervently desired forgiveness for her many sins

she had already confessed to God. Her love drove her out to Him. God also seeks this love with us.

After teaching Simon, the Lord turns to the woman and declares that her sins have been forgiven. After her heart was overwhelmed by the love of God, her conscience is now also reassured.

In turn that provokes a reaction from those present. They talk among themselves about Who He Who even forgives sins. They talk about forgiveness as a theological issue, as is so often the case today. But only the heart that is convinced of sins and desires forgiveness sees Who He is. When the Lord speaks to Simon about the woman, He speaks about everything she has done to Him in love. He says to the woman that her *faith* has saved her; He doesn't speak about her love she has abundantly shown to Him.

The woman is the only one of the whole company who goes away in peace.

Luke 8

Lk 8:1-3 | Who Follow the Lord

1 Soon afterwards, He [began] going around from one city and village to another, proclaiming and preaching the kingdom of God. The twelve were with Him, 2 and [also] some women who had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses: Mary who was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, 3 and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who were contributing to their support out of their private means.

After the Lord had let the woman go away in peace (Lk 7:50), we see Him travelling from one city and village to another, proclaiming and preaching the kingdom of God. Here it is about His service with the Word. There is no mentioning of wonders and signs, but of the Word. The Lord preaches and proclaims the good news of the kingdom of God, that is to say that through His preaching He wants to form people who submit to His authority. With Him are also the twelve. They are with Him in training and hear how He proclaims and preaches. They will have to do the same in the future.

He has chosen the twelve to be with Him, but not only they are with Him. After the woman from the previous chapter we hear here from even more women who have found peace. They are also children of wisdom and of the kingdom, and follow and serve Him out of love. The kingdom consists of people who serve Him out of love, for it is the kingdom of the Son of the Father's love (Col 1:13). Women often have a better sense of Who the Lord is than men. The fact that the Lord has so many women in His retinue also makes it clear how important He considers them to be.

Rabbis held women inferior, incapable of receiving religious education. For example, they had made a law prohibiting a man from speaking to a woman in public. The Lord is totally different with regard to women. He appreciates their love and service.

Some women are mentioned by name. First Mary Magdalene. She is very grateful to the Lord. She loves Him, for He has delivered her from seven

demons. She is now free from bondage and only wants to be with her Deliverer. There are also distinguished women, such as Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward. As wife of Herod's steward, she will regularly be at his court. She has seen the emptiness of the worldly splendor and has found the sought peace in the Lord. She now belongs to Him, as does Susanna, of whom we know nothing more than her name, and many more women of whom we do not even know the name. The Lord knows each of them personally. Their service to Him is that they make their possessions available to Him. That could be, for example, by providing a meal regularly.

Lk 8:4-8 | The Parable of the Sower

4 When a large crowd was coming together, and those from the various cities were journeying to Him, He spoke by way of a parable: 5 "The sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell beside the road, and it was trampled under foot and the birds of the air ate it up. 6 Other [seed] fell on rocky [soil], and as soon as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. 7 Other [seed] fell among the thorns; and the thorns grew up with it and choked it out. 8 Other [seed] fell into the good soil, and grew up, and produced a crop a hundred times as great." As He said these things, He would call out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

Through His wanderings, the Lord has gained much renown. A large crowd gathers with Him from all the cities in the vicinity. That is the opportunity for Him to tell the parable of the sower. In this parable He is the Sower. In the picture of the sower He shows that He is no longer looking for fruit among His people, but as the Sower He sows the seed of the Word of God in the hearts to produce fruit.

The picture of the sower is an everyday picture for the crowd. They are familiar with the work of a sower. They also know that not all seed actually produce fruit. Thus there is seed that falls beside the road. That seed is trampled under foot and eaten up by the birds of the air. There is also seed that falls on rocky soil. It does grow there, but that is only for a moment. It withers away quickly because rocky soil cannot absorb moisture. Yet other seed ends up between the thorns. The seed does grow up, but the thorns

grow up with it and are the cause of the seed choked out. There is also seed that falls into good soil. When it grows up, it produces abundant fruit.

When the Lord has spoken the parable, He calls out to the crowd to find out the meaning of the parable and to take it to heart.

Lk 8:9-10 | Why Parables?

9 His disciples [began] questioning Him as to what this parable meant. 10 And He said, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest [it is] in parables, so that SEEING THEY MAY NOT SEE, AND HEARING THEY MAY NOT UNDERSTAND.

His disciples appear to have ears to hear, for they want to know the meaning. The Lord answers that they may know the mysteries of the kingdom of God. It has been "granted" to them, that is to say, it is God's grace that reveals to them what the mysteries mean.

These mysteries have to do with the fact that Christ reigns over His kingdom according to the thoughts of God. But now that Christ has been rejected, that kingdom cannot be established in public and in power. The mystery is that the kingdom is established despite the rejection of Christ, but invisible to the world, but visible to faith. For the kingdom is everywhere where the Word of God is sown in the hearts to produce fruit.

To understand the mysteries, one must have accepted the Lord Himself. Because the disciples have followed Him and committed themselves to Him, they can understand what the mysteries are. They do not yet understand its full extent, but they will understand it when the Lord Jesus is in heaven and they will have received the Holy Spirit as a result. In the disciples we see the faithful remnant, which is clearly distinguished from the unbelieving people.

Lk 8:11-15 | Explanation of the Parable of the Sower

11 "Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God. 12 Those beside the road are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they will not believe and be saved. 13 Those on the rocky [soil are] those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no [firm] root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall

away. 14 The [seed] which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of [this] life, and bring no fruit to maturity. 15 But the [seed] in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance.

The Lord Jesus sows the Word of God. He travels around to preach and proclaim it. Wherever He speaks, the seed of the Word ends up in a certain kind of ground. We read of all kinds of ground that they 'hear' the Word. Yet it does not produce fruit in all cases. The seed reveals the character of the soil in which it falls. The seed is identified with the listener.

The Lord speaks the Word of God. Those who are sown beside the road are those who hear. They hear, but the devil comes and takes away the Word from their heart. As a result, they do not believe and are not saved. These hearers are not fruit for the kingdom. Such a seed, that is to say such a hearer, is Simon from the previous chapter (Lk 7:36-47).

The second type of seed are those sown on the rocky soil. These hearers are not fruit for the kingdom either. For a moment it seems as if it is. They hear the Word and receive it with joy. However, the Word of God does not first bring joy, but sadness. It first does the work of the plow in the conscience and reveals sin to man.

If that work does not happen, there is no root. Then there is faith for a while, but when faith is tested it turns out not to be there. The trial can be by oppression, but also by temptation. They fall away from their initial confession. There has never been an inner work of life-giving faith. It has only been an outer matter.

The third kind of seed are those who hear, but grow up among the thorns. The thorns overgrow the seed. For a while they too seem to bear fruit, but they bring no fruit to maturity. The Lord mentions three reasons why the seed cannot really germinate and bring fruit to maturity. First of all, there are worries. Someone is overwhelmed by his cares, while he could have brought them to the Lord. That would have been proof that the seed had brought fruit to maturity.

In contrast to the worries, there are riches. Someone can also be so pre-occupied by it that the Word does not bring fruit to maturity. He has

not given his riches to the Lord. Thirdly, the pleasures of this life can be a cause that the Word brings no fruit to maturity. People hear the Word, think it sounds good, but are absorbed in everything life offers. They do not find true pleasure in the life of and for the Lord.

Finally, there is the good soil. These are those who hear the Word, and by whom it is absorbed and preserved in the heart. The Lord calls such a heart “an honest and good heart”. That heart is convinced of Who the Lord is and of the truth of His Word. In that hearer a life connection between his heart and the Lord had been created.

In the parable, the Lord speaks of producing a crop a hundred times as great (verse 8). It is about the Word of God here. Then it is only for or against, all or nothing, a crop a hundred times as great or no fruit. Wherever the Word is received in an honest or excellent or convinced heart, there will be and remain fruit. The fruit corresponds to the seed.

The fruit that is borne with perseverance is the love for God and the Lord Jesus. Those who hear and keep the Word will persevere, for the motivation for their actions is Christ. If there are difficulties, if there is disappointment, even of fellow believers, they continue, for they look at Christ.

Lk 8:16-18 | The Light Must Be Able to Shine Freely

16 “Now no one after lighting a lamp covers it over with a container, or puts it under a bed; but he puts it on a lampstand, so that those who come in may see the light. 17 For nothing is hidden that will not become evident, nor [anything] secret that will not be known and come to light. 18 So take care how you listen; for whoever has, to him [more] shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has shall be taken away from him.”

Fruit is there for God, light is there for the neighborhood. Hence the Lord after the fruit now speaks of the light. The light is a public testimony. Every true conversion as fruit of the sown Word is the lighting of a new lamp in this dark world. But just as worries and riches choke out the seed of the Word, the light will not shine when it is covered. This happens when we give our body, presented in a “container”, excessive attention or when we seek our convenience, presented in a “bed”. The ‘container’ can also speak

of the daily activities. We can be so absorbed by them that nothing of our testimony is seen.

That someone receives a new nature through the working of the Word of God is not enough. God establishes a testimony for Himself. Where a lampstand is lit, it is not intended to be covered. It must give light "so that those who come in may see the light". God wants the light to shine clearly. After all, it is there to be able to see.

The Word also reveals everything. Anything we want to keep hidden or secret will one day be revealed and made know. If we do not reveal the light, the Lord will do it in His time. Therefore, a fruit of the Word is that we not only shine for others, but we ourselves are in the light as well.

"How" we listen has to do with our mind. "What" we listen to (Mk 4:24) has to do with the content of what we listen to, for there is much mixture of truth and error. Luke looks at the heart of man. It is not only important *what* I hear from someone else, but also *how* I hear myself. Because of my own condition I may be in danger of accepting an error and rejecting the truth. The mistake is not always in what I hear, but can also be within myself. If we don't listen carefully because we are in a bad mind, we will lose what we already thought we had. Then we are not good soil and there is no fruit.

For example, one hears a speech about the truth of Christ's coming for the church and he sees that he is part of the bride of Christ. If he does not take this into his heart and speak about it with God, he will not look forward to the coming of Christ. He will forget that he does not belong to the world, and the truth that Christ is coming soon will lose its power to him. The consequence is that he will merge into the world because he does not keep that truth in his heart in fellowship with God.

Lk 8:19-21 | The Relatives of the Lord Jesus

19 And His mother and brothers came to Him, and they were unable to get to Him because of the crowd. 20 And it was reported to Him, "Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, wishing to see You." 21 But He answered and said to them, "My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it."

After the Lord has given His teaching about the Word of God and its effects, His family members come to Him. But He is so much surrounded by a crowd that they are unable to get to Him. Natural relations are no guarantee that anyone has access to the Lord.

Before, four men with a paralyzed friend and with faith did not let themselves be stopped by the crowd, but sought a way to come to Him, and they succeeded (Lk 5:19). The relatives of the Lord do not make that effort. They let Him deliver a message and if He just wants to make sure that they can come to Him. The Lord makes it clear that His true family relationships are not based on natural kinship, but on hearing and doing the Word of God.

When we do hear well, it brings us into connection with Christ Himself. The Word, received in faith, which bears fruit for God and radiates light to people, brings us into a close relationship with Christ.

Lk 8:22-25 | The Storm on the Lake

22 Now on one of [those] days Jesus and His disciples got into a boat, and He said to them, "Let us go over to the other side of the lake." So they launched out. 23 But as they were sailing along He fell asleep; and a fierce gale of wind descended on the lake, and they [began] to be swamped and to be in danger. 24 They came to Jesus and woke Him up, saying, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" And He got up and rebuked the wind and the surging waves, and they stopped, and it became calm. 25 And He said to them, "Where is your faith?" They were fearful and amazed, saying to one another, "Who then is this, that He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey Him?"

We see in the history of the storm on the lake that the Lord is united with His disciples in the difficulties and storms that surround them. These storms and difficulties are the share of the disciples because they have entered into His service. Herein He is with them, even though He does not seem to pay attention to these difficulties. God allows this exercise of faith. The disciples are for Christ' sake and with Him in this situation, therefore He is with them. He, because of Whom they are in the storm, is present with His power to protect them. They are with Him in the same boat.

It is again something that Luke mentions that it happened "now on one of [those] days". These are the days of the Son of Man on earth. The Son of

Man goes into a boat. He uses the means of transport that all people use. He does not move in a wondrous way, as He does after His resurrection.

Luke also emphatically mentions the connection between Him and His disciples when he says "Jesus and His disciples". This connection is also expressed in the Lord's command: "Let us go over." He connects them to Himself and speaks of "us". That's how they launch out together.

The Lord is so truly Man, that He falls asleep on board. He is tired. He also is trusting His God that much that He sleeps quietly, even though they are overtaken by fierce gale of wind and are swamped. They are in danger, but He sleeps. If the disciples were wise, they would see that all their blessings rest in the Master and that all their safety depends on Him. Therefore, there is no reason for faith to be afraid. He falls asleep and lets things run their course. Whatever happens, the boat in which the Lord Jesus is, cannot be an unsafe place for those who are with Him.

But the disciples can't endure. They go to Him. That is a good thing. Then they wake Him up. That was not necessary. They could have quietly sought protection from the Lord in the certainty that He would offer a solution. Later Peter did so when he was in prison and slept (Acts 12:6). Sometimes insomnia is the result of a lack of trust in the Lord, a lack of trust that He is in charge and that He will not let it get out of control.

Now they wake Him up because they are afraid they will perish. They say "we are perishing", as if *He* could drown. Because this is not possible, and they are with Him, they will not perish. In addition, He has said: "Let us go over to the other side." Could something He said be prevented by a storm? If He says something, it's the guarantee that it will happen. He thinks about the end of the journey, we look at the way to get there.

Their calls make it clear that they have no idea Who they have on board. They do not realize that He, Who lies asleep, is the One Who will "neither slumber nor sleep" (Psa 121:4). How understandable is their reaction to us and at the same time it is a lesson for us in trusting the Lord when we know we are on our way with Him.

The Lord comes into action at the call of His disciples. He could also have rebuked the wind and the surging waves while lying down, but He stands up. God stands up. Then something happens! He gets up and rebukes the

wind and the surging waves. That means that satan is behind this storm. Just as diseases and demons disappear when He rebukes them, so do the elements of nature disappear and cease their rages against Him and His own. The result is calmness. The silence that is always in His heart, He establishes in creation and also in the hearts of His own.

The Lord reprimands them with His question about their faith. That is what it is all about for followers of the Lord. Is there faith in Him wherever He leads us and whatever happens? If He has the circumstances in His power, what is there to fear? The disciples are filled with reverence for His majesty and marvel at Him. Thus the Lord makes us amazed more than once about His wonderful outcome in situations where we saw none.

Lk 8:26-29 | A Demon-Possessed Meets the Lord

26 Then they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. 27 And when He came out onto the land, He was met by a man from the city who was possessed with demons; and who had not put on any clothing for a long time, and was not living in a house, but in the tombs. 28 Seeing Jesus, he cried out and fell before Him, and said in a loud voice, "What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me." 29 For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had seized him many times; and he was bound with chains and shackles and kept under guard, and [yet] he would break his bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert.

They continue their boat trip and come in the country of the Gerasenes. The location is specified as the country "which is opposite Galilee". The Lord goes there to seek and deliver a poor demon-possessed man. After the need of the disciples and the salvation by Him we see in this history the need of one individual person and the liberation from it by Him.

The disciples' need had to do with their service for Him. They had Him with them in their need. It was only about trusting Him. The need of the man in the next history is totally different. He is completely distanced from the Lord and completely in the power of satan. When the disciples were in need, they called to the Lord's help; the man cried that he had nothing to do with Him. In both cases, the Lord shows His power and outcome.

When they have left the boat and come out onto the land, He and His disciples are not warmly welcomed. For the disciples it does mean further teaching. After having experienced the power of the natural elements in the boat, they now enter an area where satan is lord and master. A man from the city meets Him. It is not just any man. Luke describes a man who is completely in the power of satan.

The man walks around without any self-respect, naked and without any shame. Nor does he live in a house, but in the tombs, the area of death. There is no normal talking either. When he sees the Lord, he falls down before Him. Loudly he says that there is no connection between him and the Lord. But he does acknowledge His power to judge him. He asks the Lord not to torment him because he knows that this is the judgment that awaits him.

The voice of the man is the voice of the demons. The demons have taken such full possession of this man that the words they express are attributed to him. The Lord has come here to deliver men from the power of satan. He commanded the unclean spirit, which is one of the causes of the man walking around shamelessly naked, to come out of him. The evil spirit is not only unclean, but also violent and powerful. It is a spirit that cannot be tamed by people and cannot be bound by any human power. Many times it has been tried to control the man by tying him with chains and shackles. It was all in vain because he broke the bonds. Restlessly he is driven by the demon into the desert.

Lk 8:30-33 | The Demons Enter the Swine

30 And Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion"; for many demons had entered him. 31 They were imploring Him not to command them to go away into the abyss. 32 Now there was a herd of many swine feeding there on the mountain; and [the demons] implored Him to permit them to enter the swine. And He gave them permission. 33 And the demons came out of the man and entered the swine; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

The Lord wants the demon to make himself known and asks for his name. The demon answers that his name is "Legion", because he is not alone,

but with him many demons have entered the man. How it came thus far, isn't mentioned. It is a warning that we should not open up for anything originating from satan. Once he has a point of entry in a person, he will try to gain full control over that person. An unclean spirit can slowly but surely take possession of someone if he, for example, engages in pornography. Every impure thought or unclean image must be judged as soon as it arises, otherwise satan has an opening.

The demons know that the Lord has the power to send them into the abyss. Therefore they beg Him not to do that. They suggest to Him to send them into the swine. He allows that. That is not indulgence from His side, but he uses the demons to judge the evil of the inhabitants of that country. They are as unclean as the swine they keep. In addition, the demons reveal their desire to destroy.

Just as the wind and the sea obeyed Him, so do the demons. What happens to the swine is a picture of what will happen to the apostate Jews. Later, when heathen powers will come to take possession of their holy city, they will throw themselves into battle in an incomprehensible blindness to let themselves be slaughtered. This is the result of their rejection of the Lord Jesus.

Lk 8:34-37 | Reaction of the People in Gerasa

34 When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they ran away and reported it in the city and [out] in the country. 35 [The people] went out to see what had happened; and they came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting down at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind; and they became frightened. 36 Those who had seen it reported to them how the man who was demon-possessed had been made well. 37 And all the people of the country of the Gerasenes and the surrounding district asked Him to leave them, for they were gripped with great fear; and He got into a boat and returned.

Those who had herded the swine run away. They have completely lost control of the herd. Everywhere in the area, both in the city and in the country, they tell what has happened. They do an eyewitness account be-

cause they have seen it with their own eyes. Their story leads all who hear it to go and see what has happened.

When they come to the Lord, they find there the man who had always made their area unsafe, sitting at His feet in complete peace. He is no longer naked and insane. He is physically dressed and mentally healthy. Here we see a picture of what grace is capable of working in a human being who, shortly before, was still completely in the power of satan. That should touch their hearts. The grace of God in Christ has done what they couldn't achieve with their chains and shackles.

But the effect on the people who see this, is fear. Then the witnesses report of the salvation of the man who was demon-possessed. They have seen how the demons were expelled from him by the Lord, and went into their herd, and how their herd had perished. Instead of being impressed by the healing of the possessed, they are impressed by the loss of their herd. The Lord had destroyed their herd. They rather get rid of such a Person Who had taken their possessions. They don't want Him. They have tolerated the company of a man who was demon-possessed, but they do not tolerate the Lord's company. If He would please leave them. Without saying a word, the Lord goes into a boat again and returns to Galilee.

Lk 8:38-39 | The Commission

38 But the man from whom the demons had gone out was begging Him that he might accompany Him; but He sent him away, saying, 39 "Return to your house and describe what great things God has done for you." So he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him.

It is understandable that the man, delivered by the Lord, wants to stay with Him. But the Lord sends him away. At the same time he gives him a commission. He tells the man to go to his house, where he has not been since he was demon-possessed and lived in the tombs. There he can show his family how he has changed and tell them what happened to him. That is the simplest thing that everyone who has been delivered by the Lord from the power of satan can do. This commission also applies to us.

The Lord says to the man that he must tell “what great things *God* has done” for him. However, the man tells “what great things *Jesus* had done for him”. It is clear to him that the Lord Jesus is God. He tells his story not only at home, but throughout the whole city. They did not want the Lord to be with them, but in His great grace He sends them a witness. This is what has been happening since His rejection. We have been sent into the world from which He left because it rejected Him, to testify of what He did to us.

Lk 8:40-42 | Jairus Implores the Lord for His Daughter

40 And as Jesus returned, the people welcomed Him, for they had all been waiting for Him. 41 And there came a man named Jairus, and he was an official of the synagogue; and he fell at Jesus' feet, and [began] to implore Him to come to his house; 42 for he had an only daughter, about twelve years old, and she was dying. But as He went, the crowds were pressing against Him.

When the Lord returns, a hearty welcome awaits Him. All are looking forward to Him. Thus will the Lord in the future be received by His people in truth. Now it is still because of His blessings and not because of the need of their sins, but the attitude is beautiful. Do we also look forward to Him? He can come any moment, for He has said: “I am coming soon.”

A man comes forward out of the crowd. It is Jairus, an official of the synagogue. As an official of the synagogue, Jairus is a prominent and distinguished Jew who is closely connected to the law. He is not an opponent of the Lord. On the contrary, he appeals to Him in his distress while he falls at His feet.

Everyone sees this attitude, but he is not ashamed of it. He implores the Lord to come to his house. This is the way a Jew expects healing. He expects the Messiah to come to the place where he lives. With the Gentile centurion we have seen a greater faith, for he believed in the power of the Lord's word (Lk 7:7).

Jairus' only daughter is in need. She is twelve years old and is dying. She was brought up in the atmosphere of the law, but that does not prevent her from dying soon. The appeal that Jairus makes to the Lord is not in vain. Surrounded by the crowd, He sets off for the house of Jairus. The condition

of the girl represents the condition of the people. The people are dying and the Lord has come to heal the people.

Lk 8:43-48 | The Woman Who Had a Hemorrhage

43 And a woman who had a hemorrhage for twelve years, and could not be healed by anyone, 44 came up behind Him and touched the fringe of His cloak, and immediately her hemorrhage stopped. 45 And Jesus said, "Who is the one who touched Me?" And while they were all denying it, Peter said, "Master, the people are crowding and pressing in on You." 46 But Jesus said, "Someone did touch Me, for I was aware that power had gone out of Me." 47 When the woman saw that she had not escaped notice, she came trembling and fell down before Him, and declared in the presence of all the people the reason why she had touched Him, and how she had been immediately healed. 48 And He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace."

In the crowd is still someone with a need. It is a woman who has suffered blood loss for twelve years. She has kept herself hidden. Her hemorrhage made her unclean (Lev 15:19-27) and also unfit for worship. The woman was not allowed to eat from the peace offering. She had been outcast from that, already for twelve years.

In connection with the age of Jairus's daughter – she was twelve years old after all – it shows that the people have been unclean throughout their history, from the very beginning. The daughter represents the state of all the people of Israel, to which the Lord is on His way to give them life. The woman represents the individual of the people of Israel, who break away from the crowd to find healing already now on the basis of personal faith.

Life slowly flowed out of her. She had spent everything she had to live on, to be cured of her ailment. All the doctors she had visited and paid to be cured had not been able to cure her. She has no more money and no hope of recovery. There remains only one possibility for her: Christ.

That is how it has been with countless people who have tried everything to get peace in their heart. They have spent a capital, but it has not given them inner peace. They have done all kinds of things, but instead of finding peace and rest, the lack of peace and rest has only increased. Until they

came into contact with the Lord Jesus in their need. When they entrusted their lives to Him, they found peace and rest.

The woman stays in the crowd, but she manages to get so close to the Lord that she can touch the fringe of His cloak. Once she has done that, she notices that she has been healed. The hemorrhage stops immediately. It is only a touch and that at the lower part of His cloak, but she receives the full blessing because she has done it in faith. The fringe means the tassels at the bottom of the cloak in which the blue cord is woven (Num 15:38). She has bowed herself deeply to appeal to heaven, of which the blue cord speaks.

She touched the Lord from behind, but He wants to bring her into His presence, face to face. He wants to let her know that He wholeheartedly agrees with her healing. It now seems as if she has stolen that healing, but in reality the cause lies in the touch of faith. So He says: "Who is the one who touched Me?"

As all deny it, Peter and others try to show the Lord the illogicalness of His question. How can He ask that anyway! The people are crowding and pressing in on Him. Many have touched Him. It is indeed true that everyone in His direct surrounding has touched Him, but these are not touches done in faith.

The Lord does not ask any further, but then states that someone has touched Him. It was not the crowds pressing in on Him. That happened completely unintentionally. The touch he noticed was a conscious touch, a touch in faith in Who He is. Someone has resorted to Him in true faith, however weak that faith may have been.

The pressing in of the crowds did not make power gone out of Him. That way, the Lord did not heal. Such pressing in is of no use to get a blessing from Him. But the believer who is in His presence and touching Him, however modest and shy, always receives a blessing from Him.

Then the woman makes herself known. Trembling she comes to the Lord. She falls down before Him and, as all the people hear it, she tells them why she touched Him and that she has been healed immediately. The woman gives a great testimony of faith to the people about the Lord Jesus and His power.

After having openly told the “whole truth” (Mk 5:33), she receives from the Lord the assurance of forgiveness of her sins. He deliberately uses the word “daughter” because it expresses His affection for her to take away her fear and anxiety. Then He gives for her soul what only He can give: peace. What a joy it will be for her to remember the words He spoke to her. He gave her His guarantee by comforting her when she was so fearful. He acknowledged her faith, weak as it was, and finally sent her away with a message of peace. This is worth more than the healing of the body.

Lk 8:49-50 | Jairus’ Daughter Has Died

*49 While He was still speaking, someone *came from [the house of] the synagogue official, saying, “Your daughter has died; do not trouble the Teacher anymore.” 50 But when Jesus heard [this], He answered him, “Do not be afraid [any longer]; only believe, and she will be made well.”*

Jairus, who came to the Lord first, does not receive the blessing first. It is for the woman who has appealed to the Lord along the way. That is how it is with Israel, of whom Jairus is a picture, and the believers from the nations, of whom we can see a picture in the woman. The Lord was on the way to heal Israel, but He was rejected by the people. That has made the way free to bless the nations. That is the time in which we live now.

The Lord also has healing for Israel, even if life has totally disappeared from it. After the period of blessing for the nations, He returns to bring Israel to life. That shows the continuation of the history, where we see the real state of Israel. Israel is not only sick, but dead, but Christ possesses in Himself resurrection life.

Happiness and salvation are only obtained through faith in His Person, in the Divine power in Him, in the grace that comes to exercise this power. The Jews have been rebellious in their unbelief for so long. They have tried for so long to eradicate the Name of Him, Who by certain statements made Himself equal to God. Nevertheless they will recognize their rejected Messiah as their Lord and their God and their dry bones will come to live (Eze 37:1-10).

All Israel – that is to say, the faithful remnant – will finally be saved (Rom 11:25-26). The people will blossom and outgrow and fill the surface of the

earth with fruits! That promise is enclosed in the resurrection of the deceased girl. He Who commanded the girl's father not to fear but to believe, will fulfill the promise He once gave.

This history also contains much that encourages us in our personal life of faith. The Lord is on earth to make known the grace of God to all people. We too may drink from this grace by applying the lessons from these histories to ourselves.

While the Lord is still speaking, someone from the official of the synagogue comes with a message to the official. His daughter has died. The communication is followed by the resigned statement not to trouble the Teacher anymore. As if we trouble Him when in our opinion there is nothing more to do anyway. If, according to our assessment of the situation, there is nothing more to do, it is faith that matters. That is also what the Lord answers when He hears the message.

He went to Jairus' house to heal his daughter. Then it is not possible that a 'coincidental' delay should cause a hindrance to heal. The Lord knows the weakness of faith and first reassures Jairus with the encouragement: "Do not be afraid."

In this way He also meets our weak faith. What seems to be an obstacle to the weak faith, that He cannot do what He promised, He will use to show His power of grace more clearly. The power of His grace is shown the most when the situation is most hopeless.

After the encouragement not to be afraid, the Lord says that Jairus must do what remains if the situation is completely hopeless: "Only believe." With this He says: 'Put your trust completely on Me.'

Lk 8:51-56 | The Daughter of Jairus Resurrected

51 When He came to the house, He did not allow anyone to enter with Him, except Peter and John and James, and the girl's father and mother. 52 Now they were all weeping and lamenting for her; but He said, "Stop weeping, for she has not died, but is asleep." 53 And they [began] laughing at Him, knowing that she had died. 54 He, however, took her by the hand and called, saying, "Child, arise!" 55 And her spirit returned, and she got up immediately; and

He gave orders for [something] to be given her to eat. 56 Her parents were amazed; but He instructed them to tell no one what had happened.

The Lord comes to the house. He only allows the three disciples who were with Him on the mountain to enter with the girl's father and mother. They may witness how He brings her to life. For the three disciples it will again be a special encouragement with a view to their later service for the Lord. The father and mother may also be there, because He wants to give the child back to their care immediately. They have shown their concern by calling on His help.

There are also people present who only see death, but they are standing outside the door. He tells them that they can stop weeping because the girl has not died, but is asleep. To Him, death is a sleep from which He can awaken someone. Where He is, death must give way. Nor has anyone ever died in the Lord's direct surroundings. The people who are weeping and lamenting for the girl when hearing His words change immediately their attitude and start laughing at Him. So little do these people understand the power of God. They have no eye for the power of life in Him.

The Lord does not answer them, but takes the hand of the child. Then He calls the words: "Child, arise!" He calls because she has to wake up. He calls "saying", for his words will wake her up. The girl hears the voice of the Son of God and her spirit returns to her and she becomes alive (Jn 5:25). Just as the blood flow stopped "immediately" (verses 44-47), so here too the result is "immediately". There is no process of waking up. She gets up immediately.

The care of the Lord goes beyond giving her life. He gives orders to give her to eat. She has suffered a lot and needs to regain her strength. This is also important with anyone who receives new life that he gets to eat. The new life must be fed with sound spiritual food. That is God's Word in the first place.

The parents who have so lived in the atmosphere of the law and had raised their child with the law, are deeply impressed by the grace of the Lord. All their good intentions were aimed at making their child live, but they had to state that the only result was death. Now they have appealed to Someone Who proves grace and they have gotten the life of their daughter.

Grace is always a matter that causes amazement to those who live in a lawful atmosphere. In connection with His service, the Lord wants this wonder to remain hidden, for He must be accepted on the basis of the testimony He gives to the conscience and the heart. The resurrection of the daughter of Jairus is a transient act, although full of life power. It is an incidental event. The time that will be characterized by a general blessing, has not yet come. Therefore the Lord commands them not to tell anyone what has happened. If He Himself is not accepted, if one refuses to accept His word, it is in vain to make His power generally public.

Luke 9

Lk 9:1-6 | The Twelve Sent Out

1 And He called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all the demons and to heal diseases. 2 And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing. 3 And He said to them, "Take nothing for [your] journey, neither a staff, nor a bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not [even] have two tunics apiece. 4 Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that city. 5 And as for those who do not receive you, as you go out from that city, shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them." 6 Departing, they [began] going throughout the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.

The Lord calls His twelve disciples together to Him. It originates from Him. He also gives what is necessary for the service, both spiritually and materially. He provides them with power and authority. Power has to do with the ability, the energy, to do something; authority is the right to use the power. He gives them power and authority "over all the demons". They will encounter them frequently in their service to counteract them in their service work and if possible to prevent them from doing their service. He also gives them power and authority "to heal diseases". Thus the Lord as the Almighty provides His disciples with what is necessary to show the grace of God to men.

After providing them with power and authority, He sends them out with the instruction "to proclaim the kingdom of God". That is what it is all about. He wants people to know that this kingdom of God is coming, that it is at hand. The healing of the sick is the sign that the preaching is a blessing for the hearers.

Then the Lord gives the necessary instructions. They don't have to worry about anything when it comes to their own needs. That is unnecessary ballast that will only hinder them in fulfilling their mission. He wants them to be able to dedicate themselves completely to their task and concentrate on that alone.

Anything that people normally take care of when they go on a journey, and what is justified to do, should be renounced by His disciples. The Lord wants them to realize the importance of the need for undivided dedication to their mission. They can count on Him to take care of them. Later they will also acknowledge that He has taken care of them (Lk 22:35).

Nor should they worry about finding a place to stay. If they are received hospitably in a house, they must stay there. That house will be their base of operations. From there they will go into the city every morning to preach the kingdom of God, and there they can return in the evening.

They must also take into account the fact that there will be cities where they are not welcome. Then they have to leave that city. They have to shake the dust from that city off their feet that came on them when they brought their message there. It is a sign: if that city rejects them, they cannot have any fellowship with that city. It will not fare differently for the disciples than it fared for Him.

The twelve leave and fulfill their mission. Wherever they go, they preach the gospel and heal according to the word of the Lord. Thus the testimony of the Lord is extended considerably, so that even Herod hears of Him.

Lk 9:7-9 | Herod Is Greatly Perplexed

7 Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was happening; and he was greatly perplexed, because it was said by some that John had risen from the dead, 8 and by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the prophets of old had risen again. 9 Herod said, "I myself had John beheaded; but who is this man about whom I hear such things?" And he kept trying to see Him.

When Herod hears everything the disciples do, he doesn't know what to think about it. There's all kinds of rumors going around (cf. verses 18-19). His conscience is appealed to, for some say that John had risen from the dead. Actually, dead has been raised. That rumor will also have been penetrated everywhere. But if people don't know the details, they let themselves be carried away by their own imaginations formed by a deformed conscience.

In addition to the name of John, the name of Elijah is mentioned, of whom he is said to have appeared. Still others speak of one of the old prophets

had risen again. Fantasy has free rein when people just are led by rumors. Only when we are in connection with the Lord and His Word we are preserved for expressing or believing such uncontrolled opinions.

When Herod hears the name of John, he thinks for a moment about the possibility that he might have risen (Mt 14:2). He also rejects that possibility, for after all he has beheaded John. What Herod hears are rumors about what the disciples do, but he rightly concludes that it all comes from the Lord Jesus. He wonders Who He is. It is, however, only natural interest, a wondering about the supernatural, without sincere desire for the truth. His desire to see Him will be fulfilled, but different than he imagined (Lk 23:8-11).

Lk 9:10-11 | The Apostles and the Crowds With the Lord

10 When the apostles returned, they gave an account to Him of all that they had done. Taking them with Him, He withdrew by Himself to a city called Bethsaida. 11 But the crowds were aware of this and followed Him; and welcoming them, He [began] speaking to them about the kingdom of God and curing those who had need of healing.

When the apostles have fulfilled their mission, they return to the Lord and tell Him everything they have done. It is also always good for us to go to the Lord with all that we have been able to do. All work for Him must not be to our own honor, but to His honor. He has given the command for it and also the power to do it. And if there is any result, it is thanks to Him. Moreover, it seems that the disciples are more filled with the power and authority they have been able to exercise because they report this to the Lord. We do not hear that they are telling Him about the preaching and the results of it.

Then He takes them with Him to be alone with them again for a moment. For this He chooses the city of Bethsaida. There is a house where He is welcome, with His disciples. There is rest to talk to them about their mission and to give them further teaching about it. When the crowds notice that He is going with His disciples to Bethsaida, they follow Him. The Lord Jesus will also have spoken with His disciples along the way about the development of their mission. Then He is open again to receive the crowds.

However great the unbelief of the crowds may be, again in grace He is their Servant and preaches to them and cures their sick. He does not refer the crowds to the disciples or tell the disciples that they have a new possibility for their service. He Himself does what He has instructed the disciples to do when He sent them out (verse 2). He does it Himself to let His disciples again hear and see how He approaches the crowds.

Lk 9:12-17 | Five Thousand Fed

12 Now the day was ending, and the twelve came and said to Him, "Send the crowd away, that they may go into the surrounding villages and countryside and find lodging and get something to eat; for here we are in a desolate place." 13 But He said to them, "You give them [something] to eat!" And they said, "We have no more than five loaves and two fish, unless perhaps we go and buy food for all these people." 14 (For there were about five thousand men.) And He said to His disciples, "Have them sit down [to eat] in groups of about fifty each." 15 They did so, and had them all sit down. 16 Then He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed them, and broke [them], and kept giving [them] to the disciples to set before the people. 17 And they all ate and were satisfied; and the broken pieces which they had left over were picked up, twelve baskets [full].

The Lord is engaged until late in the afternoon. It won't be long before it becomes evening. The twelve notice it and think that the Lord might have forgotten the time. They remind Him of the time and suggest to Him that He sends the crowd away. Their argument sounds plausible, because they want to give the crowd the opportunity to provide shelter and food in time. They do see that there is nothing to be found in the immediate vicinity. At the same time, their proposal is also ill-considered. How can a crowd of five thousand men alone find shelter and provisions in a short time?

The problems the disciples see are not there for the Lord. He wants to teach them a new lesson. He commands them to feed the crowd. That seems to be an impossible task for the disciples. How can He ask that? They have only five loaves and two fish at their disposal.

The problem of the disciples is that they judge the difficulty in the light of their own abilities and resources rather than looking at the problem from

the Lord's point of view. The only possibility they see is that they go and buy food "for all these people". But the Lord does not expect practical tips for fulfilling a commission He gives. While fulfilling their mission, they experienced that He provided them with the necessary means to fulfill the mission He gave them. Apparently they have forgotten that, just as we too often forget what He has already shown us of Himself.

The company is large. The disciples have said: "Send the crowd away." The Lord says: "Have them sit down." To get everything running in an orderly way, He gives His disciples the instruction to divide the large company in 'eating groups' of about fifty people per 'eating group'. Those fifty have a common meal in a special way.

This can be compared to local churches. All believers of a local church are part of the large, worldwide church, but locally they experience fellowship in a special way. They form an 'eating group' that is brought together by the Lord through His servants to have fellowship with Him and with one another at His table.

The disciples do what the Lord has said and make sure that they all sit down and come to rest. The attitude of rest is the good attitude to receive the blessing from Him.

The Lord takes the five loaves and the two fish. Before He multiplies them, He looks up to heaven and in that way openly connects His action with God. It was Adam's sin that he took and ate without looking up to heaven. The Lord blesses the food, He expresses thanksgiving for it, recognizing it as a gift from God. Adam didn't do that either because he couldn't do that.

Then He breaks it. Only by breaking something can it be multiplied. When we break something, it has often lost its value to us. If God breaks something, or if we break something for God, the value increases. We see this in it's biggest and most glorious way at the institution of the Supper. There we read how the Lord Jesus takes bread and breaks it and says: "This is my body" (Mt 26:26; Mk 14:22; Lk 22:19; 1Cor 11:24). And what a huge crowd, the church, has come forth out of His body that was broken to death. What a multiplication!

The result of His multiplication is not only that all can eat, but also that all are satisfied and that there are even twelve baskets left with broken pieces.

If the Lord provides, He does not do so half and not even only fully, but abundantly. He provides not only for the moment, but also for the future. With this wonder He has given them a special proof of the power and presence of God in their midst. According to Psalm 132 He satisfied the poor of His people with bread as Yahweh (Psa 132:15).

Lk 9:18-20 | Who Is Jesus?

18 And it happened that while He was praying alone, the disciples were with Him, and He questioned them, saying, "Who do the people say that I am?" 19 They answered and said, "John the Baptist, and others [say] Elijah; but others, that one of the prophets of old has risen again." 20 And He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" And Peter answered and said, "The Christ of God."

After His busy activities with the crowd, the Lord feels the need to pray. For this He withdraws to be alone. This is also important for us. When we have been engaged in our work, in which our attention has been taken up by all sorts of things, we need to withdraw for a moment to speak with the Lord.

The disciples are with Him, but do not disturb Him. When He has finished praying, He has a question for them. This question arises from His prayer. He has spoken with His Father about how the people react to His message. Now He wants to teach His disciples about this. They must be aware of the people's mind and their thoughts about Him.

The disciples know what thoughts about Him are circulating. These are the same thoughts that have also reached Herod's ears (verses 7-8). These opinions indicate that the attention of the people has been aroused, but that they do not go beyond speculations of the human spirit about the Savior.

It is good to know the opinions of others about the Lord, but the big question is of course Who the disciples, and we ourselves, say He is. The Lord then asks His disciples about this, a question to which we must give an answer as well.

Peter answers convincingly that He is "the Christ of God". The Lord Jesus is the Messiah, the Anointed, the Christ – all names with the same meaning

– Who comes from God, belongs to God, is God Himself. When we are convinced of Who He is, we will make Him known as such. The disciples were no longer allowed to do that at that time in history.

Lk 9:21-22 | First Announcement of the Suffering

21 But He warned them and instructed [them] not to tell this to anyone, 22 saying, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised up on the third day.”

After Peter’s wonderful testimony that He is the Christ of God, the Lord gives them the warning and the order not to say this to others. This order must have surprised them because so far their testimony about Him has been precisely that He is the Christ. The Lord makes it clear to them that the moment has come when not His earthly glory as Messiah lies before Him, but His death and His resurrection as the Son of Man.

His title “Son of Man” has a larger scope than “Messiah”. Messiah He is to His people Israel, while He, as the Son of Man, is connected with all men and all creation. His suffering and death have consequences not only for His earthly people, but for all creation.

It is mainly the religious leaders of His people who will kill Him. They cherish a deadly hatred against Him. For now, the crowds are not yet against Him. They just seek Him, they are attracted by Him. Only when the Lord is captured they get under the influence of the leaders and turn massively against Him. So influenceable is the popular opinion if there is no personal faith in Christ.

Lk 9:23-26 | Take Up the Cross and Follow

23 And He was saying to [them] all, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. 24 For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. 25 For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself? 26 For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and [the glory] of the Father and of the holy angels.

Directly following what He said about His suffering, rejection and death, He tells His disciples that this will also be part of all who want to follow Him. This suffering then only concerns the suffering done to them by people. In His atoning suffering on the cross no one can follow Him or share in it. He did that work all alone. He was the only One Who could do it. But following Him on His way of defamation through this world is open to anyone who wants it. However, there are conditions attached to it in order to actually be able to do it.

The first condition is that someone must deny himself, that is to say that he puts his own will in the hands of the Lord Jesus and no longer pursues the things he himself wants. That is an inner matter. The second condition is to take up his cross, that is to say that he is prepared to undergo the reproach that the world has for him. That is an outer matter. Someone who went through the city with a cross on his back to the place of execution was a target of mockery for the people. Such a person had nothing more to expect from life, his sentence was fixed and he was on his way to the place where his life would end. That is what the Lord asks of a disciple when He puts this before him.

He doesn't ask us to occasionally do something great for Him, some heroic act that people admire and about which a book can be written or a movie can be made. He wants us to identify "daily" with Him in His rejection. It has to be made true every day. This requires perseverance and not an occasional act of faith.

No matter how foolish it sounds, the way of life is the way of self-denial and the taking up of the cross. If we don't go that way because we want to enjoy life here and now, if we want to save our lives, then the result will be that we lose it. But if we lose our lives for His sake, that is to say, if we give control of it to Him, we will save it. It comes down to faith in Him and His promises and that while He is on His way to the cross. It means choosing His side and following Him on that way.

The Lord also appeals to the sober mind. Imagine that you win the whole world, but you lose yourself, you're going down, you will perish by it, or you will forfeit yourself, that means you suffer spiritual damage (1Cor 3:15), you suffer detriment, what is the profit of it? You can enjoy it briefly

and only to a limited extent. When your stomach is full, you just have to stop eating, even though there are tons of the most delicious food around you. If you have access to the whole world, you can go anywhere you want and do anything you want, but it stops once. And then? Then comes eternity, where only what you have done for the Lord Jesus in your life counts.

Whoever wants to follow the Lord Jesus must be like Him. Whoever wants to follow Him, but does not want to be like Him, does not want to be identified with Him, but is ashamed of Him and His words, will be treated by Him in the same way when He comes back in glory.

The Lord makes us clear in a warning way what we lose if we confess Him outwardly, but deny Him as soon as it costs us anything. We lose His recognition. To be ashamed of Him means to be afraid to stand up for Him, so there is no testimony of Him. If He comes in His majesty, He will openly acknowledge all who have shared in His rejection, but He will then openly be ashamed of all who have been ashamed of Him in His rejection. The shame of the Lord means that He will not be able to recognize such a person as one who belongs to Him.

He comes in His glory, that is His own glory as the Son of Man. Then there is no more humiliation, but glorious majesty. He also comes in the glory of His Father. The glory of the Father is then not only heard in the voice at His baptism, or on the mountain of transfiguration as we see in the following verses, but will then be impressively visible to all. When He comes in His glory, also the holy angels are with Him. They will not announce Him as born on earth with as a sign a child wrapped in cloths, but on His command they will collect everything that is offensive from His kingdom and burn it with fire.

Lk 9:27-29 | The Lord Jesus in His Glory

27 But I say to you truthfully, there are some of those standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God.” 28 Some eight days after these sayings, He took along Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. 29 And while He was praying, the appearance of His face became different, and His clothing [became] white [and] gleaming.

When the Lord Jesus has spoken in this way about His coming in glory, He promises some of those who stand with Him that they will see that glory before they die. That is, they will not only see the kingdom after they have died and in due course be raised to enter the kingdom, but during their life they will see the kingdom of God in its glorious and final form.

This announcement is fulfilled after only about eight days. Luke speaks of “some eight days” because the number eight represents the beginning of a new period. The number seven represent a complete period. The seventh day, the Sabbath, is fulfilled in the glory of the realm of peace. The new of the eighth day is the establishment of the kingdom of God, of which Christ is the radiant center and of which the glory flows into eternity (2Pet 1:11; 3:18).

The Lord takes Peter, John and James with Him because later they will be pillars in the church (Gal 2:9) and He wants to strengthen their faith to that end. By doing so, they will also be able to strengthen the faith of others. The Lord’s goal to go up the mountain is to pray. This is again a striking and characteristic remark for Luke representing Him as the dependent Man.

While He is praying, His face gets a different look and also His clothing changes. His face was that of an ordinary person, a face that did not stand out among other faces. Now it changes. Luke only notes that it becomes different, that it undergoes a metamorphosis. His face gets the glory that fits the glory of heaven. It is a glory that we also receive when we look at Him in His glory, because thereby we are transformed into the same image from glory to glory (2Cor 3:18).

Luke also mentions that His clothing becomes white and gleaming. His clothing indicates His appearance, His behavior. His behavior among people is always of unstained, radiant beauty, but only those who have an eye for it see that. You can’t see that in His appearance. Now it also becomes externally perceptible. This is part of His appearance in glory.

Lk 9:30-31 | Moses and Elijah Talk With the Lord

30 And behold, two men were talking with Him; and they were Moses and Elijah, 31 who, appearing in glory, were speaking of His departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.

The saints also belong to His appearance in glory. They are part of the glory that Christ will have when He appears in His kingdom. In this scene we see saints together who never met on earth because they were separated by many centuries. All saints are represented in two great men of God, one of whom represents the period of the law and the other the period of the prophets.

Moses was the legislator and Elijah was the man who called back to the law a people who had been turned away from the law. In Moses we see a picture of the deceased believers and in Elijah a picture of the believers who are raptured without dying. Both groups share with Christ the glory of the kingdom by virtue of His death. Moses and Elijah speak to Him about this death.

In their own time, Moses and Elijah talked about other things. Moses gave the law, and Elijah made an effort to bring the people back to it so that the blessing might come. Now that there is talk of the new glory, everything depends on the death of Christ and only on it. Everything else disappears.

The believers are in the same glory as the Lord Jesus. They are there with Him and speak confidentially with Him about things that are closest to His heart. They talk about His “departure”, that is, about His suffering and death as His departure from the world to return to heaven. The word used here for ‘departure’ is the word ‘exodus’ known to us from the similarly named book of the Bible. In that book the word refers to the ‘exodus’ of the Israelites from Egypt. Here Moses, who was the leader of that exodus, speaks about the exodus of Christ, of which the exodus from Egypt is a picture.

This makes it clear that His exodus also means the exodus of His people from this world. This is what the believers think of when they celebrate the Supper. At the Lord’s Supper they eat and drink to remember Him Who suffered and died and proclaim His “departure”, His death (1Cor 11:26). They do so “until He comes” to also make them go out of the world to go to Him in the air (1Thes 4:17).

Moses and Elijah speak as those who understand God’s counsels, for His departure has not yet taken place.

Lk 9:32-33 | Peter's Proposal

32 Now Peter and his companions had been overcome with sleep; but when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men standing with Him. 33 And as these were leaving Him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tabernacles: one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah" —not realizing what he was saying.

The climb up the mountain has probably been quite strenuous for the men. When the Lord has gone into prayer, Peter and the other two disciples are overcome with sleep. They are so little impressed by their praying Master that they could not resist the sleep that overwhelmed them. As a result, they miss much of the Lord's conversation with the two men standing with Him. Fortunately, they are not awake thus late that they don't see anything of the whole scene. And for this they were allowed to go up the mountain.

Often we too miss much of the glory of the Lord Jesus due to indulgence in earthly needs at times when we would have to put them in the background. We sleep at times when we need to be awake and are awake when we need to sleep, like in the storm on the lake.

By the grace of God they still get an impression of His glory. They also see the two men standing with Him. It is an exalted scene in connection with heaven, and at the same time it takes place on earth and perceivable persons take part in it. The disciples wake up when the two men are about to leave the Lord.

Peter, the first one mentioned as having been overcome with sleep, is also the first to react to what he sees. Impulsive as he is, he wants to hold on to this scene. This is because he missed what Moses and Elijah spoke about with the Lord. If he had heard that, he might have understood that this transfiguration was a passing matter, a foretaste, because first there is another departure to accomplish by Him at Jerusalem. Because he does not understand the actual situation and only relies on what he sees at that moment, he concludes in hubris that it is good that "we" are here. He places himself on the same level with the Lord.

This is always the case with believers when they sleep, while the Lord speaks of His suffering. His speaking about the suffering then passes them

by. Such believers think only of glory and they want to hold on to it, sometimes even enforce it. They float on their emotions of the moment. Just like Peter, they don't know what they are saying. Peter wants to make three tents. He puts the Lord first, but still places Moses and Elijah on an equal footing with Him. Peter shows good intentions, but they do lead to wrong conclusions. The Father therefore intervenes immediately.

Lk 9:34-36 | The Testimony of the Father

34 While he was saying this, a cloud formed and [began] to overshadow them; and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. 35 Then a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My Son, [My] Chosen One; listen to Him!" 36 And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent, and reported to no one in those days any of the things which they had seen.

As soon as Peter has made his impulsive remark, or perhaps while he is still making it, a cloud comes over them like a shadow. The word 'overshadowed' is the same word that the Septuagint – the Greek translation of the Old Testament – uses for the coming and filling of the tabernacle by the cloud. In the Gospel according to Matthew we see that it is a light cloud. So it is the cloud of glory that was in the wilderness with Israel. It is the cloud in which God dwells. God spoke with Moses from the cloud at the time and Moses entered the cloud (Exo 24:16,18). Here Moses enters it with the Lord and together with Elijah.

This sight causes fear among the three disciples. From the cloud comes a voice that cannot be another voice than that of the Father. The Son of Man Who will be killed on earth is acknowledged in the majestic glory as the Son of the Father. Yahweh makes Himself known as Father through the revelation of the Son. For the Father only He is important and exalted above all and everyone.

The disciples hear how the Father points to Him as His chosen Son. When He has been revealed, it is no longer a matter of listening to Moses or Elijah, but the call is heard: "Listen to Him!" Throughout the Old Testament the great call is "hear Moses"; and when the people have deviated from God, the great call is "hear Elijah". But Moses and Elijah disappear when He appears. Not that He brings anything different than Moses and Elijah,

for what they have spoken are His words. Only now He speaks personally and no longer through the mouths of the great prophets.

While the Father expresses His exclusive pleasure in the Son, Moses and Elijah disappear, the Son remaining alone. He is found alone. He is incomparable with anybody. People who try to compare Him to other people have never heard the Father's voice about his Son.

The disciples are embarrassed with what they have seen and heard. They feel that they cannot communicate this to others, at least not in those days. Peter will talk about it later in his second letter (2Pet 1:16-18).

Lk 9:37-42 | Healing of a Lunatic Boy

37 On the next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met Him. 38 And a man from the crowd shouted, saying, "Teacher, I beg You to look at my son, for he is my only [boy], 39 and a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly screams, and it throws him into a convulsion with foaming [at the mouth]; and only with difficulty does it leave him, mauling him [as it leaves]. 40 I begged Your disciples to cast it out, and they could not." 41 And Jesus answered and said, "You unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you and put up with you? Bring your son here." 42 While he was still approaching, the demon slammed him [to the ground] and threw him into a convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the boy and gave him back to his father.

The Lord has been with His disciples for (a part of) a day and a night on the mountain. Peter had wanted to stay there, but the glory was not yet definite there. They have to go down again. There a large crowd meets the Lord. On the mountain there was undisturbed glory. At the foot of the mountain there is hopeless distress and misery due to the present power of satan. It is the difference between heaven and earth.

We also know this experience. We can have moments of undisturbed fellowship with the Lord when we read His Word or listen to it in a meeting. We forget everything around us and see the Lord Jesus in His glory. Then we have to return to everyday life and are confronted with the misery and need, either of ourselves or of people around us. Yet even then the Lord is there and He can be called, as this father does from the crowd.

He calls upon the Lord because of his only begotten son. He asks Him to “look at” his son, that is, to look in compassion and offer help. It is calling for the Lord’s favor. Mary uses the same word in her song of praise when she says that God, her Savior, “has had regard for the humble state of His bondservant” (Lk 1:48a). ‘Regard for’ has the meaning of ‘look at’. Thus God, our Savior in Christ, still looks in compassion at people in their humiliation and need to offer help.

The man has a son he isn’t able to control, over whom he has lost control. The boy is in the power of a spirit, an unclean spirit, that controls him. The man sees its effect in the behavior of his boy, which he describes openly to the Lord. He does not paint an edifying picture of his child: screaming, convulsing, foaming. He is desperate. The father has no choice but to stand by helplessly as his boy is being abused.

But now the Lord Jesus is there, that is to say His disciples, for the Lord was on the mountain. The father has thought that His disciples could deliver his son. He has begged the disciples to cast out the spirit from his son. They tried it, but they couldn’t. They had no authority over the demon. Previously the Lord had given them this power and authority (verse 1), and they had used it, but now they lacked the necessary faith.

The Lord can entrust us with a gift, but there must also be fellowship with Him to exercise that gift. Apparently the nine disciples left behind were as ‘sleepy’ as the three on the mountain. They had forgotten Who the Lord is and what He had given them.

As followers of the Lord we often disappoint people who expect certain things from us as His followers. We confess to follow and serve a Lord Who gives outcome in distress. Then we raise certain expectations with people. If they call on us, how do we respond? It is not a question of being able to solve all the needs that exist. The Lord has not done so either. The question is whether we are attentive and sympathetic to people in need, to go together with them to the Lord. If we try it by ourselves, the disappointment will be great.

Fortunately, the Lord Jesus comes at the right moment from the mountain and the father calls Him. The Lord is indignant because of the lack of faith among His disciples. He calls them an “unbelieving ... generation” and

asks Himself how long He will be with them, how long He will be able to deal with those who show so little faith. His patience with unbelief will have an end.

To the father He says to bring his son “here”, that is to Him. The demon doesn’t like to come near the Lord Jesus, but he also knows that he cannot escape the power of Christ. Before the demon is cast out, he will make every effort to cause the boy as much damage as possible. The Lord rebukes the unclean spirit. Then He also heals the child because he suffered a lot from the demon. He then gives the child back to his father. Also here He restores the parent-child relationship (Lk 7:15; 8:55).

The father gets a new chance to take care of his son. We don’t know how the boy got the unclean spirit. However, we can make an application for today. Many parents do not know what their children see of pornographic pictures and magazines and movies. As a result, the impurity enters the child and it will show uncontrolled behavior. It can get out of hand in such a way that the child is no longer controllable. When parents are near despair, they can take refuge to the Lord Jesus for their children. It is never too late for that.

Lk 9:43-45 | Second Announcement of Suffering

43 And they were all amazed at the greatness of God. But while everyone was marveling at all that He was doing, He said to His disciples, 44 “Let these words sink into your ears; for the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men.” 45 But they did not understand this statement, and it was concealed from them so that they would not perceive it; and they were afraid to ask Him about this statement.

All those who have seen Christ’s performance in favor of the boy are amazed at the greatness of *God*. Always the deeds of the Lord Jesus make one think of God. They are amazed and wonder at everything He does. His deeds appeal to them. This profits them, here is Someone at work Who can help them.

However, the Lord does not seek the admiration of men for His deeds. For this reason He has a word for His disciples that they should let sink into their ears. He wants them to be deeply aware of the fact that the Son of Man

will not be *honored*, but *executed*. Instead of receiving tribute from men, the Son of Man will be delivered into their hands. They will not worship Him as the Son of God, but condemn Him as if He were a great criminal. Their admiration is only temporary and superficial and will turn into contempt. These words are so important that He places particular emphasis to take them in. However, they do not understand what He is talking about, even if He tells them – not in prophetic form, not with difficult imagery, but – with the simplest words, what will happen. Here we see that understanding Scripture has nothing to do with the language used. The true cause that something remains dark lies in the heart of man.

The disciples are not ready to face the consequences of what the Lord has just said. They still only take into account a ruling Messiah. They don't want to think of a suffering Messiah. Therefore, what He has said remains concealed from them and they do not perceive it.

The disciples leave the matter alone, for they are afraid to ask Him about that word. Maybe they feel that they will then hear things they don't like to hear. The real condition of their heart is shown in the next event and then we also see why they don't like and are unable to think about His suffering and why that remains concealed from them.

Lk 9:46-48 | The Greatest in the Kingdom

46 An argument started among them as to which of them might be the greatest. 47 But Jesus, knowing what they were thinking in their heart, took a child and stood him by His side, 48 and said to them, "Whoever receives this child in My name receives Me, and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me; for the one who is least among all of you, this is the one who is great."

In verses 46-56 we see that we are not only dealing with powers around us, but also with a power within us. That power is the flesh. We see three different sides of the selfish flesh in the believer that prevent him from walking in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus.

First there is personal selfishness, finding oneself important and measuring oneself against others (verses 46-48).

In verses 49-50 we find a second form of selfishness. This is more about collective selfishness, the importance of the group, of the community of which we are a part.

The third form of selfishness is the selfishness which is clothed with the appearance of zeal for the Lord, but without being truly in tune with Him (verses 51-56).

In verses 46-48 we see that the disciples discuss which of them might be the greatest. That is a bad thing. They all find themselves more important than the other and they demand the best post in the kingdom their Master is going to establish. Here we find the true reason for why the words the Lord has proclaimed about His rejection and suffering remain concealed. If that happened to Him, nothing would come true of their dream.

Dreaming of a top position in the coming realm is a pleasant activity. However there is competition. So there is need for a talk about the division of the posts, because it is better to make it clear what you are best at and which ministry you want to be in charge of, rather than occupying an insignificant place later on. The lobby has begun.

The Lord sees what is going on in their hearts. He wants to teach them a lesson by a child He stands by His side. He "took" this child. He has it at his disposal, without having to ask the parents for permission. He "stood him by His side", He identifies Himself with it. By this action He shows the value of a child.

A child does not count in the eyes of adult people. Children do not contribute to solving the great issues of life. Sometimes they are even experienced as annoying in pursuing a career. And the disciples are busy with the latter.

The Lord points out to them the child standing with Him, and speaks of receiving him in His Name. He binds His Name to this child. He who sees Him in this child and therefore receives the child, receives Him. As unpretentious as this child is, He is. Someone must be as uncompromising as He is to have an eye for it. Not to stand on his rights, not to claim his due, is what He shows and in which He asks to be followed.

He who shares this with Him, receives all those in this world who are not counted with because of their conformity to Him. By receiving them, they

receive the Lord Jesus, and by receiving Him, they receive His Sender, God. That is the reward for anyone who wants to be the least and gives priority to others. True greatness is connected to and seen in everyone who wants to take the least place. We see this true greatness in Christ. The disciples are far away from it with their quarrels about whom of them is the greatest.

Lk 9:49-50 | 'Who Is Not Against You ...'

49 John answered and said, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name; and we tried to prevent him because he does not follow along with us." 50 But Jesus said to him, "Do not hinder [him]; for he who is not against you is for you."

John may feel addressed by what the Lord has just said that he is quoting an event that has taken place before. He remembers that a while ago they saw someone who was busy casting out demons in the Name of the Lord. Of course that was not possible, because the man had not joined them. Therefore they – he and his fellow disciples – have tried to prevent him.

By using the word "us", John shows that he and the others value the collective, the group. They make 'us' important, while the Lord has just made it clear that the only important thing is His 'Name'. In addition, the man has done something in which they themselves have recently failed (verse 40).

John and his fellow disciples are undoubtedly in the right place, with the Lord, but that does not mean that others are not. For example, the Lord sent the man who was demon-possessed, who would have liked to stay with Him, home to witness there (Lk 8:38-39). In this way He has a separate commandment for each of His own and also independently of the group to which we belong.

In what John says, sounds that, as far as he is concerned, someone can only follow the Lord if he has joined the group to which he himself belongs. To think that only one's own group guarantees to be used by the Lord is pride and sectarianism. The Lord rebukes John. He must not prevent any work happening in His Name. That work is not aimed against them, but for them.

The Lord does not speak of ‘against Me’ or ‘for Me’, but of “against you” and “for you”. Whether John likes it or not, the Lord connects the work of this man with the work that the disciples are allowed to do. The man is not a competitor, but a co-worker in the Lord’s service. It is sometimes difficult to accept that the Lord blesses others who go a different way than we do, more than us. It is a shame to speak ill of this or even to want to prevent it.

Lk 9:51-56 | Refusal to Receive the Lord

51 When the days were approaching for His ascension, He was determined to go to Jerusalem; 52 and He sent messengers on ahead of Him, and they went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for Him. 53 But they did not receive Him, because He was traveling toward Jerusalem. 54 When His disciples James and John saw [this], they said, “Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?” 55 But He turned and rebuked them, [and said, “You do not know what kind of spirit you are of; 56 for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.”] And they went on to another village.

Here Luke begins to describe the events that lead to the suffering and death of the Lord in Jerusalem. This section continues until Luke 19:44. The Lord Jesus is determined to go to Jerusalem. He looks farther than His suffering and death for thereafter He will ascend to heaven. He sees the joy before Him, which will help Him endure the cross and despise the shame (Heb 12:2). Like the expression “His departure” (verse 31), the expression “days ... for His ascension” is also an expression used only by Luke and not by the other evangelists.

Although He knows what awaits Him in Jerusalem, He sends out His messengers as true King to prepare His coming. He chooses a village of Samaritans as an intermediate station. What a grace it is for Him to visit this village on his journey to Jerusalem to make them familiar with the grace of God. But the Samaritans do not receive Him. The disciples, in their search for a place of abode, will have told about the purpose of their Master, where He is traveling to. He is travelling to Jerusalem on the occasion of the upcoming Passover – not to participate in it, but to fulfill it.

When the Samaritans hear where He is heading, they close their doors to Him. They declare Him an unwanted Person. They have not recognized the time of their visitation. Yet later, grace went also to them and many of the Samaritans, possibly also in this village, have heard that He died in Jerusalem and that it is also for them (Acts 8:5-8,12,25).

The Samaritans' attitude fills the brothers James and John with anger. Here their Master is dishonored. They cannot tolerate this. They suggest that they let fire come down from heaven to consume them. Did Elijah not do the same when they treated him disrespectfully (2Kgs 1:10,12)?

Their proposal stems from the feeling of being important because of their connection with the Lord. If their Lord is treated disrespectfully, they feel it as a personal insult. Because by this action they actually only want to maintain themselves, they become blind to the grace that characterizes their Master, exactly when dishonor is done to Him. They want to bring fire down from heaven, while their Lord has come from heaven to bring grace.

He does not want to have anything to do with a spirit as expressed in the brothers. He turns His back on them and rebukes them for their proposal. They do not realize of what spirit they are, what their mind is. What they want is strange to His thoughts of grace. What they propose does not come from Him.

He, the Son of Man, did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. How little have they understood what His Name 'Son of Man' means. He has truly become a Man, a Man as God means him to be. God has sent Him as Man among men to show His pleasure in men. And now they want Him to give them permission to destroy the precious souls of men by sending down fire from heaven.

As with the Gerasenes (Lk 8:37) the Lord accepts the refusal to receive Him and goes to another village. That is the mind of grace that does not demand, but humbles itself, making that mind shine even more.

Lk 9:57-62 | Following the Lord

57 As they were going along the road, someone said to Him, "I will follow You wherever You go." 58 And Jesus said to him, "The foxes have holes and the

birds of the air [have] nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." 59 And He said to another, "Follow Me." But he said, "Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father." 60 But He said to him, "Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God." 61 Another also said, "I will follow You, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home." 62 But Jesus said to him, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

Following the Lord brings one into all kinds of situations that allow Him to teach His disciple. In these situations, the motives of a disciple's heart come to the surface. Someone can only follow the Lord when He calls him to do so. When a person says from himself, "I will follow You wherever You go", it sounds good at first hearing, but it has to be made clear from which source this desire originates. For it can come from the deceitful will of man, while a person can only be a good follower if he has heard the powerful calling of grace.

If there is a real calling of grace, it means the necessity to let go of all things that may prevent us from obeying that calling. When the Lord calls, the difficulties and obstacles will be felt. We see that in the following cases.

But first we see someone who wants to follow the Lord in his own power, someone who thinks he is able to so. Such a man will fail in following Christ. When Peter later said something similar, he denied Him shortly thereafter (Lk 22:33). One servant-girl was enough to frighten the most important of the apostles. He started to curse and swear that he did not know Him (Mk 14:71). The optimism of self-awareness must be denounced by the Lord. Peter experienced this by his fall.

Someone who is about to follow Him will be told the consequences by Him. Possibly the man came and wanted to follow Him because there was something to win. It seemed to him to be beneficial. The Lord says that He has nothing to give him, not even a place to rest. Those who follow Him are worse off than foxes and birds, for these animals have at least a place of rest and protection.

He can offer His followers nothing but shame, suffering and loneliness. He had no place of rest, He could not lay His head down anywhere. How could He do that in a world that lies in sin? It was only on the cross that

He was able to put His head down at rest after He had accomplished the work for sin. He “bowed His head” (Jn 19:30) is the same word as here “to lay His head”.

When someone offers himself to follow Him, He illustrates the reality of His rejection. He does this to slow down carnal enthusiasm. It’s another case when the Lord calls. As said, then come the objections, and the obstacles are felt. Just letting go of everything and face an uncertain future is too much for the flesh. Suddenly there are all kinds of things that have yet to happen “first”. These are not sinful things, they are good things in themselves.

Surely burying a father is allowed, and can’t we say it’s even according to the Lord’s will? In His answer, the Lord does not make clear that the man did not have to take it so hard with the (last) tribute to His father. What matters to this man is whether Christ is more to his heart than anything or anyone else in the whole world.

This man is not only called to follow Christ, but to be a witness to Him, to proclaim the kingdom of God. How will that go in his contact with other people, if he has no faith to give up everything for Christ? The message is so urgent that there can be no delay. The (spiritual) dead may well bury the (physical) dead, but they cannot possibly proclaim the kingdom of God. Only those who are called by the Lord can do so.

Another person who is apparently also called by the Lord has another excuse. To him, the problem is not leaving the dead, but the living. He first wants to say good-bye properly to those who are of his household. Again, this is something that is permissible in itself, but in this case prevents a direct obedience to a command of the Lord. Whoever wants to follow the Lord must be prepared to break radically with family relationships, as James and John did (Mt 4:22).

Preaching the kingdom is a matter of looking ahead. It is everything or it is nothing. It cannot be the kingdom of the true God if it allows its servants to be held up by all kinds of trivial things. Christ is the First and the Last and He should be everything to the heart, otherwise He loses all importance to the heart through satan’s tricks.

Looking back can become fatal, as with the wife of Lot (Gen 19:17,26) who with her heart was attached to the things of this life and even in the light of the judgment did not come loose from it. You cannot build on someone who pursues two interests (Jam 1:8). The Lord's service requires undivided dedication.

Luke 10

Lk 10:1-4 | The Seventy Sent

1 Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them in pairs ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come. 2 And He was saying to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. 3 Go; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. 4 Carry no money belt, no bag, no shoes; and greet no one on the way.

Although it is clear that the Lord goes to Jerusalem to be rejected and killed there, He continues His service. In this He engages even more workers than the twelve He has already sent. He extends the service further and thus increases His efforts to reach as many people as possible with the grace of God. He sees in the spirit the outcome of His work, the great harvest that results from it. The greater the rejection, the greater the effort to preach the gospel.

The Lord sends them in pairs. That underlines the testimony they give. It does not mean that we should not go alone, but together you are stronger against a powerful and cunning enemy. He sends them out ahead of Him to all places where He Himself will come. He gives them a route description. On all these places they must announce His coming and preach repentance. The harvest is plentiful, for the love, which is not cooled by sin, but rather aroused, keeps an eye on need through all external opposition. Unfortunately, few are touched by this need and are taking action.

Even though the Lord sends another seventy, it is little in relation to the great harvest. Therefore, He calls upon those whom He sends, before He sends them, to pray above all to the Lord of the harvest for even more workers. It is precisely those who are in the Lord's service, who are aware of all the work that needs to be done and that it is impossible for them to do all the work by themselves. All believers have a duty in the work of the Lord and they cannot do without one another. That is how He has meant it to be (1Cor 3:5-8).

He also tells them what kind of people they will meet. He no longer presents His people to whom He sends them, as lost sheep, but as wolves. They themselves are the lambs and as such a prey for the wolves. Going out for the Lord is not a victory march, but a dangerous undertaking that requires their whole dedication and full attention. He sends them like defenseless lambs under cruel, tearing wolves. He forbids them from making any provision to have a chance to survive. They are sent completely defenseless by Him, so they will depend on what He works in people's hearts.

They must be completely absorbed in their work and greet no one along the way, for time is pressing and the judgment is at hand. As they are thus sent in a spirit of grace, exposed to the enmity of men, they may go into the full consciousness of His glory. They don't need more, because all the more would only be unnecessary ballast. The danger is imminent, the duty is urgent.

They do not need to prepare for their departure and service, but can count on the power of the Name of Him Who will provide for their sustenance in Israel. He that sends them is the King, though men reject Him. There is also no time for comprehensive and time-consuming greetings. The Lord does not mean that they should be grumpy and unfriendly, but that they should not waste time on useless greeting ceremonies. Friendliness is all good and well for the earthly circumstances and the present time, but the servants must be aware of eternity, as the Lord is fully aware of it.

Lk 10:5-12 | Sent and Received

5 Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace [be] to this house.' 6 If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you. 7 Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not keep moving from house to house. 8 Whatever city you enter and they receive you, eat what is set before you; 9 and heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' 10 But whatever city you enter and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, 11 'Even the dust of your city which clings to our feet we wipe off [in protest] against you; yet be sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come near.' 12 I say to you, it will be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city.

In the absence of any provision for themselves, they will depend on the people to whom they go. At the same time, it will confront the people to whom they come with the choice of whether or not they will hospitably receive the messengers of the Messiah as such. If the messengers had had enough money to rent a hotel room, it would have been much easier for people to reject their message. They would not have to prove that they were open to the preaching by taking in the messengers of the Lord.

The message with which the Lord sends them is a message of “peace”. ‘Peace’ is the first word they must speak when they enter a house. It is the first word the Lord speaks to His disciples when He appears among them after His resurrection (Lk 24:36). They represent the Prince of peace and pursue what makes for peace (Rom 14:19; Heb 12:14).

Peace in a house is a blessing. To possess peace is the great desire of every human being in need. “A man of peace” [literally “a son of peace”] is one who welcomes the messengers of peace into his house. He then receives not only the messengers of peace, but also peace itself. That peace shall rest upon him. His radiance will be peace and not war, because there is peace in his heart. A son of peace has peace as his father. He is conceived by peace, and everyone around him will notice that. His Father is God, Who is “the God of peace” (Rom 15:33; 16:20).

If it turns out that someone rejects that peace and chases away the messengers of the Lord, he will not receive the peace wished to him. Such a man will continue to live as an enemy of peace and turn against the lambs like a wolf.

If they are in the house of a man of peace, they should not make it difficult for themselves by going from one house to another for their food as if they were bothering their guesthouses. As true workers for the Lord, they are entitled to it on His behalf. They also have to watch out for greedy choosiness as far as themselves are concerned. They may entrust themselves wholeheartedly to the Messiah and accept what is offered to them. The Messiah recognizes the dignity of the worker by stating that the worker is worthy of his wages. Those who belong to the Messiah will notice His recognition and also recognize His servants.

His servants should not go from house to house. That would impair His glory because they could be accused of giving in to selfishness. They would make a restless impression, and that does not fit in with their message of peace and rest. They must always be aware that they represent a Lord Who claims the service of His people. They represent Him and must avoid giving a false impression of Him by giving the impression that they are seeking their own advantage and not that of those to whom they have been sent to announce the Messiah.

They may underline their message of peace by healing the sick in the house where they have come. With the healing they must also preach that the kingdom of God has come near to them. The footsteps of the Lord sound as it were behind them. The kingdom of God is near because He is near. When they receive Him, they are part of the kingdom of God and share in all the blessings that that kingdom brings.

The Lord also tells the seventy that there are cities where they are not welcome, where there is no son of peace who opens his house. Then they have to go outside, on the streets, and testify against that city. They must give the strongest testimony to such a city that they do not want to have anything to do with it. If they are not allowed to eat there, they don't even want to carry the dust of that city on their feet. At the same time, the city must know that despite their refusal, the kingdom of God has come near and that it only makes their refusal more serious because they reject what has come so near.

The Lord connects a severe judgment to the rejection of His disciples; for he who rejects them rejects Him Who has sent them. Rejecting their words, means rejecting His words. They have testified that the kingdom of God has come near.

Nothing like it has ever before been presented to the people. Others, like the prophets, gave testimony about it, but as the prophets themselves knew, it was from afar. But now that it has come near, it really is dangerous to despise those who announce it. That is like despising the Lord Jesus and God Himself. Conversely, listening to the disciples is the good way to honor the Lord Jesus.

Such testimony is never addressed to Sodom. Although that city is fully responsible for all the crimes it has committed, Sodom is less responsible than the city that rejects the messengers announcing the direct coming of the Messiah. This will be reflected in the severity of the judgment with which God will strike both Sodom and the city that rejects the Lord.

Lk 10:13-16 | ‘Woe’ to the Galilean Cities

13 “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had been performed in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. 14 But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the judgment than for you. 15 And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will be brought down to Hades! 16 “The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me.”

The Lord says “woe to” Chorazin and Bethsaida because these cities have seen so many of His works of power and yet have not repented. He has proven time and again to be the Messiah, but they continue to refuse to accept Him. With this they sink deeper into their sins than Tyre and Sidon who, according to the Lord’s judgment, would have repented long ago if He had done those miracles – literally: works of power – there.

The question may arise why He did not do so, for then those cities would have repented. The answer is that God has an appropriate testimony for every occasion in every period. He approached Tyre and Sidon with a testimony that exactly suited them and could be understood by them, but that they consciously rejected.

It is important to hold on to the sovereignty of God Who knows much better what is in man than we do. He knows what He can ask of a person and takes into account the circumstances in which that person finds himself. According to that knowledge He measures the responsibility of man and tests him therein by the message He sends to him. That message is exactly what is needed for that person.

Thus He has always acted, and therefore His judgment is also perfectly righteous. Never will a person be able to sue Him why He didn’t treat him

in another way. Every human being will realize that God has approached him in a perfect fitting manner, but that he has rejected Him.

The most severe punishments come therefore on those who are most favored by Him, those whom He has taken nearest to Himself, or to whom He has come in Christ. Therefore it will be more tolerable for the heathen cities of Tyre and Sidon in judgment than for the cities of Israel. The cities of Israel are visited by God Himself in Christ and they have rejected God revealed in the flesh.

And what does Capernaum, the city where the Lord Jesus lived for a long time, think? Does the abode of the Son of God in their midst mean the exaltation of the city to heaven? That could have been if they had accepted Him. But the abode of the Son of God in their midst remains without any effect on their heart and conscience. That only makes their guilt bigger and their rejection of Him worse. The city will be brought down to Hades.

The Lord connects Himself at the closest to the message that the seventy will bring to the cities. It is therefore essentially *His* message. They do not bring their own words, but *His* words. Therefore, to hear and accept their words is in reality to hear and accept the Lord's words. With rejecting the messengers it is the other way around. He who does so, rejects Christ and with Him also the Father Who sent Him.

Whenever we hear God's Word, we must be aware that we are not listening to a human being, but to God, whereby the test is not our feeling, but God's Word. It is not about whether we like the messenger or the message, but about whether we are open to what God has to say through the messenger.

Lk 10:17-20 | Return of the Seventy

17 The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name." 18 And He said to them, "I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning. 19 Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will injure you. 20 Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven."

Immediately after the sending of the seventy, Luke mentions their return. They have carried out their task. Excited, they come to the Lord to tell Him how wonderful it was to exercise their authority over demons. They do not speak a word about their preaching and the result of it. The authority exercised has made a great impression on them. That is what *they* did, didn't they? After all, every victory over satan is one.

The Lord tempers their enthusiasm. They don't have to be so excited about their authority over demons. They do not have that authority of themselves. He tells them that in the spirit He saw satan fall from heaven like lightning (Rev 12:9). To Him it is important that satan loses his place in heaven. He says He has seen much further than what they have done. They are impressed by the here and now, while He has seen the future and final defeat of satan. Every 'partial victory' over satan is advance on what awaits him.

As for their authority, the Lord has given it to them. If they can stand in victory over all the power of the enemy, it is because He protects them. The fact that the spirits are subject to them is not something to make a great fuss about.

What should really make them, and us, to rejoice, is that their, and our, names are recorded in heaven. On *earth* our names are recorded in the place where we live. Here the Lord Jesus says that our names are recorded in *heaven*, which means that there is our home. We have a heavenly citizenship (Phil 3:20). We can rejoice about that, more than about the exercise of authority on earth. Our names are removed from earthly registers when we die. Our names are never removed from the heavenly register. Heaven is our eternal home.

This joy can only be our part if we have certainty of faith. If we doubt our salvation, that joy is not there, but tormenting uncertainty. This is not the work of the Holy Spirit, but of unbelief.

Lk 10:21-24 | The Lord Jesus Praises the Father

21 *At that very time He rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit, and said, "I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from [the] wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. Yes, Father,*

for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight. 22 All things have been handed over to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal [Him].” 23 Turning to the disciples, He said privately, “Blessed [are] the eyes which see the things you see, 24 for I say to you, that many prophets and kings wished to see the things which you see, and did not see [them], and to hear the things which you hear, and did not hear [them].”

When the Lord Jesus thinks of heaven and of all whose names are recorded there, He rejoices greatly in the Holy Spirit. He sees the full result of His work. First He saw the end of all Satan’s activity in heaven and communicated it to His disciples. Satan will be cast out of heaven (Rev 12:9) and crushed under the feet of the believers (Rom 16:20). Then He sees all the names of those who will populate heaven. These are things for which He praises the Father.

He praises the Father that these things have been revealed by Him to infants, to those who have no high pretensions. The intelligent minds, the highly educated at theological faculties who boast of their religious knowledge, have no idea of these things. It has been the pleasure of the Father to do it this way.

The Lord Jesus knows that, despite the rejection that is His part and that awaits Him even more deeply, the Father has handed over all things to Him. Only the appreciation of the Father counts for Him, not that of men. If they reject Him, it is in order that the pleasure of the Father is done. We do not understand these things. We cannot understand that the Son, as Man on earth, fulfills the pleasure of the Father by man’s rejection of Him. We would not have thought of using the height of man’s sin to carry out a plan for man’s benefit. That is the secret of the Son, a secret that only the Father knows.

The presence of the Son presents God in grace to man and reveals God’s pleasure in man. The Son’s presence also reveals the greatest possible corruption and hatred against that revealed grace, goodness and love in man. The presence of the Son and His rejection by men gloriously show the triumph of grace over evil.

The eternal Son became Man to reconcile as Man people with God. In His work on the cross He has brought all the corruption and hatred of men before God and God has judged Him for it. All God's hatred of sin has burst forth over Him. At the same time, God's pleasure went out in an unspeakable way to His Son Who accomplished this great work to His glorification. This wonder of the Son is only known by the Father. Here, all a believer has to do is to believe and worship.

Although we cannot know the Son in the wonder of His Being, we may know the Father in Him, for the Son has revealed the Father. The revelation of the Father in and through the Son is the joy and peace of faith. It is even true for infants. The little children, and not only the young men or the fathers, know the Father (1Jn 2:13).

After His praise to the Father, the Lord speaks a word that only applies to the disciples. He declares "blessed" all who see what they see. It is a great privilege for them and others to see Him personally, to be able to perceive His physical presence. In Him God is fulfilling all His promises.

Many of the most privileged persons before them, such as prophets and kings, have wished this great privilege. However, this privilege was not allowed to them. But those who see the Lord have been given this great privilege. This enormous grace cannot be described. It indeed is true that they behold God revealed in the flesh! A more impressive meeting cannot take place. The queen of Sheba was taken the breath when she saw the glory of Solomon (1Kgs 10:4-5). And behold, more than Solomon is here (Lk 11:31)! Prophets have announced His coming to fulfill all they have prophesied about.

And we are allowed to see so much more than those who see and hear Christ at that moment. This is because of the Holy Spirit Who dwells in us and forms the church as a heavenly people already connected to the Lord Jesus in the closest possible way. God already wants to introduce people into the atmosphere of heaven by bringing them to an inn on earth where the Holy Spirit is the Host. We see this in the next parable, that of the good Samaritan.

Lk 10:25-29 | A Lawyer Puts the Lord to the Test

25 And a lawyer stood up and put Him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" 26 And He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?" 27 And he answered, "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND; AND YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." 28 And He said to him, "You have answered correctly; DO THIS AND YOU WILL LIVE." 29 But wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

After unfolding the glorious heavenly and eternal things about the Father and the Son, a lawyer stands up and takes the floor. He feels that the Lord Jesus is talking about things that cannot be fitted into the law. That is why he considers them to be in conflict with it. If the Lord says that He comes from God, He must surely maintain the law. That is why the lawyer sets up a trap. The Holy Spirit notes that the intention of the lawyer is to put the Lord to the test.

The question of the lawyer is what he must do to inherit eternal life. He cannot possibly do this outside the law. In his judgment, the Lord would make Himself implausible in His claim that He is the Christ if He showed another way. And if He only referred to the law, He was not the merciful One Whom He also pretended to be.

The lawyer does not ask: 'What do I have to do to be saved?', but raises a subject for discussion with his question, to which he does have an answer with his knowledge of the law. His question is not really sincere, it's just theory for him. He is not really concerned about the salvation of his soul and he has no understanding of his own state or of God.

The law does not assume that a sinner is hopelessly lost and does not present salvation to him. The law can only hold a person accountable for his responsibility, which he can never fulfill, because he is a sinner. The poor, desperate jailor in Philippi did ask how he could be saved (Acts 16:30). That is the question that fits a sinner much better.

In His response to the question, the Lord reverses the relationships. He asks the questions and the lawyer must answer Him. He asks him not only

what is written in the law, but also how he reads. The Lord asks the lawyer the right question, for that man places himself on the basis of the law.

To him, inheriting eternal life was something you could achieve through your own efforts. He sought his salvation in fulfilling the law. The Lord answers in His wisdom the fool according to His folly (Pro 26:5). A fool thinks he can keep the law and thus inherit eternal life. With His question the Lord wants to convince him of the futility of all attempts to inherit eternal life on that basis.

The lawyer answers the question what is written in the law. Without being aware of it, he also answers the question of how he reads. He knows exactly what it says, but he reads it without his heart being involved. This is also how we can deal with Scripture. We know what it says and we know the right answers to biblical questions. However, it is only theory if not the whole of Scripture controls our heart and life. The lawyer controls the law with his mind, but the law does not control his heart and life.

The Lord says to the lawyer that he has answered correctly. He considers his answer to be correct. That is indeed what it says. That is how He had let it written down. If the lawyer abides by this, he will live, that is, he will receive eternal life as an inheritance.

The lawyer has answered the Lord's question, but feels that he is defeated. He does not want to admit that. Immediately he has another question that connects to his own answer. He asks who his neighbor is. He also expects an answer to this question that is in line with the law. So his neighbor could only be someone from God's people. If the Lord did not give that answer, He could not be the Christ. The man does not realize that he is in the process of challenging the wisdom of God and that he is setting a snare for himself.

Lk 10:30-35 | The Good Samaritan

30 Jesus replied and said, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went away leaving him half dead. 31 And by chance a priest was going down on that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32 Likewise a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a

Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, 34 and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on [them]; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him. 35 On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return I will repay you.'

The Lord answers with a parable. This is a different kind of parable from the parables in the Gospel according to Matthew. There He tells parables of the *kingdom*, while Luke records parables of *grace* from the Lord's mouth.

The Lord presents a man who descends from Jerusalem to Jericho. It means that it is a person who leaves the place where God dwells to go to the place of the curse. It is not only a literal going down, but also and above all a spiritual going down. The man doesn't reach Jericho because he falls among robbers. They do not spare him. They take away all his possessions from him, mistreat him and leave him half dead. His future looks bleak, death is what he can expect.

Then hope seems to dawn. A priest passes by, someone who knows God and knows how God is. He will help him, his fellow countryman. However, there is no friendliness in the heart of this priest, no intention to show love. Nor was he sent on a journey by God, but he is going his own way. He passes by there "by chance". To him it a sad coincidence of circumstances for that poor man, but that is not his business. Seeing the man in his misery does not arouse any mercy in him. Thus the priest, the highest expression of God's law, "when he saw him, he passed by on the other side".

The priest did not know who his neighbor was, nor did the lawyer. Selfishness makes one blind. The law gives knowledge of sin, but does not encourage to help others in need. The law simply shows man his duty, and declares him guilty because he does not do it. On the other hand, the law does not forbid showing mercy.

When the priest has disappeared, a Levite passes by. According to the law, he is closest to the priest in his position. He also looks at the man, but like the priest he does not recognize his neighbor in the man.

Then a Samaritan comes upon him. If the man wasn't half dead, he wouldn't want to be helped by a Samaritan. But he doesn't even have the

strength to call someone to his aid. The Samaritan, despised by him, does not ask who his neighbor is. The love present in his heart makes him the neighbor of the man in need. This is what God Himself has done in Christ. Then all legal and carnal distinctions disappear.

The Samaritan does not pass by 'by chance'. He is "on a journey", he has a goal. On his way to that goal, he comes upon the victim of the robbery. He sees him, and instead of turning away, he feels compassion. His compassion leads him to go himself to the man. He does not send anyone else. He says nothing, he does not blame the man, but bandaged up his wounds after pouring oil and wine on them.

The Samaritan seems prepared for such an encounter because he has with him the things that are exactly needed for this man. He does not leave the man to his fate, but takes him with him. For this purpose he makes his own beast available. The man may sit on it and he walks next to it. He changes places with the man. That is what the Lord Jesus does with us. He was rich and became poor to make us who were poor rich (2Cor 8:9).

In the oil, the wine and the beast we can also see a spiritual meaning. Oil is a picture of the Holy Spirit and wine is a picture of joy. His own riding animal is what carries us, in which we can see His righteousness through which we can live for God.

In that way he brings him to an inn. The Samaritan has to travel further, but his care for him doesn't stop there. He passes on his cares to the innkeeper, whom he gives two denarii for that purpose. And still his care for him does not stop. He promises to come back to see how the man is doing. If it turns out that more was needed than the two denarii, the Samaritan will also repay him.

This is the full result of grace. Grace not only delivers us from sins, but also brings us to an inn, a home, under the care of the Holy Spirit, of Whom we can see a picture in the innkeeper. In the innkeeper we can also see a picture of a believer who cares for others with the gift the Lord has given him through the Holy Spirit.

On His return, the Lord will repay all those who have cared for others for all the efforts they have made.

Lk 10:36-37 | Application of the Parable

36 Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' [hands]?" 37 And he said, "The one who showed mercy toward him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do the same."

The Lord has painted an impressive illustration of love for a neighbor. Now the lawyer may answer the question of the Lord of who proved to be a neighbor. Notice how the Lord reverses the question. The lawyer asked: Who is my neighbor? The Lord asks: Who shows himself to be a neighbor to others? My neighbor is he who comes to help me in my need. My neighbor is not the one to whom I must show love, but the neighbor is the one who takes care of me. This means that I see myself represented in the man who fell into the hands of robbers and that I depend on someone who wants to be my neighbor. For me, the Lord Jesus became the Neighbor.

In his answer the lawyer does not take the word 'Samaritan' in his mouth. Instead, without realizing it, he gave the beautiful description "the one who showed mercy toward him". Then comes the answer from the Lord, which must have sounded like a thunderclap to him: "Go and do the same." The Lord says that he should do as the Samaritan did. He sends him to do the same.

The lawyer is finished talking. There is nothing to object to by law. Such an attitude is not found in the law. The law doesn't say anything about it at all. The law does not condemn, but also does not encourage, such an attitude. Grace therefore goes far beyond the law. The Lord Jesus perfectly has done everything that is written in the law, but He has done infinitely more than the law says. In the same way as He is the Neighbor, so it is required of us.

Lk 10:38-42 | Martha and Mary

38 Now as they were traveling along, He entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. 39 She had a sister called Mary, who was seated at the Lord's feet, listening to His word. 40 But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up [to Him] and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me." 41 But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha,

you are worried and bothered about so many things; 42 but [only] one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

In the section of Luke 10:38-11:13 the Lord makes His disciples familiar with the great means of blessing: the Word, prayer and the Holy Spirit. These three means make up the whole of the practical Christian life, in which it is about listening to God, going to Him as Father and entrusting oneself to the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit. That is what marks the atmosphere of the inn in the previous parable and through which a heavenly people on earth is formed that inhales the atmosphere of heaven.

It is remarkable that Luke speaks of "travelling", as the Lord also said of the Samaritan that he was "on a journey" (verse 33). The Lord Jesus and His disciples are not 'by chance' on the way, like the priest and the Levite. His goal is Jerusalem. On His way there He enters a village, where a woman, Martha, welcomes Him hospitably into her home. It is as it were the inn from the parable of the good Samaritan. There He is and there He speaks His word to those who are at His feet to listen to His word.

Martha has a sister. She is called Mary. Luke says of her that she "also" [Darby Translation] sat at the Lord's feet and listened to His word. The word 'also' is telling because it means that she not only sat and listened, but *also* helped Martha serve.

Mary appreciates the care the Samaritan gives her. We find her three times at the Lord's feet. Here to listen to His word. The second time is when she brings her grief to the Lord's feet because her brother has died (Jn 11:32). The third time is to anoint His feet as an expression of her worship in view of His death and burial (Jn 12:3). She has learnt to know Him as she listened to Him while sitting at His feet.

While Mary sits at the Lord's feet, Martha is busy. It is no small thing to have to take care of thirteen men all of a sudden. It irritates her that her sister sits there so quietly and has left her to do all the serving alone. She also reproached the Lord for not encouraging Mary to help her. He sees how much there is to do, doesn't He?

There is nothing wrong with serving, but it must be the result of sitting at the feet of the Lord. Serving the Lord at the same time subtracts Martha

from the Lord. There are so many things that are not wrong in themselves, but that so easily subtract us from Him. That can be necessary, but also interesting things, things that fascinate us. If any work is not done only out of love for Him, we lose our joy in it and become critical of others. For Mary, all she can do for the Lord is nothing compared to what He has to tell her.

Martha is so occupied by her work that there is no place for anything else. Martha has too much work. Work in itself is not wrong, but it is if it takes away the sight on the Lord. Much is needed, but all that is needed can only go well if it comes from this one thing: sitting at the Lord's feet. That is the one thing Mary has chosen. If we are distracted by many things, as is the case with Martha, it means that we lose sight of the one thing that is needed.

There are more histories that show us the importance of "one thing". Thus David asked "one thing" (Psa 27:4), the Lord Jesus asked in connection with His Person "one thing" (Lk 20:3; Mt 21:24; Mk 11:29), the blind-born man knew "one thing" when he had become seeing (Jn 9:25), the rich young man lacked "one thing" (Lk 18:22; Mk 10:21), and there was "one thing" that Paul did (Phil 3:13).

Overactive commitment to the Lord means that we lose sight of Him and have no fellowship with Him in what concerns Him. In addition, He is in a time of crisis. He is on His journey, on His way to Jerusalem, the final destination of His walk in the flesh on earth. Then it is important to listen to His Word and to keep the other activities to a minimum.

The Lord praises Mary for having chosen "the good part". The good part is the good 'portion' you get with a meal. Thus Joseph gave Benjamin the best portion of the food, five times that of his brothers (Gen 43:34). Martha wanted to present the Lord with a good 'portion', while Mary has chosen the part that the Lord is presenting to her. Martha remained the hostess and the Lord the Guest; for Mary the Lord is the Host.

At the house of the two from Emmaus we also see that the Lord, after being invited as a Guest, takes the place of Host when He breaks the bread (Lk 24:29-30). He seeks this place in our heart and not that of a Guest. He knows from His own experience what the good part, the good portion is.

That is the part that the Father gives Him: doing His will, for that was His food (Jn 4:34).

Luke 11

Lk 11:1-4 | Lesson in Prayer

*1 It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples." 2 And He said to them, "When you pray, say:
'Father, hallowed be Your name.
Your kingdom come.
3 'Give us each day our daily bread.
4 'And forgive us our sins,
For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us.
And lead us not into temptation.'"*

After getting to know the place at the Lord's feet (Lk 10:38-42), the desire to learn to pray also arises. The disciples ask the question after the Lord Himself has been in prayer. They have seen Him pray again and realize that He draws the power for His service from this. It says so beautifully, "after He had finished". The Lord says "I am prayer" (Psa 109:4b), that is, His life was prayer, it consisted of prayer, He lived in constant dependence on His Father. Yet He also had times of prayer. He also had spent a night in prayer (Lk 6:12). Then He was all alone. When His disciples are with Him, His seclusion in prayer is of limited duration.

They ask Him to teach them to pray, as John taught his disciples. It makes clear that John was not only a man of the Word, but also a man of prayer and that he pointed its importance to his disciples. Now that the disciples see the Lord praying, they remember it and now they want to receive teaching about this topic from Him, their Lord and Master.

The prayer that the Lord teaches His disciples is the expression of a heart that lives in fellowship with God. He teaches His disciples to put the Father's interests first. Then He tells them that they will entrust the needs of the body to the care of the Father. Then He knows how much they need forgiveness of sins from the Father. He also knows how weak their flesh is. Therefore He tells them to ask that they will not come into circumstances

where the flesh will reveal itself, that they will be saved from the power of the enemy. Then He speaks in a parable about perseverance, that the prayers may not come from a heart that is indifferent to the outcome. He assures the disciples that their prayers will not remain without consequences.

In this Gospel we see the disciples more in connection with heaven, as it were at the level of heaven. Therefore only "Father" is written here, and not "Our Father who is in heaven" as in Matthew 6 (Mt 6:9), where the disciples are more connected to the earth and from the earth they turn to the Father in heaven. In the Gospel according to Matthew there is more distance, in the Gospel according to Luke there is more nearness. The Lord puts the Name of the Father first. By this He teaches the disciple that his desire must first and foremost be that the Name of the Father will be hallowed on earth. That Name is done so much dishonor.

Then the desire for the coming of the kingdom of the Father is expressed. That is related to the sanctification of His Name. If His kingdom is established in public glory on earth, the Name of the Father will be hallowed on all earth by everyone. His Name shall be seen in all its glory, love and holiness.

For sons, that kingdom is already present in their hearts. Here every son of the kingdom is given the indication that in his prayer life he must also put the honor of the Father first. The Lord tells us that we will begin our prayer by thanksgiving to the Father and asking Him to be glorified in our life and that we will not begin with our needs.

A next aspect is that they are in circumstances where they depend entirely on His care for their daily needs. Although most of us don't know it that way, it is important to live constantly in this awareness that we depend entirely on our Father for every bite of bread we need. To an even greater extent, this applies to the food for our heart. We cannot afford to miss that. That is why the Lord teaches us to ask the Father to give us every day the portion of manna He has measured out for us. We depend on our Father not only for our physical needs, but also for our spiritual needs.

Then there are two other spiritual needs. The one is that of forgiveness. We all often stumble (Jam 3:2) and then miss the fellowship with the Father.

Our heart yearns for that fellowship, cannot get on without it. If we have sinned, it is important to confess that sin. Then we may know that the Father forgives (1Jn 1:9). This prayer is based on the trust in the Father that it is His pleasure to forgive the sins of His children.

The reason for this trust in forgiveness is that the disciple himself also has the willingness to forgive others. If a disciple is willing to do so, he can count on the Father having that willingness for sure.

The last prayer the Lord teaches His disciples is not to be led into temptation. That is a prayer in view of one's own weakness. The prayer is that it will not be necessary for the Father to let us discover ourselves, as was necessary with Peter. This is not yet the end of the teaching about prayer.

Lk 11:5-8 | A Parable About Prayer

5 Then He said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and goes to him at midnight and says to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; 6 for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; 7 and from inside he answers and says, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been shut and my children and I are in bed; I cannot get up and give you [anything].' 8 I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him [anything] because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs.

The Lord adds a parable to underline the importance of ongoing, trusting prayer. There are three friends. Someone has a friend who comes to him at a most inappropriate time because he needs three loaves. The reason for the friend's request is that he has a friend who unexpectedly came to him to spend the night with him. Because he did not count on that, he has nothing in his house to give his friend, who is tired of the journey.

Fortunately, he has another friend who will certainly lend him some bread. Confident in their friendship, he goes there and asks for those loaves, even though it is midnight. A real friend will not respond with all kinds of excuses not to help his friend. He will not regard his friend as troublesome and will not point to the fact that he has already closed all doors, or to his sleeping children who might well wake up.

The Lord gives two reasons why that friend should get up. In the first place he would get up because he who comes to him is his friend. And if that isn't reason enough, there would be another reason that would make him get up. That reason is his friend's unashamed request. The fact that his friend is so bold that, without any shame, he is asking him for help at this time should make him give his friend everything he needs. It's about the trust that the friend asking for help shows in the friend to whom he asks for help.

Lk 11:9-13 | Ask, Seek, Knock, the Holy Spirit

9 "So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 10 For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened. 11 Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? 12 Or [if] he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he? 13 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will [your] heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?"

Following on from this example, the Lord Jesus says that His disciples – and this also applies to us – can count on being given when they pray. When we ask in complete confidence, shamelessly, we will receive what we ask for.

The Lord does not say that we always get what we ask for *immediately*. Sometimes we have to *seek* for the will of the Father, we have to get to know that will, that what we ask is in accordance with His will. There may be unknown reasons for the delay of the answer, but our prayer is heard from the first time we say a certain prayer. We see that with Daniel. He prays for three weeks, but receives no answer (Dan 10:2-3). When he then receives an answer after three weeks, he hears the reason of the delay, but also that his prayer from the beginning had come before God (Dan 10:12-14).

If we seek God's will, we will find it. That is why it is important to keep *knocking* on the door, to continue to seek Him. We must not let ourselves be discouraged in case of a delay, for it will be opened to us.

After the encouragement to pray, seek and knock, the Lord gives the unequivocal promise that whoever asks, receives; and who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks it will be opened.

Praying is trusting in the goodness of the Father. How does that work with earthly fathers? If a son asks for a fish, his father does not give him something as dangerous as a snake, does he? Or if he asks for an egg, his father will not give him something as deadly as a scorpion, will he?

If earthly fathers act like this with their children by not giving them anything that is dangerous or deadly, will the heavenly Father act differently? No, He will certainly not be inferior to this, but will only give good gifts to His children.

The Lord Jesus gives them another prayer to pray. They may ask for the Holy Spirit. It shall be given to them by the *heavenly* Father. It is not about the place where the Father is, but about the characteristic of that place. The Father is in the sphere of heaven and from that sphere He gives the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit will come from heaven to form a heavenly people on earth. This prayer is answered on Pentecost. Believers should not pray whether the Holy Spirit will come to them. As soon as someone believes the gospel of his salvation (1Cor 15:1-4), he receives the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:13). The believer may ask the Father whether his life may really be led and filled by the Holy Spirit. Note that it does *not* say that the Holy Spirit is being prayed *to*. That is nowhere mentioned in God's Word.

Lk 11:14-16 | A Demon Cast Out of a Mute

14 And He was casting out a demon, and it was mute; when the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke; and the crowds were amazed. 15 But some of them said, "He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons." 16 Others, to test [Him], were demanding of Him a sign from heaven.

In the now following section we see a big contrast with the previous section. There we have the means for the believer to live for the glory of God. That section ends with the gift of the Holy Spirit. In the section that follows, we see the power of satan. We also see the Lord's power to cast out demons and we see again the importance of God's Word (verse 28).

Here and elsewhere in this Gospel we see the connection between satan and men, but we also see the privilege of the believer in whom the Holy Spirit dwells. For the new man, for him who is born of God, the Spirit of God is the power for fellowship. Satan, on the other hand, likes to fill the old nature of man with the power of an evil spirit.

The Lord shows the connection between the evil spirit and disease, weakness, or other ailments of body or mind, as we see here with the mute. It is clear that the lack of speech is not a result of physical weakness, but is caused by the evil spirit that is in the man. As soon as the evil spirit has left him, the mute can speak.

By casting out the demon, the Lord gives an illustrating example of the age to come. The powers that He manifests, as well as the powers that others will do later in His Name, are “the powers of the age to come” (Heb 6:5), that is the millennial realm of peace. The millennial realm of peace means the total defeat of satan, to the glory of God. The healings performed by the Lord and the casting out of evil spirits are a partial proof of what will take place in that day, publicly and world-wide.

The Lord heals one who is mute. Muteness is, among all the ailments a person can have, a particularly pitiful one. The ability to speak is only given to the human being. Muteness robs him of what it means to be human. A person who is mute is locked up in his own mind and body.

The muteness of this man is a picture of man’s inability to communicate with God. People do not speak to God because they do not believe in Him, caught as they are by sin. Satan’s business is to keep man imprisoned in his muteness. The last thing he wants for man is to express himself to God. The Lord can break this silence. When He has healed him, the mute can speak. He can ask, seek and knock. He can be a God praising person.

This revelation of the Lord’s power, which He exercises in the power of the Holy Spirit, is blasphemously attributed by some to satan himself, who is Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons. Attributing to satan what is undeniable proof that God is at work can only be done intentionally. This is not a matter of ignorance, but of malice. The deep depravity of man and his hatred of Christ are revealed here. It is the contradiction of sinners against Him which He constantly endured (Heb 12:3).

Others do not go that far, but still want a sign from heaven from Him, by the way, for an equally depraved reason, namely, to tempt Him. Satan does not lead all in the same way, but he adapts his working method to the flesh of each person. Some people are fierce in their unbelief, while others are more religious. Desiring a sign from heaven, while the great Sign from heaven stands before them, shows blind unwillingness to believe.

Lk 11:17-20 | The Kingdom of God

17 But He knew their thoughts and said to them, "Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and a house [divided] against itself falls. 18 If Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul. 19 And if I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? So they will be your judges. 20 But if I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

In the section of the verses 29-32, the Lord answers the question of a sign (verse 16). First, He speaks about the terrible blasphemy that He casts out demons through satan (verse 15). He knows what they think. He set before them the logical example of a kingdom divided against itself. In such a case, that kingdom will not stand, but will be laid waste. The same goes for a house that is divided against itself. Such a house falls.

Surely it is logical for every right-thinking person that the same applies to satan, isn't it? Are they so naive to think that He is doing the work of satan when it is so obvious that He is working against satan? If He were busy casting out demons by satan, it would mean the end of satan's kingdom. But satan does not break down his own kingdom.

The Lord refers to their sons who also cast out demons. Do they do so by the ruler of the demons? Of their sons they acknowledge that they do so in the power of God. If they can judge that their sons do so by the power of God, then those sons will act as witnesses against them when they stand before God's judgment seat, the great white throne.

Their assessment of their sons shows that they can properly judge by whom demons are cast out. This establishes their guilt for their false accusation that the Lord Jesus casts out the demons through satan. Instead of being confronted with satan in His Person, the kingdom of God has come to

them in His Person. Here is not someone who is working for the kingdom of satan, but for the kingdom of God. It has come to them in the exercising of a power that is undeniable, namely in the casting out of demons.

The casting out of demons is a testimony to the power of that kingdom and also a 'fingerprint' from God. The "finger of God" points to, points out and does something that surprises people, and in which they see God's power revealed (cf. Exo 8:19; 31:18; Psa 8:3; Dan 5:5; Mk 7:33; Jn 8:6). The Gospel according to Matthew shows that God's finger is the Spirit of God (Mt 12:28). That 'finger' brings life, but also judgment, to the world. The kingdom of God came at that time, as a testimony of its power, however not yet as a situation and atmosphere in which everything is public.

This presentation of the kingdom here is different from what we find presented in the Gospel according to Matthew in the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of heaven always suggests a change of dispensation as a result of the Savior taking His place in heaven. He will soon reveal His power on earth, but He has to come from heaven to establish the kingdom of heaven. To establish that kingdom in power and glory in the future, the Son of Man will come with the clouds of heaven. Then He will receive the kingdom and will rule over all the earth.

Lk 11:21-23 | Someone Stronger

21 When a strong [man], fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are undisturbed. 22 But when someone stronger than he attacks him and overpowers him, he takes away from him all his armor on which he had relied and distributes his plunder. 23 He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me, scatters.

The strong one is satan. When Christ was not yet on earth, satan had a firm grip on men. The number of demon-possessed people in the days of the Lord Jesus, the number of cases with which He is confronted, shows that. Except for a single exception, like the man in the tombs (Lk 8:27-29), those people did not show that they were demon-possessed. In this way, the man with the unclean spirit could be inconspicuous in the synagogue. The unclean spirit did not reveal itself until Christ came there and he had to reveal himself (Lk 4:33).

Demons cannot remain hidden in the presence of the Lord; but until He is there, demon-possessed people live in the peace of satan. We see that in countries like China and India, where people live in the greatest idolatry without being concerned that they are in the power of satan. The unrest only comes when they come into contact with the gospel.

Then the Lord Jesus comes toward satan. He is stronger than satan. That is what He proved in the temptations in the wilderness (Lk 4:1-13). There He conquered him, and deprived him of his power, and put him out of action. From then on He is busy taking his plunder.

In such an opposition as that between Christ and satan, there is only one choice possible: *with* Him or *against* Him. He is the utterly Rejected. This requires a radical choice. This choice must be reflected in doing His work of bringing together what belongs to Him.

The test that the Lord applies here concerns not only everyone's person, but also everyone's work. The former applies more particularly to the unconverted and the latter more to the converted who is working in a worldly manner.

It may be that someone has chosen Christ while he imitates the world in his work and pursues his own honor. Such a person could be a popular preacher, for example, but who binds people only to himself and not to Christ. He can also use a certain doctrine as the basis of gathering. This often happens in professing Christianity. This is not gathering with Christ. A major hindrance to gather with Christ is also a spirit of factions and sectarianism that is necessarily hostile to Christ. Gathering Christians with a center other than Christ increases the confusion.

Lk 11:24-26 | The Return of the Unclean spirit

24 *"When the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and not finding any, it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.'* 25 *And when it comes, it finds it swept and put in order.* 26 *Then it goes and takes [along] seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first."*

The deliverance from an unclean spirit is not enough to be set free and live for the Lord. Someone can stop the worst evil, he can let go of a wrong religion or a certain form of idolatry, but all this does not sanctify him nor makes him a new man. It is about whether the emptiness in his heart is filled with the presence of God through the possession of a new nature. The absence of a certain evil just leaves the room empty and offers the possibility of access for the old evil. The impure spirit can return to the house, except if it is already inhabited by the power of the Spirit of God, for He alone effectively excludes satan.

After someone has broken with evil through external Christian influences, satan's power seeks fuel for a greater fire. That man falls into worse evil than if he had never confessed the Name of Christ. It is not just a return to what he used to be, not even a rising of old evil, but there is a new and complete flow of evil, a new and worse power of the enemy, who takes possession of his heart. This makes the last state of that person become worse than the first. An apostate person is the most hopeless of all the bad people. This is how it will be with the Jews and this is how it will be with professing Christianity. That's how it is with anyone who has a confession, but is only an empty house.

Lk 11:27-28 | Hearing and Observing the Word

27 While Jesus was saying these things, one of the women in the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, "Blessed is the womb that bore You and the breasts at which You nursed." 28 But He said, "On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it."

After the Lord has said this, a woman in the crowd raises her voice to express her agreement with what she has heard Him say. She is impressed by what she has heard. She expressed her feeling of what a happiness it must be to have such a Son Who reveals such a beneficial power.

In her admiration, the woman does not go beyond the natural feeling that the Lord's good deeds are experienced as very pleasant. The roman-catholic church has gone much further by introducing the scandalous worship of Mary.

To the Lord, it is not about being superficially impressed by His goodness or an outwardly privileged position like that of His mother Mary. Therefore, He takes this opportunity to show what is much better. With His “on the contrary” He introduces that it is far more blessed to hear and observe God’s Word.

Through the Word of God, a connection is established that is closer and more lasting than the bond of the flesh. There is nothing on earth that brings up eternal things as the Word of God does. Power, even if it is as great as the power the Lord Jesus exercised over man or over the enemy, has only a temporary effect; “but the one who does the will of God lives forever” (1Jn 2:17).

The Word of God is the connection between man on earth and God on high, it is the seed of the imperishable life, “through the living and enduring word of God” (1Pet 1:23). The great touchstone is how one reacts to the Word of God. Of Mary it says several times that she kept the Word in her heart (Lk 2:19,51).

Lk 11:29-32 | Answer to the Question for a Sign

29 As the crowds were increasing, He began to say, “This generation is a wicked generation; it seeks for a sign, and [yet] no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah. 30 For just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so will the Son of Man be to this generation. 31 The Queen of the South will rise up with the men of this generation at the judgment and condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, something greater than Solomon is here. 32 The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

The fact that the Lord does not seek popularity is apparent from what He begins to say to the increasing crowds. He knows them and knows that they are a wicked generation. As true Jews, they only want to believe when they see signs. However, signs do not make a person believe. The Lord has already done so much, but has this generation come to believe? One more sign will be given to them and that is the sign of Jonah.

They know Jonah and his history well. Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites when he appeared there after three days and three nights being in the fish and preaching that they should repent (Jona 3:6-10). He did not do some work of power, but spoke the Word. It was a word of judgment in which at the same time God's mercy had a place. We see that when the Ninevites have repented, for God does not let judgment come.

In the same way, the Son of Man will be a sign to this generation when He rises from the dead. Like all signs, they will only see this sign when they repent. In the mission to the Ninevites, the Gentiles, we see the love of God for all people. This love for all people is also seen in the sending of the Lord Jesus.

The Lord refers to another example to show them the situation they are in. At the judgment that will be pronounced over them when they stand before the great white throne, the Queen of the South will testify against them, and that testimony will be the reason for their condemnation. For she had come from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon. What had led her to undertake that long journey? What she had heard about Solomon in connection with the Name of the LORD (1Kgs 10:1)! The people to whom the Lord Jesus speaks did not have to make a long journey. The wisdom of God has come to them in Him Who is more than Solomon and stands before them and speaks to them.

In this context the Lord speaks again of Himself as the Son of Man. In doing so, He makes it clear to all that He not only has a greater glory than Solomon, but also a greater area of authority. His name "Son of Man" indicates that the realm of His government is all creation and also that His government is not only a temporary, but an eternal one.

Also the men of Nineveh will testify against them at the judgment. Jonah had preached to them and they had repented. Now He Who is more than Jonah stands before them, and they reject Him.

Neither with the Queen of the South nor with Jonah is there any sign or wonder, but the testimony of the Word was heard and worked in power. It worked in the Ninevites to repentance and in the Queen of the South to go to Solomon. In Jonah God sent in His mercy a man to the Gentiles to call them to repent. In the Queen of the South a heathen comes to God, to

Solomon, to his house, to see all the glory of Solomon. In these two persons this whole gospel is summarized as it were.

Lk 11:33-36 | The Lamp of the Body

33 *“No one, after lighting a lamp, puts it away in a cellar nor under a basket, but on the lampstand, so that those who enter may see the light. 34 The eye is the lamp of your body; when your eye is clear, your whole body also is full of light; but when it is bad, your body also is full of darkness. 35 Then watch out that the light in you is not darkness. 36 If therefore your whole body is full of light, with no dark part in it, it will be wholly illumined, as when the lamp illumines you with its rays.”*

The Lord Jesus then speaks of the Word of God as a light. He speaks the Word of God and thereby lets the light shine in the house of Israel. The light reveals everything. In Him there is nothing that obscures the light. However, we can dim the light. If it is placed in a cellar, nobody can see it. The light is also not seen when a basket is put over it. Light should stand on a lampstand, so that it can illuminate anything freely anywhere. We can obscure the light that has been ignited by hidden sins, “a cellar” is a hidden place, or by being completely absorbed in our daily work, busy to fill “a basket” with what we need for daily life.

The Lord points these things out to us in order to draw our attention to the possible causes that the Word of God remains ineffective in relation to us. We do not need to think that we will believe when we see signs, or that signs strengthen our faith in God’s Word. Faith in the working of God’s Word and experiencing its working is not in the presence or absence of signs, but in the object of our eye. A “simple” [Darby Translation] eye is an eye that focuses on only one object, Christ. We will then know what to do with our bodies in order to achieve God-glorifying deeds.

The Word of God always turns our eyes to Christ. If Christ is not the object of our eye, if we do not live in the light of God’s Word, our eye will be turned to bad things and we will come to bad, God-dishonoring deeds. There can be external light, there can be external knowledge of God’s Word, as in Israel and in professing Christianity. Such knowledge does

not result in a life of dedication to God. That's why this light becomes darkness.

The history of Israel has confirmed this. They once possessed, compared to the nations, Divine light, but the light that was in them has become darkness. In that state of darkness they came more and more during the life of the Lord on earth, until there was no way back. At first they were indifferent to Christ, but finally they totally rejected Him. What remains is the darkness of death.

The Lord places them in the full light of His Word. This has two effects. The first effect is seen in those who believe, who have condemned themselves as sinners in the light of God's Word. Their whole body is enlightened, they are totally in the light. They walk in the light, as God is in the light (1Jn 1:7). It is important that they also walk in accordance with the light. This is possible if the eye is simple, if it is directed only at the Lord Jesus.

The second effect we see in those who do not believe and reject the light. Once all of them come into the light, nothing remains hidden. If they were aware of that, they would repent. Because they reject the light, what the Lord says here will become clear to them in judgment in its full horror. The lamp will shine on them with its light when they stand before the great white throne. Everything will be brought to light (1Cor 4:5) and judged righteously. In the next section we see people to whom this applies.

Lk 11:37-44 | Speech Against the Pharisees

*37 Now when He had spoken, a Pharisee *asked Him to have lunch with him; and He went in, and reclined [at the table]. 38 When the Pharisee saw it, he was surprised that He had not first ceremonially washed before the meal. 39 But the Lord said to him, "Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and of the platter; but inside of you, you are full of robbery and wickedness. 40 You foolish ones, did not He who made the outside make the inside also? 41 But give that which is within as charity, and then all things are clean for you. 42 "But woe to you Pharisees! For you pay tithe of mint and rue and every [kind of] garden herb, and [yet] disregard justice and the love of God; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. 43 Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the chief seats in the synagogues and*

the respectful greetings in the market places. 44 Woe to you! For you are like concealed tombs, and the people who walk over [them] are unaware [of it]."

The people have not let in the light that brought them the blessing. Now the Lord turns the light as a spotlight of truth on their religious leaders. The Pharisee does not have the faintest idea of this when he invites the Lord to have lunch with him, for he has totally different thoughts. The Lord accepts the invitation and reclines at the table.

When the Pharisee sees that He has not first ceremonially washed before He uses the lunch, he marvels. It is not a question of hygiene, but it is a religious ritual, a ceremony. According to the Pharisees' thoughts, the Lord can never be a good Jew if He does not keep the religious precepts as they themselves have set them up and keep them as the right thing to do. The Pharisee can only think of external things. He notes that the Lord does not keep to their traditions.

What we see in this man is the characteristic of legalism. Legalism is adding to Scripture and imposing these additions on others, whereby the external behavior is important and normative and the inner unimportant. But an outwardly indisputable behavior is not necessarily proof of an inner good mind. That was true then and it is still true today. The Lord's reaction is therefore important to take to heart, for the Pharisee is in each of us.

The Lord knows the Pharisee is surprised and the reason for it. He doesn't ask for permission to speak, but takes on the role of Host and starts immediately with a stern speech. His speech is harsh for the religious leaders, but it is also grace for others that He clearly denounces these leaders, so that they will not be deceived by them. He actually had not come to use the lunch with the Pharisees, but to shed light on their actions and their way of judging.

In this Pharisee he speaks to the whole company of Pharisees. The words which He addresses to them are not gentle. They are a discovering light. He tells them how they are alert to a clean outside, but that their inside is full of robbery and wickedness. They rob others and above all they rob the honor of God. They are full of wickedness, they have a bad eye.

Except that they are corrupt inside, they are also unwise, or *because* they are corrupt, they are also unwise. They have forgotten God as the God Who

made not only the outside, but also the inside. It is foolish to think only of the outside, to focus on it and to own the inside for oneself and to think that others can't come to it. They have to do with Someone Who knows both sides perfectly because He has made both sides. God desires truth in the innermost being (Psa 51:6a), but they are concerned only for what people see.

The Lord looks at the heart, but they do not think about that. The reason is clear: they seek the honor of men and not the honor of God. He points out to them that all outer things will be truly clean if they offer their innermost being to God and open it to Him. For those who are clean within, all outer things are clean (Tit 1:15). With this, He puts an end to all legalism that has leavened the church of God through the ages (Gal 5:9).

By giving the smallest, they think they go the furthest in accuracy, all to their own credit, of course, to stand out above the crowd that only brings the ordinary tithes. However, they have no understanding whatsoever of God's judgment or assessment, how God assesses true piety, how He judges their revelation. That must always be a question for us.

The last thing they think of is the love of God, or worse still, they don't think of it at all, they pass it by. They ignore both the judgment of God and the love of God. That is a terrible insult to God. The Lord reminds them of their duty in this. If they came into the right relationship with God, they could also give the tithes.

The Lord pronounces a second "woe" to the Pharisees because of their predilection for prestige. They like to receive tributes from people. They demand that tribute by sitting on the first seats, the front seats, where everyone can see them. That caresses their sense of honor. And when they walk on the markets, where there are many people, they hope there are people who greet them enthusiastically and praise them loudly, so that many see and hear it. Their sense of honor is therefore particularly caressed. Everything revolves around themselves, whether in a confined room or in public.

A third "woe" goes to the Pharisees because they are concealed tombs, while the people who come into contact with them do not know. They, who are so keen on external impurities, are themselves polluting crea-

tures. By their hypocritical religion they drag people into ruin without them noticing.

Lk 11:45-52 | Speech Against the Lawyers

*45 One of the lawyers *said to Him in reply, "Teacher, when You say this, You insult us too." 46 But He said, "Woe to you lawyers as well! For you weigh men down with burdens hard to bear, while you yourselves will not even touch the burdens with one of your fingers. 47 Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets, and [it was] your fathers [who] killed them. 48 So you are witnesses and approve the deeds of your fathers; because it was they who killed them, and you build [their tombs]. 49 For this reason also the wisdom of God said, 'I will send to them prophets and apostles, and [some] of them they will kill and [some] they will persecute, 50 so that the blood of all the prophets, shed since the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation, 51 from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the house [of God]; yes, I tell you, it shall be charged against this generation.' 52 Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge; you yourselves did not enter, and you hindered those who were entering."*

The Pharisee has apparently also invited lawyers. One of them feels addressed. He finds it all insulting to the Pharisees. And not only that, he wants to make it known that the Lord has not only insulted the Pharisees, but also them. For they are the creators of all those laws and commandments that the Pharisees so meticulously put into practice.

The Lord makes it clear to them that the spotlight of truth is also on them, and that they too are subject to His judgment. The lawyers will also hear the "woe to you" from Him and the reason for it. They are as hypocritical as the Pharisees. They burden people with their self-invented applications of the law, which they themselves do not live up to at all. They're twisting the law in a way that their conscience remains out of question, but that they can exercise authority over others.

The lawyers are people with a great historical awareness. They know the history well. They greatly appreciate the prophets who have spoken in faithfulness to God and have been killed for it. You had to honor such

people. However, to the lawyers they are nothing more than relics. They honor these prophets by building tombs for them that can serve as places of pilgrimage, but the message of the prophets is of no use to them. They do not realize that they are descendants of the fathers who killed them.

The Lord exposes the reality of their outward actions. They act in line with their fathers. Their fathers killed the prophets, and they build the tombs for the prophets. They are not spiritual descendants of the prophets, because they do not identify themselves with their message. They reject the message of the prophets just like their fathers and by doing so they make themselves one with their fathers who killed the prophets.

The future will make it clear that they are exactly like their fathers. This happens when prophets and apostles are sent to them, as the Lord announces. This sending takes place in the book of Acts. It concerns the prophets and the apostles of the New Testament. The Lord says emphatically that the wisdom of God does this. After all, people would never have thought of exposing others to rejection and death in order to reveal people's hearts. According to human perception, this sending seems fruitless and even foolishness. With "the wisdom of God" the Lord can also mean Himself. For He is the wisdom of God (1Cor 1:24,30). He will send them.

Those who build the tombs of the martyrs do not seem to be involved in the persecution and violence practiced by the fathers, but that is only apparent. The opposite will soon be the case. God will soon put them to the test by sending apostles and prophets, some of whom they will kill and others persecute to get rid of them somehow. Instead of being held back by the example of their fathers, they follow in their guilty footsteps. They are more to blame because they ignore such a serious warning. In the wisdom of God, the conduct of the people to whom the Lord speaks here, the measure of iniquity of "this generation", which is this kind of hypocritical people, will be made full.

God will then demand from them the blood of all prophets that through the ages has been shed by them from the very beginning. Abel is the first person whose blood was shed. We do not read from him a word he has spoken. Yet here the Lord calls him a prophet. By his way of life, which showed fellowship with God, he was a condemnation for Cain. What Abel

did, casted light on Cain who rejected the light by killing Abel. Cain is the pious, legalistic Pharisee, who expresses his anger against someone who truly honors God. This generation will soon do the same with the Lord Jesus.

As the last in the long line of prophets killed by the people the Lord mentions Zechariah. The history of Zechariah is at the end of the Bible book 2 Chronicles (2Chr 24:20-21). This book is in our Bible somewhere in the middle, but in the Hebrew Bible it is the last book of the Old Testament. So what the Lord says is true (of course!). He also mentions the place where this faithful man was killed. That is on the temple ground. Their anger had grown so great that they did not hesitate to enter that holy area and kill someone who had spoken to them on behalf of God.

After this, the Lord repeats His announcement of the judgment on this generation, which He introduces with an affirmative “yes” and a powerful “I tell you”. In His last “woe” against the lawyers, He establishes their terrible guilt that they have taken away the key of knowledge. They have not accidentally lost the opportunity to gain knowledge of God, but have deliberately taken it away.

The key of knowledge, and of wisdom, is to fear God. The true fear of God gives access to knowing Him and the wisdom of His counsels (Pro 1:7; Job 28:28) which are manifested in Christ. In Christ are “hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col 2:3). They have taken away the key to that treasure room by focusing attention on themselves, putting themselves in the center and thinking only of their own honor.

To enter, they should take the place of a pupil, the place of a needy and lost person, but they do not want that. Therefore they themselves have not entered into that glorious knowledge of God in Christ Who is the wisdom of God (1Cor 1:30). By imposing their own laws on others, they have also prevented those who did want to from entering. They want to continue to exercise power over others. It would also be a condemnation of their own position if they allowed others to enter. The lawyers shun the light and reject it, as do the Pharisees.

Lk 11:53-54 | Strong Resistance

53 When He left there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to be very hostile and to question Him closely on many subjects, 54 plotting against Him to catch [Him] in something He might say.

What the Lord has said is not appreciated. The religious leaders, who have heard all this and have been in the beam of the spotlight, reject the light and revolt against the light. They attack Him fiercely and question Him closely on many subjects.

These people are not sincere. They want to hear all kinds of things from Him. However, they are not interested in knowing the truth, but in maintaining and justifying themselves and their system. Anything they ask of Him is meant to be a snare. How badly would they like something to come out of His mouth and catch Him. If only He would let something slip that they could use as a ground for an accusation.

Luke 12

Lk 12:1-3 | Warning Against Hypocrisy

1 Under these circumstances, after so many thousands of people had gathered together that they were stepping on one another, He began saying to His disciples first [of all], "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. 2 But there is nothing covered up that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. 3 Accordingly, whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in the inner rooms will be proclaimed upon the housetops.

We do not know whether the very hostile attacks on the Lord attracted the thousands or whether it was on another occasion. In any case, Luke connects to the speech the Lord has just made against the Pharisees and lawyers by stating that "under these circumstances ... thousands of people had gathered together". By this connection he wants to show the link between what the Lord has said to the religious leaders and what He now has to say to His disciples.

The people in the crowd were stepping on one another. Everyone wants to be as close to Him as possible so that they don't miss any of His words. Fortunately that this doesn't work that way anymore. Whoever wants to hear Him can read His Word. This can be done in peace and quiet, without having to push others from their place.

The Lord addresses the word to His disciples. The word "first [of all]" indicates that the teaching that follows has the highest priority. After having turned the spotlight of truth on the religious leaders in the previous section, He now turns that same light on His disciples and the way they have to go. They will have to give their testimony in the midst of hypocrisy and opposition, whereby they may know they may rely on the power of the Holy Spirit.

In order to give their testimony, the Lord warns them first of all of what is so characteristic of the Pharisees: hypocrisy. Even the true disciple is in danger of keeping up a certain appearance, of wanting to appear some-

thing he is not. The disciple may also be inclined to external piety as the hallmark of true piety in order to obtain honor from people. Hypocrisy is acting differently than you really are. The word 'hypocrite' used to be used for an actor, who also plays someone else.

There is another aspect added with the Pharisees, and that is that they pretend to be what they are not in order to gain respect among people. Hypocrisy originates from a life lived before the eyes of men and not before the eyes of God.

The Lord compares hypocrisy to leaven. Leaven is always a picture of evil, and that in a form that is also dangerous for others. Leaven is an active evil that can infect others. It is a bloating, the appearance of being bigger and more devout than in reality. This is exactly what characterizes the Pharisees and for which the Lord warns His disciples, for they and we are in danger to behave in the same way.

As an extra warning, He adds that it makes no sense to degenerate to hypocrisy and covering or hiding things. There will certainly come a moment when what they have wanted to keep covered, will be discovered and will be revealed. What is hidden, what no one should know, will come to everyone's knowledge. This concerns both the attitude and actions (verse 2) of the disciple and the words he speaks (verse 3).

The disciples must count on the fact that nothing of what they have said will remain in the darkness. It will be fully exposed. The hidden thoughts behind the words they have spoken will come to light. What they have just whispered to someone in the ear, in an inner room without anyone else being able to hear it, will be spoken loudly and clearly for each ear. This will happen before the judgment seat of Christ, where we will all be revealed (2Cor 5:10). The Lord wants His disciples to speak clear language, without hidden meanings.

Lk 12:4-7 | The Father's Care

4 "I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do. 5 But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him! 6 Are not five sparrows sold for two cents? [Yet] not one of them is

forgotten before God. 7 Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows.

Disciples tend to hypocrite when they are under pressure (cf. Gal 2:11-13). How often do we do or do not do something out of fear of what others will say about it? The second for which the Lord therefore warns is fear of man (Pro 29:25). He tells them that they will be persecuted and rejected by these hypocrites. If we do not join them, if we do not behave like a hypocrite, we are not loved. We will have to fear for our life. Yet the Lord says that we should not be afraid of them. They can kill the body, but they cannot reach the true life. After all, we do not stand before people, but before God. He points this out in the following verses.

How wonderful that He precedes this second warning with the beautiful form of address "My friends". This must have been a great encouragement for His disciples and it may be for us. In the power of His friendship we can go through the world. He calls us His friends because He treats us with complete confidentiality. Nothing is hidden with Him, nothing mysterious, He holds back nothing from us, but shares everything with us (Jn 15:15). Then we will also be completely transparent to Him and not hide anything, right?

Instead of being afraid of people, we should fear God. People can only kill the body. Then it is over with the exercise of their terror. God, however, can not only kill the body, but also has authority to cast into hell. The Lord wants to impress upon them and us that God is holy and all-knowing, a God Whom you cannot deceive, Who looks through all hypocrisy. God has the authority to cast unbelievers into hell. If disciples keep that to mind, they will have awe of that God and be careful not to deceive Him and men by hypocrisy.

There is also another side of God and that is His caring love. God pays attention to the smallest birds which, even in trade, barely make any money. Each of these animals, which are insignificant to humans, is a continuous object of God's care. He continues to take care of them, for each sparrow individually, no matter how often they are traded and change hands.

Here the Lord encourages them by pointing out the care of His Father. The hairs of their heads are not only counted, they are even numbered, which

is the true meaning of the expression. This means that each separate hair has God's attention. If God cares so much for us, would we be afraid of people? The value of a disciple goes beyond that of many sparrows.

Lk 12:8-12 | Fearless confession

8 "And I say to you, everyone who confesses Me before men, the Son of Man will confess him also before the angels of God; 9 but he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God. 10 And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him. 11 When they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not worry about how or what you are to speak in your defense, or what you are to say; 12 for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say."

The Lord has another great encouragement not to be afraid of men, but on the contrary to confess Him boldly before hostile people. This encouragement is that in that case He, as the Son of Man, as the One to Whom the Father has submitted all things, will confess us before the angels of God. He will appreciate every word we say in His favor. The Son of Man will tell the angels that we belong to Him and that we are true witnesses of Him. He will tell the angels that we are His, and that we behave worthy of Him.

Angels do immediately what God says. They are out to serve God's interests. They also have great interest in everything that is done on earth for or against the Lord Jesus. They will wonder why He causes His witnesses to suffer so much. Then He will tell them that His disciples undergo the same that He also underwent.

However, if we deny Him before men, if we deny that we belong to Him, this will also be communicated to the angels of God. Angels are powerful beings. With them there is no fear of people. If they see that people deny the Lord Jesus, they will not understand. He will tell them that these people do not belong to Him either.

It is not about cases like Peter, who stumbled. He denied the Lord, but did so in weakness and not in rebellion, even though he did it three consecutive times. His deep repentance shows that it was a stumbling and not a hostile attitude toward his Lord.

In His great grace Christ forgives every man who has spoken a word against Him. A man may have expressed the meanest things and most slanderous language against Him and acted in the most rebellious spirit, but when he comes to repentance, it will be forgiven. The conversion of Saul of Tarsus is a good example of this (1Tim 1:13). Who has spoken more against Him than he? He is an impressive proof and witness of forgiveness. So will it be with the people when they repent of their rebellion and rejection of Christ.

But he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not receive forgiveness. That is the fate of "this generation". 'This generation' has the Son of Man among them. Everything He does is through the Holy Spirit, but they attribute what He does to the ruler of the demons, to satan (Lk 11:15). Such an accusation is the culmination and low point of a series of rejections that has taken on ever stronger forms.

Their hatred against Him and their absolute unwillingness to believe cannot be clearer and more definitive than by denying the Holy Spirit. Anyone who attributes to satan the Lord's many and always undeniable works of power is guilty of the sin that will not be forgiven. This generation, which is the generation in the midst of which the Lord Jesus is, and which has seen everything with its own eyes and heard it with its own ears, will show the undeniable proof of their hardening. They will do so if they reject the testimony of the Holy Spirit in Stephen after the ascension of the Lord (Acts 7:51).

The Lord doesn't beat about the bush that His disciples will be persecuted. He encourages them not to worry about what to answer to the questions they are asked. And when they ask themselves whether they should say something, they also need not to worry about what they should say. They can count on the help of the Holy Spirit.

Here we find the third Person of the Deity Who helps us as disciples. We have seen the friendship of the Lord Jesus (verse 4), the care of the Father (verse 7) and now the teaching of the Spirit, and we have also seen the reward in verse 8. Everything serves to our encouragement.

Lk 12:13-15 | Be on Your Guard Against Greed

13 Someone in the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the [family] inheritance with me." 14 But He said to him, "Man, who appointed Me a judge or arbitrator over you?" 15 Then He said to them, "Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not [even] when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions."

Someone in the crowd interjects the Lord with a question about an inheritance to be divided, of which he wants to have his share. Here another danger is seen. The previous section deals with the danger of persecution by legalists. Now we face the danger of money-seeking, materialism, which falls under the heading of greed.

While the Lord speaks serious words about the teachings of the Pharisees and the committing of an unforgivable sin and persecution of His disciples, one thinks that there are more important things, such as dividing an inheritance. The man has the idea that this Man can settle a dispute with his brother about an inheritance to be divided. It is actually not even a request, but more a command. His brother has run away with the inheritance and he is left behind with empty hands. With all he has heard of this Man, it seems to him the appropriate Person to act as a mediator in this case.

He acknowledges Him as his Superior by addressing Him as "Teacher". The Lord addresses the questioner with "man", in which a serious reproach resounds, in the sense of: "Man, are you bothering Me with this? You have no idea about what you are talking." He asks the man how he can come to the conclusion that He would be a judge or arbitrator [divider, Darby Translation]. Who appointed Him to this end? In any case God has not.

Surely He is Judge and Divider, but not now. If He had now come as a Judge and acted as such, no one could have existed before Him. Also the time of dividing had not come. He did not come for earthly, but for heavenly purposes. If He had been accepted by men, yes, He would undoubtedly have divided inheritances here below. But as it is now, He is not judge or divider about the people or their affairs here below.

The Lord is not going to give rules for the dividing of earthly possessions, but uses the question to reveal the deeper cause of it: greed. He addresses

the questioner personally. He knows that the question comes from greed, from wanting more than one possesses. The division of inheritances only reveals what is in the hearts. People in such situations are ruled by the fear that others will run off with something valuable that they have overlooked and that they come off second-best.

Greed is wanting to have more than is enough to live from. It is idolatry (Col 3:5-6), for it repels God and the Lord Jesus from the heart and plunges life into destruction. The Lord also points out that life is not one's possession. People are not aware of that. You can still have so many possessions and have them at will, one's life is a gift from God.

Lk 12:16-21 | Parable of the Rich Fool

16 And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man was very productive. 17 And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?' 18 Then he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years [to come]; take your ease, eat, drink [and] be merry.'" 20 But God said to him, 'You fool! This [very] night your soul is required of you; and [now] who will own what you have prepared?' 21 So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

The Lord considers this such an important subject that He wants to give clear teaching about it through a parable. The danger of greed is clearly portrayed here. He presents a person who is already very rich. And that wealth is increasing all the time. His land always was very productive.

By the way, to a real Jew, this is a proof of God's favor because of his faithfulness to God's law. For it says that God connects His blessing to faithfulness to His law (Deu 28:1-6). Because of the unfaithfulness of God's people, however, God no longer acts on the basis of the law with His people. Then it may happen that the faithful person suffers and that the unfaithful person receives blessing. That was the struggle of Asaf who also noticed that (Psa 73:2-12). Asaf also got to know the solution of this problem. He learned this solution by entering into God's sanctuary and

from there looking at the end of the wicked (Psa 73:16-20). The Lord Jesus also refers to this end in this parable.

There is extraordinary selfishness and folly in what people call wise policy and insight. This is because they take themselves as the source of wisdom. The rich man reasoned *to himself*, he does not consult with God. Everything revolves around himself and his own thoughts. This resonates throughout his deliberations. It is always 'I'll do this' and 'I'll do that'. This kind of deliberation fits well with people who only live for this life. He wants to gather everything for himself, but he neglects to think of God's riches. This is his foolishness.

Because he speaks only of "I", he also speaks of "my barns ... my grain and my goods". Everything is "my". He will do it all. This complete blindness to the awareness of being a dependent human being is called by James "boast in your arrogance" (Jam 4:13-16). The rich fool is full of greed. He believes that all his goods will enable him to complete his program, a program of taking ease, eating, drinking and being merry. This is what the man of the world in general is looking for: richly ease, richly food and drink and richly joys and delights. He has no eye for the future outside this world. The life of this world is everything to him.

It is not the case that the rich fool makes improper use of what he possesses according to human standards. He does not live immorally, but all his actions go no further than satisfying his desire for ever greater abundance. The rich owner repeatedly breaks down his barns and builds larger ones, with the intention of securing all his fruits and expanding his possessions. His thoughts are exclusively and only focused on the present life which, he believes, will always continue like this. Unfortunately, many Christians are the same. They build houses and collect supplies of money as if they will live here for a thousand years.

Then suddenly a voice sounds to him in the middle of the night. What was he busy with then? He spent the last night of his life thinking up great plans for a future he would never see. He resembles Belshazzar who also spent the last night of his life with great parties (Dan 5:1-4,30).

So many people resemble him for whom life is one big party, while the day or the night comes that this life is suddenly cut off. God addresses him

according to what he is, “fool”, and pronounces His judgment. He has not taken God into account and he has certainly not taken into account that God could quash all his calculations.

And what does the judgment consist of? God does not take away his wealth. He could have done that, but He does not. The fool first spoke of his possessions, and second of his soul. God speaks first of the soul of the fool and then of his possessions. God demands his soul, for in His “hand is the soul of every living thing” (Job 12:9-10; Dan 5:23b). The fool did not think of the fear mentioned in verse 5.

God takes away his soul and asks the question: “And [now] who will own what you have prepared?” No answer to that question is given. That answer we must give because that question that comes to us as well. The fool had degraded his soul to nothing but slavery of the body, instead of controlling the body, so that the body would be the servant of the soul and God the Master of both.

To gather treasures for ourselves is the forced labor of one’s own self and of the unbelief that forms reserves. It is living in the dream of being able to enjoy it for a long time to come, a dream that is broken off by the Lord suddenly.

Lk 12:22-28 | Worries

22 And He said to His disciples, “For this reason I say to you, do not worry about [your] life, [as to] what you will eat; nor for your body, [as to] what you will put on. 23 For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. 24 Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap; they have no storeroom nor barn, and [yet] God feeds them; how much more valuable you are than the birds! 25 And which of you by worrying can add a [single] hour to his life’s span? 26 If then you cannot do even a very little thing, why do you worry about other matters? 27 Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; but I tell you, not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. 28 But if God so clothes the grass in the field, which is [alive] today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more [will He clothe] you? You men of little faith!

The man who asked the Lord to judge in a case of dividing an inheritance is silent. The Lord has not yet finished speaking. He adds to the parable of the rich fool a penetrating warning or, perhaps better, a great encouragement for His disciples.

With the words “for this reason” He clearly connects to the parable. Whoever is rich in God does not have to worry about earthly things. Life and the body are earthly realities that need maintenance and care, but they need not be objects of excessive care. Disciples are under God’s constant care. Someone to whom the kingdom is promised (verse 32), which means whoever is truly rich in God, need not be greedy or even worried. Our degree of worry depends on the degree of our faith in God.

The Lord gives some examples that they can see in nature. Let them watch the birds in the air and the flowers in the field. The example of the ravens contains a disapproval to be concerned about our food. The lilies say the same with regard to our clothes. As a reason for not being worried, the Lord gives that it is not food and clothing that are the most important things of human existence, but his life and his body.

He points His disciples to the ravens. Do they not notice that God’s condescending care extends even to unclean birds like a raven (Psa 147:9)? These birds do not have the habit, like the rich fool, of sowing and reaping and of creating storerooms or barns for the harvest. God feeds them, He makes sure they get food from the large garden of His creation. He prepares it for them. Those birds have to search for it themselves, they have to work to get it. The fact is that God has prepared it for them and that they don’t have to do anything about it on that side. Once they have found it, God can even use them to feed His servants (1Kgs 17:6).

Would God care less for His children than for the birds? In addition, being worried does not add anything to his height or his life’s span (cf. Psa 39:5). There is therefore no point in worrying because that simply does not help in any way to improve the quality or quantity of life.

The Lord calls adding to the life’s span “a very little thing” a man can do and says that he is not even capable of doing so. This is because man’s life is completely in God’s hand. He determines the size, the length, of it. That

is why people should not worry about the rest either, because it is useless effort.

In questions and worries about food supply, the Lord has said that His disciples should pay attention to how the ravens get their food. Then they see how these birds always get their food from God without taking any care. That they don't have to worry about their clothes either, they can learn from the lilies. With what great beauty God has clothed these flowers. Even Solomon could not match that in all his glory. And what material value do lilies have? They are like grass. Today it is still on the field, but tomorrow it will be used as fuel for the furnace.

If God cares so much for what has such a short existence, will He not care much more for His children? The Lord addresses His disciples at this point as "men of little faith". This is significant. He knows us through and through and knows how much we worry about our clothes. For us, this is not even about the necessary covering against the cold, but much more about what we look like, whether it looks nice. Not that what we look like, may not play a role, but the wardrobes show that we are afraid that we do not have something suitable for every occasion.

Lk 12:29-34 | The Good Pleasure of the Father

29 And do not seek what you will eat and what you will drink, and do not keep worrying. 30 For all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek; but your Father knows that you need these things. 31 But seek His kingdom, and these things will be added to you. 32 Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom. 33 "Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves money belts which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near nor moth destroys. 34 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

The Lord is concerned that we should not restlessly seek food or drink as if life were made up of them. We do not need keep worrying about that. We can really trust the Father to take care of it. When we worry about food, drinks and clothing, we are nothing better than the world, which is only concerned about them. The disciple, on the other hand, may live in the awareness that "your Father knows".

Things are needed in the earthly realm, but there are two things the Father gives us. First of all, He gives us what we need every day. He knows about those things. Yet these are not the main gifts. These are the additional gifts. He “adds” them to us. To what? To what He will give us in the second place according to His good pleasure [Darby Translation], namely the kingdom.

The fact that He wants to give us the kingdom does not mean that we can sit with our arms crossed. We are called to seek for it, just like the ravens for whom the food is ready, but they have to seek for it. We must seek for it because the kingdom is not yet public. It is not in the things of this life, but in spiritual realities sought by those who are under God’s authority. To seek his kingdom means to acknowledge and live by His authority over all things in our life.

The Lord knows that the kingdom He calls upon to seek it, is a kingdom to be sought in faith. It is not (yet) public. What is public, is a kingdom ruled by satan, from which they have to expect great resistance, hostility and persecution in their seeking for the kingdom of God. But they do not have to fear a lack of earthly needs.

The Lord encourages His defenseless, little flock of sheep, all of whom are equally dear to Him and His Father, by reminding them of the Father’s good pleasure in giving them the kingdom. He does not promise them a place *in* the kingdom, but He promises them the kingdom *itself*. They receive a portion with the Lord Jesus. They get it because they have appreciated the things His heart goes out to. They will get it from the Father because He desires to give it to them.

Here it is no longer about the things the Father knows we need for our life on earth, but about something He gives just because He wants to give it out of His good pleasure. These are things that are connected with heaven, with the glory of the Lord Jesus there. This promise is in the perspective of giving away our possessions. Besides being afraid of persecution, we can also be afraid of giving something away, because then we will have less or even nothing left for ourselves, we think. But if we are heirs to the eternal kingdom, why should we be afraid to give away a few temporary possessions?

After hearing what should not characterize the disciples, we then hear what should characterize them. If the Lord has promised them the whole kingdom, it will have to determine their view of their present possessions. This also applies to us. He says that instead of collecting treasures on earth we should sell our possessions. The proceeds are not purposed to be used to enjoy them for a while without worries, but to give away to those who have nothing.

We may well ask ourselves how we deal with our prosperity. Do we really think of others and give away in the awareness that we will receive the kingdom? Giving away is investing in another treasure, in the heavens. That treasure is perfectly safe for devaluation or theft. It is a treasure that cannot even be calculated, so inexhaustible. Giving away earthly possessions produces the true riches, being rich in God.

Whoever has God the Father and the Lord Jesus as his treasure possesses an inexhaustible treasure. 'He is not a fool who gives what he can't keep, to get what he can't lose' (Jim Elliot). Our heart is connected to what we really care about. If our treasure is our property, then the automatic consequence is that our heart goes out to it, as with the man who wanted his share of the inheritance and the rich fool who got more and more possessions. If our treasure is the Lord Jesus and the kingdom of God, the automatic consequence is that our heart goes out to Him and God's kingdom. Let's live in faith, in the sure confidence that we have an enormous wealth that is not yet seen, but will soon be.

Lk 12:35-37 | Waiting and Being On the Alert

35 *"Be dressed in readiness [or: Let your loins be girded about, Darby Translation], and [keep] your lamps lit. 36 Be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast, so that they may immediately open [the door] to him when he comes and knocks. 37 Blessed are those slaves whom the master will find on the alert when he comes; truly I say to you, that he will gird himself [to serve], and have them recline [at the table], and will come up and wait on them.*

Whoever has a treasure in heaven, knows that he himself is still on earth. He also knows that his time on earth has an end and that he may then take

possession of his treasure in heaven. Whoever has a treasure in heaven, is therefore waiting for the Lord. He is not surprised by His coming, but is ready for it.

That is why his loins are girded about. Girding the loins used to mean pulling up the long clothing and tying it around the loins so that one could walk unhindered and also quickly. The Israelites were given that command when they were about to leave Egypt (Exo 12:11). The Lord Jesus uses this picture with a view to our departure out of the world. If our heart is attached to the things of this life, we have not girded the loins.

Besides being ready to depart, the disciple also gives a clear testimony about where he lives for and what he looks forward to. His lamp burns brightly in a dark world where God is not taken into account. We also see this with the Israelites when the ninth plague, the darkness, comes over the land of Egypt (Exo 10:23).

Believers give a clear testimony of their real interests. They don't depend on the things of this life that they can leave behind at any moment, apart from the fact that he can lose all these things all of a sudden. At the same time they do not engage in world avoidance and testify in it of their expectation of the Lord (1Thes 1:8-10).

The Lord tells His disciples that they should be like men waiting for their master. This means that these people are slaves. The disciples are the slaves and the Lord Jesus is their Master. Waiting means: looking forward in expectation. The phrase "when He returns from the wedding feast" is not easy to explain. It may be that it is the wedding of the Lamb that took place in heaven (Rev 19:7). It may also be about the Lord's wedding with the earthly Jerusalem (Song 3:11).

In any case, the Lord speaks to us as disciples whom He wants to enter into the kingdom to celebrate the wedding with Him. In view of the wedding, He urges us not to be tempted to seek the things of the world. When He comes, He expects disciples who have looked forward to Him and waited for Him.

He calls the slaves blessed, whom He will not only find waiting, but also on the alert. 'Waiting' is what we do in view of the Lord, 'on the alert' is what we do in view of the thief. Looking forward to the coming of the Lord

should not make us careless, imprudent or naive for the presence of the enemy who wants to distract our eye from the Lord and cause us spiritual damage.

This attitude of waiting and being on the alert is so valuable to the Lord that He personally will give those believers a place of rest and fellowship with Him and serve them Himself. He switches places with His own, just as the Samaritan stepped off the donkey to put the man who had fallen into the hands of robbers on it (Lk 10:34). They have served Him on earth without being distracted by all prosperity; He will serve them in heaven. He will “gird” himself (cf. Jn 13:3-5) in order to serve them unhindered and “come up”, which indicates intimacy and a confidential relationship. His service consists of making them increasingly familiar with the glories of His own Person.

Lk 12:38-40 | Persevering Expectation

38 Whether he comes in the second watch, or even in the third, and finds [them] so, blessed are those [slaves]. 39 “But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have allowed his house to be broken into. 40 You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect.”

The Lord points to the fact that His return may take a while. This is not because He forgets His own, but because He is long-suffering and does not want anyone to perish (2Pet 3:9). It’s not just about waiting and being on the alert, but also about doing this with perseverance. If His return is delayed longer than we wish, we can shift our interests. If we do not do that, but continue to expect Him, despite the postponement, He calls us blessed. It is about being constantly attentive to what He has entrusted to us and not letting it be taken away from us by slacking our vigilance with the passage of time.

If the value of the treasure we have in heaven remains before our attention, if we keep thinking about the good pleasure of the Father, we will not be surprised by the thief. A thief does not sign up first. He always comes as unexpected as unwanted. Therefore the Lord says that we must always be

ready. The coming of the Son of Man can happen just like that, and if we don't look forward to it, it happens at an hour that we don't expect.

Lk 12:41-48 | The Faithful and the Unfaithful Slave

41 Peter said, "Lord, are You addressing this parable to us, or to everyone [else] as well?" 42 And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and sensible steward, whom his master will put in charge of his servants, to give them their rations at the proper time? 43 Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. 44 Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions. 45 But if that slave says in his heart, 'My master will be a long time in coming,' and begins to beat the slaves, [both] men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk; 46 the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect [him] and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces, and assign him a place with the unbelievers. 47 And that slave who knew his master's will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, will receive many lashes, 48 but the one who did not know [it], and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few. From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more.

Peter has a question to the Lord. It is not clear to him for whom He says all these things. Is it only for them as His disciples, or does He speak to all who hear Him? The Lord does not answer Peter directly, but answers with a question. When He asks a question, it is always with the purpose of thinking about it yourself. We cannot answer the question for others, we have to answer it ourselves.

The question is not to whom He does or does not speak, but that He addresses *me*. The question is whether *I* am a faithful and sensible steward of what He has entrusted me to serve others with. We have all received something from Him and each of us is steward of it (1Pet 4:10). In that service we are dependent on Him because He only knows the right time to serve. He also knows with what to serve and what is appropriate for the person who is the object of our service.

Whoever in dependence serves the Lord in that way by serving others, He calls "blessed". For the third time He calls someone "blessed", now

the active servant. So it's not only about waiting (verse 36) and being on the alert (verse 37), but also about being busy in the work that He has commanded us to do.

To that He also connects a reward, which is nothing less than putting him in charge of all His possessions. In verse 37 He speaks of a reward in a general sense according to any kind of waiting and being on the alert in view of His Person. The stewardship over His property (verse 44) is a reward in a specific sense as a result of faithfulness in the work, whereby more is entrusted.

Serving is giving away, passing on, both spiritually and materially. Everything we have given away or passed on we have not lost, but it is an investment that generates a high return. The Lord rewards service we have done to others on earth by being put in charge of all His possessions. The richness of it cannot be described.

There is also another possibility. It may be that in the heart of the steward there is separation between him and his Master. The wait is going to be too long for him. Slowly the coming of his Master disappears from his mind. This is expressed in his attitude toward his fellow slaves. Instead of serving he starts reigning with an iron fist. Next it also goes wrong in his personal life. He will focus on the things that make up this life and of which the Lord has said that the nations seek for it (verse 30). This slave merges into the world. He even gets drunk. He is no longer sober and no longer has a sound judgment about the value of life as God judges it.

People who do not look beyond this life are drunk with this life. However, the condition of this slave is much more serious than that of people of the world. This slave was first a confessor, someone who was in the company of Christians and took part in Christian activities. When the waiting for the Master was going to take too long and the costs were too high, he went back to seeking his pleasure in the world. He has become an apostate, someone who has never had a life connection with Christ. Such a slave will be surprised by the coming of the Master. He banned His coming completely from his thinking, which of course did not stop the coming itself.

The place assigned to that slave is in accordance with his half-hearted life. He has remained in the midst of the Christians and has claimed a position

for himself and abused it. His confession was Christian, his actions were worldly. This half-heartedness is punished by cutting him in pieces. After this judgment, the Master assigns his place with that of the unbelievers, for he falls into that category.

The judgment is based on the degree of responsibility. Someone who has confessed to know Christ and to live according to His will, but has given it his own interpretation, will receive many lashes. Someone who says he has read a lot in the Bible, but has distorted the truth of God's Word, will receive many lashes. Someone who has not grown up with the Bible is less guilty, but guilty for what he knew and yet did not do. He will be beaten with few lashes.

Just as there is distinction in the reward, so there is also distinction in the severity of the punishment God imposes on (confessing) people. God acts according to the principle that much can be required of the one to whom much has been given. It works the same way in society. If an employer has invested a great deal in an employee, he can also expect a great performance from him. The same goes for what has been entrusted to someone to manage and deal with. When the owner comes to pick up his property, he expects to get more than he has given.

God treats every human being, and certainly the confessing Christian, as fully responsible. He is the Owner and has every right to require and ask back. On the day of judgment He will bring everything to judgment and judge righteously (Ecc 12:14).

Lk 12:49-53 | Christ Is the Cause of Division

49 "I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled! 50 But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished! 51 Do you suppose that I came to grant peace on earth? I tell you, no, but rather division; 52 for from now on five [members] in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three. 53 They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."

The purpose of His love was not to cast fire upon the earth, but it is the result of His presence. Where He is, He can only show man his own condition. Fire is always the symbol of Divine judgment. The Lord has come to save, but if one rejects Him, one in reality kindles a fire. His presence means judgment.

The fact that the Lord has come to cast fire upon the earth means that He has come to bring men to a decision. The fact that the fire has already been kindled – as it also can be translated – means that the decision has already been made because man rejects Him. It is a necessary result of His presence that puts everything in the true light. Yet He is still in grace among men and even now the gospel of grace is still preached. At the same time He casts fire where He comes, and it turns out that it is already kindled. The Lord expresses His astonishment, as it were, that it is so. He could have expected otherwise, but because of man's persistent wickedness, it is so and not otherwise.

The second part of verse 49 in this translation means that the Lord is longingly awaiting the completion of His work on the cross. When the fire of God's judgment has passed over Him there, the foundation has been laid for the complete fulfillment of all God's plans and the establishment of the kingdom.

Then He speaks of His baptism. The baptism to which He refers is His immersion in the flood of suffering. He will be completely immersed in a sea of sorrow. He feels within Himself the pain of what will happen to Him from God's side. He indicates this by saying: "How distressed I am." He also sees the end, the "accomplishment" of that great and terrible work.

Meanwhile, His presence causes division and no peace. This seems to contradict the announcement of the angel at His birth (Lk 2:14). Surely He is come to bring peace, isn't He? He certainly is, but now that He has come, the earth appears to reject that peace. He will one day return to bring peace, but that peace will not be on earth until He has cleansed the earth by judgment.

At this time, His presence divides people into two categories: for or against Him. This for or against Him brings separation between people who live in the same house. He gives peace in the heart of everyone who accepts Him,

and as a result hate in everyone who rejects Him. The unity is disturbed. The two groups “two” and “three” are diametrically opposed.

In addition to groups of two and three, individuals also oppose each other who first lived in harmony with each other. There will be a separation between father and son when one of them accepts the Lord Jesus. There will also be a separation between a mother and her daughter and between a mother-in-law and her daughter-in-law. The Lord always mentions the relationship twice, one time putting one party first and the next time the other party first. It emphasizes the absolute break in relationships when one of both chooses for Him.

Lk 12:54-57 | Analyze the Present Time

54 And He was also saying to the crowds, “When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, ‘A shower is coming,’ and so it turns out. 55 And when [you see] a south wind blowing, you say, ‘It will be a hot day,’ and it turns out [that way]. 56 You hypocrites! You know how to analyze the appearance of the earth and the sky, but why do you not analyze this present time? 57 “And why do you not even on your own initiative judge what is right?

Time is running out to make a decisive choice for Him. He says that to the crowds by pointing to a weather forecast that they can all do in response to a phenomenon in nature. They know that a cloud they see appearing in the west means rain. Likewise, they know how to describe the blowing of a southern wind: a southern wind is the harbinger of heat.

The Lord applies this knowledge of weather to their spiritual discernment. He calls them hypocrites. They know how to analyze the outer things, but for their spiritual condition they keep their eyes closed. They know the laws of nature and apply them correctly, but they don’t think of the spiritual laws. They know that deviation from God makes judgment come on them, but they are far from God and live their own lives. Then the judgment must come. They would have to know that from God’s Word. However, they do not analyze the time in which they live because they do not want to repent and lay their life in the hand of God.

The Lord asks them why they do not judge for themselves what is right. Man is a responsible being and able to judge what is right. If he is honest

then, he will come to the conclusion that he is not able to do justice and know himself guilty before God. Then he is where God wants him to be, and God can save him. The Lord always seeks the salvation of man in order to be able to show him mercy.

Lk 12:58-59 | Attitude Toward the Opponent

58 For while you are going with your opponent to appear before the magistrate, on [your] way [there] make an effort to settle with him, so that he may not drag you before the judge, and the judge turn you over to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. 59 I say to you, you will not get out of there until you have paid the very last cent."

The crowd must realize that they have made God their adversary and that they are on their way to the judge with Him. Literally they did so when they brought the Lord Jesus before Pilate and asked for His condemnation.

They think they can bring God to justice. If they stand before the Judge, they will discover that it is exactly the other way around and that they are the defendants. It is now still time to change this situation. They can still get rid of their sins by confessing their sins. If they don't, they will be thrown into prison.

That is how it went with the people. God has surrendered them to the nations. Their call "His blood shall be on us and on our children!" (Mt 27:25) is still being fulfilled to this day. But not forever. The punishment in prison will not be endless, for they will come out of their prison if they, that is to say, a remnant, confess their sins when they see Him Whom they have pierced (Zec 12:10-14). If they have received double, they will be comforted (Isa 40:1-2).

They are now busy paying for their sins. They have stumbled, but have not fallen forever (Rom 11:11). When their time of suffering, the great tribulation, is over, God accepts them again (Rom 11:15).

Luke 13

Lk 13:1-5 | Repent or Perish

1 Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. 2 And Jesus said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were [greater] sinners than all [other] Galileans because they suffered this [fate]? 3 I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. 4 Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were [worse] culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem? 5 I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

On the same occasion, that is the occasion when the Lord spoke of the attitude of the crowds toward God (Lk 12:54-59), people come to Him with a report of a horrible event. The cruel, heartless governor Pilate had dealt with the Galileans with outrageous cruelty and insensitivity by killing them and mixing their blood with that of their sacrifices to God. By doing so, he had shown his deep contempt for their sacrificial service. The background of their report is that these Galileans must have sinned greatly. It is not so much about Pilate's horrible act, but more about their judgment of what happened to the Galileans.

The Lord answers them that it is not for them to conclude the sins of others from what they have suffered. If someone is affected by a disaster, we tend to look for causes without including ourselves. It is about the other and not me, we think. Thus the friends of Job also judged his suffering and spoke to Job, but they spoke not right neither of him nor of God (Job 42:7).

The Lord makes the report with which people come to Him a message that is addressed to their own conscience. He is the Light that enlightens every human being, revealing the deplorable condition of all human beings without exception. His call to them to repent stems from His service of grace, but if they do not repent, the same fate will affect them. That is how it happened. The Jews who did not repent were, according to the Lord's

word, killed by the Romans in the destruction of Jerusalem. The Romans did with the Jews what Pilate did with the Galileans.

The Lord Himself adds another message. They have spoken about Galileans. It concerns people far away, in the north. He reminds them of an incident closer to home, of what happened to people from Jerusalem. Some time ago, eighteen inhabitants of Jerusalem died because a tower in Siloam fell on them. Why did the tower kill those very eighteen inhabitants and not other inhabitants, or more inhabitants? Is it because these eighteen people deserved to die and the others did not? Did those eighteen have a greater debt than the other people of Jerusalem?

Here, too, He says a clear “no” to this thought and makes the incident with the tower an event that must appeal to all of them in their conscience. If we are allowed to continue living while something bad happens to others, it is not up to us to raise the question of guilt. The Lord wants to speak to our own hearts and conscience with every event. It should lead people to realize that it could have happened to them too and that they will ponder where they will spend eternity if they die without Christ.

Lk 13:6-9 | The Barren Fig Tree

6 And He [began] telling this parable: “A man had a fig tree which had been planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and did not find any. 7 And he said to the vineyard-keeper, ‘Behold, for three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree without finding any. Cut it down! Why does it even use up the ground?’ 8 And he answered and said to him, ‘Let it alone, sir, for this year too, until I dig around it and put in fertilizer; 9 and if it bears fruit next year, [fine]; but if not, cut it down.’”

Israel thought itself to be safe, but they were not aware of the precarious state in which they were now. It was completely inappropriate to speculate quietly about Galileans and it would be foolish to forget the people of Jerusalem. The Lord continues to address their conscience by showing them their own history in the form of a parable and what hangs over their heads from God.

He compares Israel to a fig tree planted by someone in his vineyard. The fig tree represents Israel that stands before God in its own righteousness.

We see in Adam and Eve that after falling into sin they cover themselves with leaves of a fig tree (Gen 3:7). With this they want to cover up their nakedness, their guilt before God. But that own righteousness does not suffice for God and therefore He makes garments of a skin. They stand before God covered by a sacrificial animal, which refers to Christ in Whom alone a sinner can stand before God.

Israel, too, has not been able to stand before God in its own righteousness. They said they could when they said that they should do all what God wanted them to do (Exo 19:8; 24:3,7). Then God gave them the law to indicate how they could live for His honor and His joy. The vineyard is reminiscent of this for wine speaks of joy.

Has Israel fulfilled its promises to be righteous, and have they given God joy? When He came to seek fruit, He did not find it (cf. Isa 5:1-7). In the parable the owner (God) tells the vineyard-keeper (the Lord Jesus) that he has been looking for fruit “on this fig tree” (Israel) for three years, but that he cannot find it. God has been looking for fruit in Israel in His Son for three years, but the people reject Him.

The proposal is to cut down the fig tree because it does not yield anything. Then something else can be planted that does bear fruit. However, the vineyard-keeper asks for an extra year of grace. Then he can try to do anything to get fruit. Thus the Lord Jesus is busy in grace and not demanding to win His people for God. Only through His intervention God is still willing to endure Israel.

The extra year can also refer to the time between the ascension of the Lord and His rejection as glorified Lord in the stoning of Stephen. If, despite the extra time and effort, there is no result, the curse comes. And so it happened. Israel has disappeared from its place as a testimony. The fig tree, the symbol of their national existence, has been cut down and withered.

Lk 13:10-13 | Healing of a Double Bent Woman

10 And He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. 11 And there was a woman who for eighteen years had had a sickness caused by a spirit; and she was bent double, and could not straighten up at all. 12 When Jesus saw her, He called her over and said to her, “Woman, you are freed from your sickness.”

13 And He laid His hands on her; and immediately she was made erect again and [began] glorifying God.

Although the Lord has announced the fate that threatens the Jews because they cover the ground uselessly, He still goes into their synagogues to teach the people. So also on this Sabbath. It is still the time of patience, and grace will not let itself be prevented from helping some. The double bent woman is a picture of people full of spiritual weakness who are weighed down by the law and are therefore in spiritual need. They have no power to erect themselves and look up. The woman constantly sees only herself.

That is exactly what the law characterizes. The law requires man to meet certain obligations, but he cannot meet them. If someone is taking it seriously, he is increasingly burdened by the unbearable burden of the law. He is constantly occupied with himself in order to escape the judgment of the law in case of disobedience.

It is like with the man in Romans 7 who sinks further and further into the swamp of his own efforts to keep the law of God. More than forty times the word 'I' appears in that chapter. There is only a looking at himself, until he finally sees the Lord Jesus. Because of this he is drawn out of the swamp (Rom 7:25). That's how it is with this woman who is bent double by a spirit of sickness. We can apply the spirit of sickness to the wrong education, which keeps people weighed down. The only One Who can free a man from it, is Christ when He speaks His delivering words.

Without the woman asking for it, the Lord calls her to Himself. He sees her and knows her. He knows how long she has been living so double bent. His grace flows to her because she needs it. He knows that need. He speaks His delivering words. First He frees her from the spirit of sickness. Then He lays hands on her to give His power to her to erect herself. After His words that have freed her heart, He gives her strength for her body. The first one she sees is the Lord Jesus. The result is that she glorifies God. There are many believers who are bent toward earth and therefore do not get around to glorifying God. Whoever is truly delivered, give thanks to God.

Lk 13:14-17 | Opponents Rebuked

14 But the synagogue official, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, [began] saying to the crowd in response, "There are six days in which work should be done; so come during them and get healed, and not on the Sabbath day." 15 But the Lord answered him and said, "You hypocrites, does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the stall and lead him away to water [him]? 16 And this woman, a daughter of Abraham as she is, whom Satan has bound for eighteen long years, should she not have been released from this bond on the Sabbath day?" 17 As He said this, all His opponents were being humiliated; and the entire crowd was rejoicing over all the glorious things being done by Him.

An arrogant man, full of legal own righteousness, moderates to prescribe the law to God! God should not work on His own Sabbath day! What folly it is to suppose that God would keep the Sabbath day in a world full of misery by sin and in a land of Israel that has so turned its back on Him (Jn 5:17).

In His answer, the Lord points to what people think is normal, and what every natural conscience will approve, despite all legal reasoning. It would be cruel and not God's thought to withhold necessary food or drink from a poor animal because it is the Sabbath day. If one is not so cruel, how can one dare to challenge the grace of God to give freedom to a victim of satan?

Because the synagogue official and his colleagues take care of their cattle, but criticize God's care for a man, the Lord calls them "hypocrites". They are kind to their animals and blame God for being kind to a human being. As an extra teaching to these legal hypocrites, the Lord gives two reasons for the healing of the woman. First, she is a real daughter of Abraham. He saw the faith in her that Abraham also had. The hypocrites may claim to be Abraham's offspring, but in reality they spiritually have the devil as father (Jn 8:37,44).

Secondly, the woman was bound by satan for eighteen years. The woman was a believer (Gal 3:7), but in her state of weakness satan had found an opportunity to bind her even further and prevent her from finding healing. The religion of religious leaders also made sure she wouldn't be healed.

The law does not set free, but leads to greater slavery. Only Christ in grace can change this situation.

It is therefore clear that the official does act as if he has great respect for God's teachings, but that in reality he is an accomplice of satan. If he really had respect for the law, he would have rejoiced that the Lord had delivered the woman from that spirit of sickness that had bound her for such a long time. Surely he would also have asked if the Lord would also release him from his bondage to the law which he too could not keep and by which he was condemned.

Genuine respect for the law is reflected in its acceptance. Whoever takes the law seriously and is honest, will admit that he is not able to keep to the law and therefore cannot come to terms with God in that way. He becomes aware of the judgment that must strike him because he cannot keep the law. Then he is ready to appeal to the grace of God that appeared in Christ.

The teaching of Divine grace humiliates the opponents and fills many with great joy. Those who rejoice acknowledge the clear and good hand of God and feel the difference between Christ and the inanimate theology of the synagogue official, however little they see Who the Lord Jesus really is.

Lk 13:18-19 | Parable of the Mustard Seed

18 So He was saying, "What is the kingdom of God like, and to what shall I compare it? 19 It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and threw into his own garden; and it grew and became a tree, and THE BIRDS OF THE AIR NESTED IN ITS BRANCHES."

The sickness of the woman has shown that the system of law is used by satan to keep people imprisoned. On the other hand, we see in the woman's healing that by the service of the Lord Jesus the kingdom of God is breaking ground. Yet this are only incidents. It is not the public establishment of the kingdom, but the establishment of the kingdom in the heart of individuals. What it looks like in the big picture, the Lord shows in two parables. There we see that the introduction of the grace and power of the realm does not yet bring about a perfect state of affairs. In the outer and inner condition of the kingdom corruption has entered.

In the first parable, the Lord compares the kingdom to a mustard seed. This mustard seed is sown and grows and becomes a tree of which the branches are used by the birds of the air to nest there. This is a picture of the development of professing Christianity which would become a powerful external system, where all kinds of evil influences – represented in the birds (cf. Rev 18:2) – would gain entrance.

That is indeed how it went. Professing Christianity is now a worldly system, just like islam or Judaism. It is an active world power in which many people are in control, people who only bear the name ‘Christian’, but are not in their inner being. They are enemies of God and His truth who introduce doctrinal errors in many areas. They distort the Word of God and abuse it to spread lies and exercise power over souls.

Lk 13:20-21 | Parable of the Leaven

20 And again He said, “To what shall I compare the kingdom of God? 21 It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of flour until it was all leavened.”

The Lord once again asks the question to what He will compare the kingdom of God. He wants to add another parable to the previous one and thus highlight the kingdom of God from a different perspective. By asking the question again, He holds the attention of the hearers and makes them think about it.

In the previous parable, that of the mustard seed, He shows the external growth of the kingdom, as the people look at it and deal with it. By adding the parable of the leaven, the Lord emphasizes its inner aspect. Leaven in Scripture is invariably a picture of sin, of what is wrong. If the kingdom of God is compared to leaven, it means that the kingdom of God assumes from within a characteristic that is sinful. There are not only evil influences, as is suggested in the birds in the previous parable, but there is an ongoing and ever-increasing effect of evil which finally permeates the whole of professing Christianity with sin.

In practice, we see this in the roman-catholic church, which as a religious system exercises its pernicious influence in professing Christianity and which, at the end, permeates the entire Christianity with it. Ecumenism

will give it its full effect. So we see not only the rise of a small beginning and tremendous growing power on earth, but also a dogmatic system, spreading over a certain area (professing Christianity) and influencing people's thoughts and feelings.

"A woman" brings in the leaven. The woman is a picture of the corrupt church. The three pecks of flour speak of the Lord Jesus, reminiscent of the grain offering in Leviticus (Lev 2:1-16). The destruction that the woman brings in has to do with the Person of Christ. His Person is affected. Demonic, disgusting teachings about Him have entered professing Christianity.

Lk 13:22-24 | Enter Through the Narrow Door

22 And He was passing through from one city and village to another, teaching, and proceeding on His way to Jerusalem. 23 And someone said to Him, "Lord, are there [just] a few who are being saved?" And He said to them, 24 "Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.

Luke mentions again in between that the Lord is proceeding on His way to Jerusalem and what He is doing on His way to that city. The Lord knows what awaits Him in Jerusalem, but He continues His service fearlessly. He must be killed in Jerusalem by the hand of the people. They will reject Him, but His words of grace continue to flow.

While He is teaching somewhere on the way, someone has a question. Someone wants to know from Him whether there are just a few who are being saved. The question will have been provoked by His teaching. The Lord does not answer this question directly, but speaks in His answer to the conscience of the questioner. His concern is not with the question, but with the questioner.

In His answer it does sound through that there are few because one has to enter through a narrow door. Nothing can go in there that makes man great. He must become small. The essence is that the questioner must ensure that he is in the right relationship to God. That does not mean that he has to accomplish anything for it, but it does mean that he has to look for it so diligently that it can be compared with a struggle.

The point here is that one has to strive to enter through “the narrow door”. By ‘the narrow door’ is meant that one repents and converts to God in faith. That is simple, but it is also difficult, yes impossible for him who does not want to break with his old life. Nothing of the flesh and of the world can enter in. It is a struggle to get that far.

The Lord speaks of those who understand that it is not enough to be among the chosen people. They realize that they have to be born again and therefore look up to God Who points to the Lord Jesus as the door (Jn 10:9). Many will try to enter the kingdom, but do so on their own easy way, according to their own terms. They want to enter through the wide door, but they will not succeed.

They try to get the blessing of the kingdom without being born of God. They want to have all the privileges promised to Israel, without being born of water and the Spirit (Jn 3:3,5). That is impossible, however. They will try to enter and they cannot, because when they enter, they have to go through the narrow door, so repent and be born again, and they don’t want that. God has a house on earth where the door is open to anyone who wants to enter. That is only possible through that one door.

In the following verses, the Lord shows that there will come a time when the Lord of the house will get up and close the door, or to say with words of the parable of the beginning of this chapter, that the tree will be cut down (verse 9). The time for Israel to enter into the blessing of the kingdom is then over. The invitees have begun to stand outside.

Lk 13:25-30 | Outside the Door

25 Once the head of the house gets up and shuts the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock on the door, saying, ‘Lord, open up to us!’ then He will answer and say to you, ‘I do not know where you are from.’ 26 Then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets’; 27 and He will say, ‘I tell you, I do not know where you are from; DEPART FROM ME, ALL YOU EVILDORS.’ 28 In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but yourselves being thrown out. 29 And they will come from east and west and from north and south, and will

recline [at the table] in the kingdom of God. 30 And behold, [some] are last who will be first and [some] are first who will be last."

There comes a moment when God puts an end to the possibility of entering through the door He has appointed, that is His Son. It is like with the door of Noah's ark. For a long time, the invitation was made to escape the announced judgment. Then comes the moment that God closes the door (Gen 7:16). The door will not open again until the judgments have cleansed the earth. No matter how people banged on the ark when it started to rain and the water started to rise, or how they kept banging when it kept raining and the water kept rising, the door remained closed. Only those who went into the ark with Noah were safe and were saved.

So it is with the people who stand outside the door when God has got up and closed the door of grace. They will knock and ask that it be opened, but they will receive the Lord's answer that He does not know where they come from. The time of grace is over when the Lord Jesus has got up to bring His judgments on the world and on His people (Isa 26:20-21).

The Lord knows the reactions that come when the door is closed and the judgments come. They will want to remind Him that He must have seen them anyway. They ate and drank in His presence! They were there when He taught in their streets. In this way they appeal to external privileges of which they apparently suddenly understand the meaning. The tragedy is that in doing so they are also delivering the clear proof of their guilt. He was there, and they did not want Him. He has taught in their streets, but they have despised Him and rejected Him, even worse than the nations. They have not repented. The time of grace is definitely over. The verdict is final. No change is possible.

The Lord emphasizes by saying "I tell you" that it will be so. He, the Omniscient, Who knows perfectly where they come from, says to them that He does not know where they are from. Wherever they come from, they are certainly not in connection with Him. Therefore He sends them away. They will never be in any connection with Him. The reason for this is that they are "evildoers". They have always done their own will in all things and have not taken the law of God into account.

They are sent away, away from the Lord, to a place of “weeping and gnashing of teeth”. There is ‘weeping’ because of the pain and sorrow. There is ‘gnashing of teeth’ because of the anger that will continually control them (Acts 7:54). The torments of hellish pains will be made worse when they see the men of whom they have always said that they descended from them. That only applied to their physical descent.

They never took part in the faith of these men. Spiritually they are the offspring of the devil in whose fate they share. They did not want to enter through the narrow door into the kingdom of God. They have not obeyed the voices of the prophets who have called for repentance. Now they are cast out, out of the kingdom, out of the place of blessing.

In their place there will be heathens from all corners of the world who will be reclining in the kingdom. They entered through the narrow door of repentance to God and faith in the Lord Jesus. The door is there not only for Israel but for all people from all over the world. God’s grace goes out to all.

The Lord ends His answer with a special word which shows that there is still grace for Israel. The message of grace went first to Israel and later to the Gentiles. Israel has rejected grace, and so the Gentiles are the first to share in the grace. Later, Israel, that is to say, a remnant, will also share in the grace. God has not rejected His people forever.

Lk 13:31-35 | Lamentation Over Jerusalem

31 Just at that time some Pharisees approached, saying to Him, “Go away, leave here, for Herod wants to kill You.” 32 And He said to them, “Go and tell that fox, ‘Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third [day] I reach My goal.’ 33 Nevertheless I must journey on today and tomorrow and the next [day]; for it cannot be that a prophet would perish outside of Jerusalem. 34 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, [the city] that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen [gathers] her brood under her wings, and you would not [have it]! 35 Behold, your house is left to you [desolate]; and I say to you, you will not see Me until [the time] comes when you say, ‘BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!’”

The Pharisees do not like the teaching of the Lord. When He enters the area of Herod on His way to Jerusalem, they come to Him with a message that Herod wants to kill Him. It seems that under the false pretext of caring for His life, they are trying to frighten Him with their message. The Lord is not impressed by their so-called care. He knows that Herod is a bad man. He also knows that the Pharisees are no better and their expression of interest and care for His Person is hypocrisy.

It also seems that Herod makes use of the mind of the Pharisees. In the hatred they both have for Him, they find each other and one uses the other for his own murderous plans. The Lord doesn't let Himself be influenced by any suggestion of the enemy. He has a work to do for His Father. With Divine contempt for this king who wants to kill Him, He calls him a 'fox' because of his cunning to thwart His testimony for God.

Of course the Lord sees through his intentions, and his cunning is in vain. He does not hesitate to say it clearly. They refuse Him Who has come to gather His people under His wings just as a hen her brood and prefer a fox. The Lord has come to do the will of God Who has sent Him. This will must be done at all costs. Therefore, just like all other days, He will do the work of God, today and tomorrow and every day thereafter.

He does a verifiable work. He casts out demons and performs cures, all works of grace. And then, on the third day – this is spoken figuratively, for it will take months before He suffers and dies – He will reach His goal. The words "I reach My goal" literally means "will I be completed". He will die at the time determined by God and at the place determined by God, not sooner and not later and not anywhere else. At the same time, it means that He is coming at the end of His walk on earth, that is to say that He will have achieved His goal. When He is risen, He will have fully achieved His purpose. Luke actually points this out by using the expression "the third [day]", which often refers to the resurrection.

The Lord speaks of the fact that He is engaged in His work and that it must be completed. He must go on to the cross. He will take a new place in the heavenly glory through His death and His resurrection, after He has ended His course on earth. He also realizes that no human power will be allowed to stop Him in His work until He has accomplished everything.

He is on His way to Jerusalem because there all the prophets have been killed. There is no other treatment awaiting Him other than all the prophets before Him.

However, He is more than a prophet. What He says about Jerusalem with sorrow, no prophet has been able to say. He is the God of Jerusalem. He mentions the name of the city twice in order to strengthen His inner compassion for this city. He is authorized and capable to gather them together out of a love that a hen also has for her brood (cf. Jer 31:10).

He would like to protect His people under His wings from all impending doom. (God is a Father with motherly feelings and as such He is an example for earthly fathers and mothers.) He could have been their shield and their very great reward (Gen 15:1), but they did not want it. They have shown their rejection of Him many times by killing the prophets God had sent to them in His love.

Because Jerusalem had behaved so rebellious, the Lord surrendered them to themselves. He withdraws from the house of Israel and also from the temple which is no longer God's house, but has become "your house", which means *their* house. He leaves them to themselves and leaves. They will not see Him again, "until ...".

The 'until' is the announcement of a change in their mind. This change will be felt when they cry out: "Blessed is He Who comes in the Name of the LORD." They will cry out this when the Lord Jesus returns to deliver His people, that is to say the faithful remnant of Israel, from their enemies.

Before that time, the people will still cry massively: "Away with this man" and: "Crucify, crucify Him" (Lk 23:18,21).

Luke 14

Lk 14:1-6 | Healing a Man Suffering From Dropsy

1 It happened that when He went into the house of one of the leaders of the Pharisees on [the] Sabbath to eat bread, they were watching Him closely. 2 And there in front of Him was a man suffering from dropsy. 3 And Jesus answered and spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?" 4 But they kept silent. And He took hold of him and healed him, and sent him away. 5 And He said to them, "Which one of you will have a son or an ox fall into a well, and will not immediately pull him out on a Sabbath day?" 6 And they could make no reply to this.

Although the Lord has just spoken of His rejection by Jerusalem, He continues to show grace and mercy. He entered the house of a Pharisee again to eat bread there (Lk 7:36; 11:37). This time He does that on a Sabbath. He is surrounded by people who watch Him closely to see if He does anything that violates their laws. The Pharisees want to use their Sabbath commandment to bind His merciful hands with. He breaks their ropes by showing that He has at least as much compassion with a human being as they have with their animal.

His grace far exceeds their legal judgments. He proves this in His actions with the man suffering from dropsy who is also present there. They feel He will do something again, for they know He will work with His grace wherever there is suffering and sickness. It is possible that they have intentionally placed this man suffering from dropsy in front of Him. By placing him there they unintentionally give him the place where he can find healing.

A person suffering from dropsy is someone who holds water and is therefore inflated, blown up in appearance. This prevents him from entering through the narrow door. It is the dropsy of Israel. Water is a picture of the Word of God. As an application, one can see in this man someone who is blown up by the knowledge of God's Word (1Cor 8:1). He is the physical expression of the spiritual state of the Pharisees. However, there is a big

difference. This man stands in front of the Lord Jesus and wants to be healthy, while the Pharisees believe that they are healthy and therefore are enemies of the Lord.

The Lord knows that they are watching Him closely. He knows their evil thoughts. His question of whether or not it is permitted to heal on the Sabbath is an answer to their evil thoughts. With His question He addresses Himself to their conscience. The evil, merciless leaders do not answer. The Lord gives a first answer through His act of mercy. He acts with vigor. He takes hold of the man. That is the only solution in such situations. In that way He also firmly took hold on the Pharisee Saul and threw him to the ground (Acts 9:3-4). He makes the man healthy and sends him away. This man has been cured and is going in liberty.

The Lord has even more teaching for the Pharisees. He continues with His answer by asking them a new question. This answer in form of a question differs slightly from the answer given to the official of the synagogue in the previous chapter (Lk 13:15). There it is more about the need to care for an animal on time, whereas here it is a more urgent case. It is not only an animal that needs a drink and needs to be led to the well, but the animal has fallen into a well.

In the comparison, the Lord equates the healing of the man suffering from dropsy with a son or an ox who has found himself in a situation that he is about to die. By curing the man suffering from dropsy, he can function as a son and an ox again. A son is to the good pleasure of the Father (Eph 1:5) and an ox is a picture of a servant (1Cor 9:8-10).

They have no reply to this reply either. The grace and truth of God are irrefutably good.

Lk 14:7-11 | Teaching for the Invited Guests

7 And He [began] speaking a parable to the invited guests when He noticed how they had been picking out the places of honor [at the table], saying to them, 8 "When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for someone more distinguished than you may have been invited by him, 9 and he who invited you both will come and say to you, 'Give [your] place to this man,' and then in disgrace you proceed to occupy the last place.

10 *But when you are invited, go and recline at the last place, so that when the one who has invited you comes, he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher'; then you will have honor in the sight of all who are at the table with you. 11 For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."*

Verse 1 says that they are watching Him closely, but in reality it is the other way around (verse 7). He watches them and notices how the guests are picking out the places of honor at the table. Such people, who have no sense of the need in which they find themselves, not only want to prevent Him from doing good to others, but are also always aspiring to exalt themselves.

It is a reason for the Lord to continue *teaching*. He continues with this until Luke 17 where He does another *work* of grace in the healing of ten leprous men (Lk 17:11-19). With His teaching He wants to place their conscience in the light with the goal that they learn to see themselves in God's light and come to repentance. It is also important to us because the tendency of everything He points out is also present in us. If we do not take His teaching to heart, we will fall into the same evil. To us, His education contains many warnings. When we look around us, we see happen what He says, but often we are not able to testify against it because we so often notice the same faults in ourselves.

The Lord gives His teaching through a parable. He presents it in this way, that there is an invitation for a wedding. For a wedding, certain places are reserved for distinguished guests. The pride of man desires a place that clearly shows his importance to others. If we sit in a place that we're not entitled to, we will be taken from there, because a more distinguished person has come who has already been allocated this place.

We might have entered through the narrow door, but still get thoughts of pride about ourselves again. The old nature has also entered with us, but we must keep it at the place of death (Rom 6:11), that is, we must not give in to it. If we give in, we will be put in our place by the person who sent the invitation, because he has also allocated the places. He knows where everyone belongs.

If we have taken a place in the front row that is destined for another person, we will have to leave when the other person comes. Red of shame, we'll have to take last place, far away from the center of the feast. Therefore it is better, if we are invited, to take the humblest place. When we are then told: "Friend, move up higher", it is a tribute that is noticed by all. We will get it without having searched for it (Pro 25:5-6).

The Lord's sympathy goes out to those who take the lowest place, the place of serving. It is identification with the place He Himself has always taken. All other guests also have respect for someone who has taken the lowest place and is addressed by the Lord as a friend and invited to a higher place.

The Lord closes the parable with an important principle. The seeking of oneself will inevitably lead to a deep fall. Whoever takes the lowest place will ultimately be allowed to take the highest place. The Lord Jesus has humbled Himself and has been exalted at God's right hand (Phil 2:8-9). This will happen to all who follow Him in that mind of humility (Jam 4:10; Job 5:11; Jn 12:26). With satan and his followers the first thing will happen. They have exalted themselves and will be humiliated.

Lk 14:12-14 | Teaching for the One Who Invites

12 And He also went on to say to the one who had invited Him, "When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, otherwise they may also invite you in return and [that] will be your repayment. 13 But when you give a reception, invite [the] poor, [the] crippled, [the] lame, [the] blind, 14 and you will be blessed, since they do not have [the means] to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

After a word for the guests, the Lord also has a word for the host and for all who invite others. He not only notes that the guests act purely for personal gain, He also notes that inviting does not happen selflessly either. There is a hidden intention to benefit from it. It must give prestige and, in the long term, also yield something. This is how a lot of people deal in the world, and unfortunately also Christians. To do good without self-interest is only possible in imitation of the Lord Jesus.

The Lord holds out to them what He Himself is also constantly doing, and that is focusing on the lowest layers of society. Let them invite the disadvantaged and underprivileged, the poor and the disabled. There is no honor to be gained for the eyes of the world, but there is honor to be gained in the eyes of God.

Spiritually applied, the Lord Jesus wants us to share of our spiritual riches to spiritually disadvantaged people. The happiness that is connected with such deeds is the inner satisfaction that He gives because there is acted out of His grace.

That happiness extends far beyond the present satisfaction. Those who act in this way can count on repayment in the future, at the resurrection of the righteous. Before the judgment seat of Christ, those who have acted selflessly in the grace of the Lord in this way will receive repayment for it in the form of a task to distribute blessing in the realm of peace.

Lk 14:15-20 | The Invitation Rejected

15 When one of those who were reclining [at the table] with Him heard this, he said to Him, "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!"
16 But He said to him, "A man was giving a big dinner, and he invited many;
17 and at the dinner hour he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, 'Come; for everything is ready now.'
18 But they all alike began to make excuses. The first one said to him, 'I have bought a piece of land and I need to go out and look at it; please consider me excused.'
19 Another one said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please consider me excused.'
20 Another one said, 'I have married a wife, and for that reason I cannot come.'

Someone who is reclined at the table and has listened carefully, suspects the scope of the words of the Lord's. He feels that He is talking about the kingdom of God and speaks out loud how blessed it must be to be in it and to eat bread there, to feed himself with what God offers as food. In this he resembles the woman in the crowd who, in response to His words, calls her "blessed" who had the privilege to be His mother (Lk 11:27-28). Just like there, it is here about an external impression that is correct in itself, but that does not bring the person who is impressed any further. The man sees the privilege of being in the kingdom, but has no part in it.

In a parable the Lord makes clear why people reject the invitation to eat bread in the kingdom of God and which people will participate in the meal. The beginning of the parable shows the great grace of God and the wide offer of His grace. He is giving a “big” dinner, where there is room for the many whom He invites. It is a “dinner”, a meal in the evening, at the end of the day. The day of grace comes to an end.

This parable represents the desire of God’s heart to fill His house with people with whom He can share the riches of His heart. The parable also makes it clear that He Himself takes care of that, because people don’t want to come. Here we see God’s sovereignty in showing His grace and mercy to fill His house. It is also important to see that it is about a house here on earth now and not about a house in heaven later on.

When it is time to start the dinner, the host – a picture of God – sends out his slave. The slave is the Holy Spirit Who, as a Servant to men, lets the gospel, that is the good news, of a ready dinner, be announced by servants. That the dinner is ready presupposes that the Lord Jesus has completed the work on the cross. In the gospel it is said to the guests that everything is ready now.

The guests are the Jews. To them comes first and foremost the gospel (Rom 1:17), which deals with the treasures of heaven that have been laid ready and that can already be enjoyed by virtue of the work of Christ. Because Christ laid the foundation for it on the cross, the invitation can go out. God sent His Son to prepare the dinner for the guests. God sent His Spirit to prepare the guests for the dinner.

When the slave comes to the guests, they all have an excuse for not coming. They have too many possessions to go through the narrow door, things they don’t want to leave at the door. The reasons they give are not things that are wrong in themselves. They are ordinary human duties. It’s not about someone who’s too drunk to come, or someone who’s degenerated as a result of a dissolute life, like the prodigal son. They are all decent, esteemed people. They enjoy the gifts of the Creator, but the Creator Himself should not interfere with them further. They are so preoccupied with their pastimes that they do not take time for the feast of grace. They are excuses of unbelief based on so-called duties, on temporary, material interests.

The first excuse comes from someone who bought a piece of land. He is very curious how it looks like and that seeing should really be done first. He will also be curious about the produce. He has just bought it and he wants to sow and earn money to prepare his own meal. So he doesn't have a longing for the dinner God has prepared. Perhaps he also dreams of large barns in which he can store the produce (cf. Lk 12:16-19). No, he doesn't have time to accept the invitation and opts out politely.

A second person who receives the invitation makes excuses because he has just bought five pairs of oxen. This new acquisition takes so much time that he really cannot accept the invitation. He just has to try those five pairs of oxen first. And you can be sure that if he succeeds, he will provide his own meal, with a richly laid table provided with his own well-earned delicacies. For him, the whole dinner of God is not necessary. No, he doesn't have the time, nor the need, to accept the invitation and opts out politely.

A third excuse comes from someone who is (just?) married. He considers that an extraordinarily good reason to reject God's invitation. For this man too, life in the world here and now, having a family, is more important than his place at God's table. Besides, his wife can prepare an excellent meal. He does not need God's. No, he can't come and doesn't even bother to apologize. How can someone bother him with a message about an invisible dinner, when he's doing so well himself!

Lk 14:21-24 | The House Must Be Filled.

21 And the slave came [back] and reported this to his master. Then the head of the household became angry and said to his slave, 'Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in here the poor and crippled and blind and lame.' 22 And the slave said, 'Master, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' 23 And the master said to the slave, 'Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel [them] to come in, so that my house may be filled. 24 For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste of my dinner.'"

The slave reports the responses to the invitation to his master. When the master hears the reactions, he becomes angry. His grace is despised (Heb 10:28-29). The privileged people are too busy and have indifferently re-

fused the invitation. The slave gets another command. He must do this quickly because urgency is required. He has to get all kinds of people off the street, people who would never think they would get an invitation. They are not invited, they are not asked if they want to come, the slave has to pick them up. From now on it will be a matter of tax collectors and sinners and all those who are in a miserable state.

The first to be forced to enter come from the city, from Israel. They are aware of their poverty and have no problem entering through the narrow door. They do not have pieces of land or oxen or a wife who are a restraint to enter. We see this happening at Pentecost (Acts 2:40-41; 4:4). Obedient the slave carries out this command.

But the house is not yet full. There is still room, even though first three thousand and later another five thousand entered God's house, the church (Acts 2:41; 4:4). God has so much that He wants to give away, that He will force others to come in. The master once again orders the slave to go out. He has to look everywhere where there might still be someone, and whoever he finds, he has to force to come in.

This is another step forward because this is obviously the gospel for the nations. By God's mercy, after the rejection of the gospel by Israel, the gospel is now also being preached to them with the greatest insistence. No one accepted the invitation of his own accord, but was forced to do so by God's sovereign grace. God fills, so to speak, not only the table, but also the chairs. What a grace! Who has ever heard of the richest celebration ever, in which only people take part who have been forced to!

The wonder becomes even greater, for all the glory of the dinner prepared by God, which we will soon enjoy in perfection in heaven, may already be enjoyed by us in the house of God on earth. It is the house where the prodigal son is brought in by the father (Lk 15:22-24).

The master determines that those who were originally invited but refused to come will never taste his dinner. Here the Lord Jesus states His judgment on the invited guests who rejected the invitation and that is especially the apostate Israel. They have consciously chosen for life on earth with all its pleasures. They repudiate eternal life (Acts 13:46), for without having

tasted it, they know that they would not like it anyway. They get what they have chosen: they will never taste the dinner.

Lk 14:25-33 | Calculate the Cost

25 Now large crowds were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them, 26 "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. 27 Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. 28 For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? 29 Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, 30 saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' 31 Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand [men] to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? 32 Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. 33 So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.

If something is available for free, it attracts a lot of people. The offer of grace is wide and attractive. However, the fact that the dinner is free of charge does not mean that it is cheap. Therefore the Lord also highlights the other side of the invitation. He also has a word for those who follow Him without realizing what it means to follow Him. He turns around and speaks to all about the truth of discipleship. There are no conditions attached to the grace of God. However, the gospel in which this grace is proclaimed places our feet on the path of the disciple, which can only be trodden under these conditions.

The disciple must follow Christ that simply and resolutely that it seems to others' eyes that he completely neglects natural family ties and that he is indifferent to all claims from close relatives. It is not the case that the Lord calls for lovelessness, but that is how it can and must appear to those from whom one bids farewell, as it were, in His Name.

To someone who wants to be a disciple, the attraction of grace must exert a greater influence than all natural bonds and all other claims of any

kind. "Hate" is not cherishing hate feelings, but consider irrelevant when it comes to following the Lord Jesus. Neither did He let Himself be led by His mother and His brothers and sisters and hated them in this sense.

Furthermore, it is not enough to come to Him and begin to follow Him, but we must follow Him day after day. He who does not do this cannot be His disciple. Thus we see in verse 26 that we must give up all things for Christ and in verse 27 that we must follow Christ despite effort and suffering and with perseverance. The Lord makes it a matter of calculating the cost. All those who start a project are first going to make a budget. No one is rushing into an uncertain business. So it is with discipleship. Following the Lord Jesus is not a matter of emotion, but of sober deliberation, resulting in a clear choice.

A tower speaks of a visible testimony, of vigilance and of a view of the future. We can say that we live for the future to then be with Christ, but that means that we give up everything on earth. That's what it costs. Following Christ can only be continued if we remain vigilant and keep an eye on His coming. Otherwise, after a shorter or longer time, we will stop following Him because we are no longer willing to make sacrifices.

Ceasing to follow Him will bring us and also Christ reproach. Then we are like someone who has started a business, but stops after a while because he has budgeted wrong. Such a person becomes an object of ridicule. It really does not remain unnoticed that someone who first followed the Lord, quits. His environment has noticed that he had started building and also notes that after a while the building has stopped.

In addition to a building project, the Lord compares discipleship with a battle. He tells the crowd that a disciple is at war. If one thinks about following him, let him see first if he can cope with the battle. Is the army in which he serves strong enough to fight the enemy? The opposition is great.

Being a witness in the world also causes battle. It costs a lot to be a witness. In a war it is true that in the case of a battle in which you will certainly lose, you are wise to ask for the terms of peace. You should ask for it when the other has not attacked you yet.

If we really give up everything we have, we will have to rely entirely on the help of the great Master. Then the path of discipleship is also open to us as a great challenge.

Lk 14:34-35 | Tasteless Salt

34 *“Therefore, salt is good; but if even salt has become tasteless, with what will it be seasoned? 35 It is useless either for the soil or for the manure pile; it is thrown out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”*

After meeting the conditions, the true disciple is the salt. Each grain offering must be salted with salt (Lev 2:13). The life of a disciple is such an offering (Rom 12:1). The salt is good (Mt 5:13). Salt prevents decay and is preservative. It repels the wrong and preserves the good. If the disciple slackens and forgets that he is the salt, he loses his characteristic as someone who uses God’s standards for a disciple. The next step is for him to adapt to the world. The corruption of the world he has escaped (2Pet 1:4) regains entrance to his life. He loses his character of witness.

Such a person is no longer a true disciple of Christ. He is not fit for the plans the world has and he has given up the plan God has with him. He has too much light or knowledge to be concerned with the vanities and sins of the world and he does not enjoy the grace and truth that should preserve him in the way of Christ. The expression “it is thrown out” actually has an unlimited meaning, that is to say it is thrown away, without saying by whom.

The last words, “he who has ears to hear”, appeal to all who hear the word of the Lord. We see in the next chapter that they are only taken to heart by the tax collectors and sinners who come to Him to hear Him. They have ears to hear.

Luke 15

Lk 15:1-2 | The Lord Receives Sinners

1 Now all the tax collectors and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him. 2 Both the Pharisees and the scribes [began] to grumble, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."

While the religious leaders have rejected Him, for tax collectors and sinners the Lord is Someone Who attracts them by His words of grace which are "seasoned with salt" (Col 4:6). They are the people who are compelled to come in (Lk 14:23). The attitude of the Pharisees and scribes is completely foreign to grace. They feel far exalted above this kind of low sunken people and look down upon them. Such people don't deserve to deal with them and do them good. That is what the Lord does, and they grumble about it.

People who have no sense of grace can only criticize others who do prove grace or live by grace in a sour spirit. It is the attitude of the older son in the third part of the parable. The grace of the Lord goes far beyond what they grumble about. The Lord does not just receive them; He seeks them explicitly, as the following parable shows. God finds His good pleasure in proving grace. What an answer to the terrible attitude of the Pharisees who object against it!

The reason for the parable is the grumbling of the Pharisees and the scribes because the Lord Jesus receives sinners and eats with them. By doing so they unintentionally give Him a big compliment. He has indeed come exactly for them .

Lk 15:3 | Introduction to the Parable

3 So He told them this parable, saying

The following three parables are essentially one parable. Therefore it says that He spoke to them "this parable" and not "these parables. It is a parable in three parts. Each of the three histories is about love for what is lost. It is a love that *seeks* (sheep and coin) and *receives* (son).

The sheep and the coin are passive. The sheep is too weak to do anything, the coin can do nothing at all. With the sheep and the coin we see what is happening *for* the lost sinner, with the younger son we see what is happening *in* the lost sinner.

In each of the histories, one Person from the Godhead is highlighted in particular. In the sheep we see the Lord Jesus as the good Shepherd Who bears the whole burden; in the coin we see the Holy Spirit with His light in the effort He makes; in the son we see the waiting and receiving Father.

Lk 15:4-7 | The Lost Sheep

4 "What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? 5 When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. 6 And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' 7 I tell you that in the same way, there will be [more] joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

The ninety-nine represent the class of Pharisees and scribes. They are left in the open pasture, not in a fenced meadow. They are, as it were, left to themselves. For the shepherd it is about that one sheep that is lost, not the ninety-nine, for they are not lost. The Pharisees and scribes do not see themselves as lost. The shepherd is not committed to them, but to that one sheep that is lost. He's willing to do anything to find it and he continues searching until he finds it. If he hadn't gone after it, it would have got lost further and further and finally died. The shepherd goes after the sheep because it has an enormous value for him. This aspect is also seen in the coin and the son.

It is about the loss that the owner experiences and his desire to get it back. It is about a God Who, full of grace and mercy, is looking for people who have been estranged from Him by sin in order to make His pleasure known to them and to bring them back to His heart. God finds man at the moment man repents.

When the shepherd has found the sheep, he lays it on his shoulders. It is nice to remember that the power and strength of the Lord Jesus in relation to the creation is expressed in the words “and the government shall be upon his shoulder” (Isa 9:6, Darby Translation), while here it says that He lays the lost and found sheep on His shoulders. One shoulder is enough to rule the world. To bring a lost sheep back to the herd, He uses both His shoulders. He also lays it on His shoulders “rejoicing”. It is a cause of joy for the Shepherd that He has His sheep back.

And where does the shepherd bring the sheep? He does not bring it back to the open pasture, to the herd he has left behind, but he takes it to his home, he brings it “home”. The lost sheep has ‘come home’. The shepherd also wants others to share in his joy about the found sheep. He calls his friends and neighbors together to rejoice with him about finding “my” sheep. A man who is happy to find something belonging to him can understand to some extent how God finds His joy in the salvation of the lost. In any case, Christ appeals to this human joy to justify God’s joy.

The Lord assures us here that a sinner who repents sets the tone for the joy on high. There is no one who grumbles, everyone rejoices in the shown love. Is that the case with us? Heaven is not rejoicing about all those people who think they are righteous and therefore think they do not need repentance. Real joy is the result of the searching love of the Lord Jesus.

Lk 15:8-10 | The Lost Coin

8 “Or what woman, if she has ten silver coins and loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? 9 When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I had lost!’ 10 In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

In the second part of the parable the Lord presents a woman who loses a silver coin. The silver coin – literally *drachma* – was a Greek currency and therefore not legal tender in Israel. Therefore it seems that the ‘silver coins’ were used for personal decoration of head, neck or arm. This decoration is very much appreciated by the women and that is why she would like to keep it intact, possibly more out of emotional value than because of

its monetary value. The silver coin is worth a lot to the woman. Maybe it belonged to a piece of jewelry with ten silver coins that lost all its shine because of the loss of that one coin. Hence the loss of one of the ten coins gives rise to a diligent search by the owner. That is why finding it leads her to call her friends and neighbors to rejoice with her.

The woman represents more the personal work of the Holy Spirit in people's hearts than the work of Christ that is seen in previous history. In accordance with the position of the woman according to God's thoughts, the Spirit has taken a position of submission, of activity in the background or in the hidden.

A lost coin is a lifeless thing. That is a suitable example to express what a lost sinner is according to the thoughts of the Spirit of God. It represents a human being who is spiritually a dead thing with just as little strength to go back as the lost coin. Therefore the silver coin gives us a fitting picture of the sinner, who does not have the least power to return to God (Eph 2:1). The sinner is utterly hopeless. Only the Holy Spirit can do something here. He lights a lamp in the dark heart of the sinner. In the work of the woman we see the work of the Spirit.

The woman does not simply accept that she lost her coin. She lights a lamp and sweeps the house and searches carefully until she finds the coin. The lamp represents the testimony of the Word of God. The Spirit is especially characterized by activity and in His work He uses the Word. Therefore it says here that the lamp is lit.

But that's not all. The woman sweeps the house and searches carefully until she finds the coin. There is love that goes to great lengths, that takes away obstacles and works carefully and searches thoroughly. If she had not searched so thoroughly and persistently, the coin would never have been found. Thus, the Spirit of God is tirelessly busy to find and bring to life a lost and dead sinner. By finding the lost coin the collection of coins is complete again.

In addition to the possibility, already mentioned, that it is about a decoration, it can also be an heirloom or a wedding gift. In any case, the purpose is to make it clear that the lost silver coin has a special value in the eyes of

the woman. We also see this in the joy that the finding of the coin causes in the woman. She wants to share that joy with her friends and neighbors. It depicts the joy of the Holy Spirit when a sinner repents. This joy that arises when a sinner repents is the joy of God. It is joy “in the presence of” the angels, not “with” the angels. What is their presence, what do they see? They see the joy of *God* over a converted sinner.

Lk 15:11 | Two Sons

| *11 And He said, “A man had two sons.*

After a hundred sheep, of which one goes astray, and ten silver coins, of which a woman loses one, now we see two sons, of whom one leaves his father. In this history we see in the younger son the depths in which the sinner has ended up and the height to which he is brought when he repents. The older son represents the spirit of the Pharisees and the scribes. In these two sons we have the two extreme cases of being lost which therefore include all other cases. In the younger son we see the tax collectors and sinners, in the older son the Pharisees and the scribes.

Although this parable is applicable to all people, the Lord speaks primarily of Israelites. They are in a special relationship with God. They are called “the sons of the LORD your God” (Deu 14:1). In the application, this especially concerns all those who occupy a position of privilege, such as children of believing parents. In the two sons we see the two ways that children who have been raised in a privileged position can go.

Lk 15:12-16 | The Younger Son Leaves His Father

| *12 The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.’ So he divided his wealth between them. 13 And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living. 14 Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be impoverished. 15 So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. 16 And he would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving [anything] to him.*

The younger son is the picture of the sinner who claims his share of life to live it the way he wants. By asking his share of the estate from his father while the father is still living, the younger son essentially declares his father dead. The father does not try to change his son's mind, but gives each of his two sons their share.

Thus God has given every human being the responsibility to do with his life what he wants. Then it will become clear how someone wants to live his life. There is no clearer way to deny God than to give preference to one's own will over that of God. This own will makes it clear that someone wants to live apart from God. It reveals the desire to follow one's own way at a great distance from God. This is without doubt the root of all sins. Sin against men will surely follow, but sin against God is the primary cause.

Man is put to the test. He is responsible, but in fact he is not prevented from doing his own will. God maintains control only to carry out His own gracious plans. Yet it seems as if God allows man to do what he wants. Only then will it become clear what sin means, what the heart seeks, what man with all his pretensions is.

The younger son is as guilty when he asks the share of his father's estate as when he sits with the swine. He has already said good-bye to his father in his heart before he actually leaves. Then we see in him, that at the moment man leaves God, he sells himself to satan. Not only do we get a description of a sinful way of life, but we also see the bitter end. Giving in to sin brings misery and distress. A void is created that nothing and nobody can fill. The selfish waste of all his wealth only makes him feel this emptiness all the more.

When in extreme despair he goes to one of the citizens of that country to ask for help, we see the degeneration of the sinner. There is no love, but selfishness. The citizen does not treat him as a fellow citizen, but as a slave. There is no slavery as deep and humiliating as being a slave to our own lusts. He is treated accordingly. How must it have sounded in the ears of a Jew that this younger son was sent to the field to feed the *swine*? He sinks to the low point of want and misery. Yet nobody gives him anything.

The lack does not yet drive him back, but leads him to seek resources in the country of satan, in what that country can give. How many souls feel

the famine in which they have brought themselves, the emptiness of all that surrounds them, without any desire for God or holiness. There is a desire in them to degrading things in sin. Satan, however, gives nothing, but takes everything. Only God is the Giver. He has proven this in the greatest Gift, which is the gift of His own Son.

Lk 15:17-19 | The Younger Son Comes to His Senses

17 But when he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! 18 I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men."'

At the bottom of his misery he comes to himself. This is the beginning of the return. Around him everything is gone. He only has himself. Now that he no longer has any distractions, he starts thinking about home. He remembers what he has turned his back on. He left his father's house as a son and now is with the swine in the greatest misery, while his father's hired men have no shortage of anything.

Where the Spirit of God works, we always find two things: the conscience is convinced of sin and the heart is attracted by God's love. This is the revelation of God to the heart. God is light and God is love. As light He works in the heart the conviction of his lost condition. As love there is the attraction of His goodness. The result is true confession.

The prodigal son makes a decision: he will go back to his father. He does more than just decide to go back. He sees that he has sinned, both against heaven and Him Who dwells therein and against his father. The life of a sinner is contrary to the life lived in heaven by angels who only do what God says. In his inner being the son is convinced of his sins and is prepared to confess them openly. By his willingness to stand up, he has already acknowledged before God that he has sinned.

He also realizes that he has lost all rights to be still accepted as son. This is the work of God's Spirit. He is truly broken and contrite of spirit. He wants to take the place of a hired man. If he could take it, he would be satisfied with it. The desire was good, but legalistic because of unfamiliarity with

grace. That is how many Christians live. They are only concerned with themselves and still have so little awareness of what lives in the Father's heart. It is not about what *we* want, but about what *the Father* wants. That is so impressive in this part of the parable. It is not about what the son wants, but about what the father does.

The Father proceeds according to the fullness of grace that is in His heart for lost sons. God's desire is not satisfied by giving lost sons the place of a hired man at the doorstep of His house. He wants *sons* in the area and atmosphere of His house. Many Christians have no awareness of what sonship to the pleasure of the Father's will is (Eph 1:5). There is no peace by return alone. True peace comes when we get to know the Father's thoughts about us.

Lk 15:20-24 | Return and Acceptance

20 So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion [for him], and ran and embraced him and kissed him. 21 And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' 22 But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; 23 and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; 24 for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' And they began to celebrate.

The younger son adds his deed to his word. He gets up and comes to his father. Many Christians say they have sinned. They also sincerely see that they are not worthy of being accepted by God. However, there is no getting up, but a lingering in the misery. That is a dishonor for the Father. Then there is no confidence that the Father is ready to receive. There may still be so much doubt, but thinking of the Father's goodness will make someone get up to come to the Father.

The father does not act with his son according to what he deserved, but according to his father heart. The father has never let go of him in his heart. His heart has gone with his son. He stood on the lookout. The word "a long way off" in verse 20 is the same word as "distant country" in verse 13. The father saw his son there and waited until he returned.

When the father sees his son approaching in the distance, he is moved with compassion. Then he runs to go to his son. In the picture we see here that God is in a hurry in a positive sense, which is the only time in the Bible. Without any reproach the father embraces him and kisses him, he covers him with kisses. The father never did that with one of his hired men. This is a welcome that suits a son! Thus is God for every sinner who repents and comes to Him.

The son starts to say what he had intended, but does not go beyond the first words. Further speaking is made impossible by the father because he does not let him speak further. Before the son can say “make me one of your hired men”, the father acts with him according to his father heart. The position of the father determines that of the son. The love that has received him as son, also wants him to enter the house as son and in a way as the son of such a father must be. The father has slaves. The son is not one of them. The father makes his slaves his son’s servants.

The son stands there in his dirty, torn clothes. It is not clothing befitting a son and it is not clothing befitting the father’s house. The father has a robe hanging ready that fits his house. The slaves are ready to put this robe on the prodigal son. The father only has to instruct his slaves to get the best robe and put it on him. The slaves do not have to ask where it hangs. It’s hanging ready for the son.

When we came to God, we also came in our clothes tainted by sin, but God has provided new clothes. For us it was already hanging ready before the foundation of the world. He has clothed us with Christ. He has made us acceptable in the Beloved (Eph 1:6). Clothed with Christ we enter the Father’s house as righteousness of God in Him (2Cor 5:21). That is the best robe, the robe of heaven.

The son also receives a ring on his hand as a sign of a special honor and dignity, as we see with Joseph (Gen 41:42). He also gets sandals on his feet. His feet are shod with the gospel of peace (Eph 6:15). He is in the Father’s house with the perfect peace in his heart that has been brought to him in the gospel to remain there forever as son (Jn 8:35). Sandals characterize our walk as sons of God.

The son receives much more than he had before he left. Thus the New Testament slaves of God tell the converted sinner what he has received in Christ. We see that with Paul who wants to present every man complete in Christ (Col 1:28). He not only preached repentance, but also taught the Word of God to all who repented.

Finally, the father orders to bring the fattened calf to kill it and then eat it and celebrate. He does not say: Let *him* eat, but: “Let *us* eat.” A meal is prepared to eat together, to share in all the blessings that the son is now allowed to share with the father. That happens in joy.

The fattened calf is a picture of the Lord Jesus Who was slain for our sins. In this Gospel we see Him as the peace offering. He is the slain Lamb and around Him all believers, all the sons of the Father, may rejoice together with the Father about the blessings of the Father. The Lamb has given the Father the opportunity to show all His benefits, all His pleasures in man, to man. The joy consists of having a common part in the sacrifice of Christ. That gives the bond of fellowship with the Father and the Son and with each other.

The father speaks of his son as “this son of mine”. He does have another son, but “this” son was “dead and has come to live again”. That is presented in the history of the lost and found silver coin. It shows that something has happened *in* him. “This son” was also “lost and has been found”. That is presented in the history of the lost and found sheep. That shows that something has happened *to* him. Both aspects are always present at a conversion.

The result is a celebration without end. What gives peace and characterizes our position according to grace are not the feelings that have worked in our hearts, although they are truly present, but the feelings of God Himself. Nor is it written now, as in the other two cases, that there is *joy in heaven*, but we see what the effect is on earth, both in that one person and in the hearts of others.

Lk 15:25-30 | The Older Son

25 “Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 And he summoned one of the servants

and [began] inquiring what these things could be. 27 And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has received him back safe and sound.' 28 But he became angry and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and [began] pleading with him. 29 But he answered and said to his father, 'Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours; and [yet] you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends; 30 but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.'

The father also has another son. While his brother comes home and is warmly welcomed by his father, that son is busy in the field. When his work is done, he goes home. When he is close to the house, he hears music and dance. The house is a place of joy.

When we come together as an assembly, we experience what it is like to be in the 'house of God'. There the Word of God is ministered by slaves of God. What we hear in the house when we hear God's Word sounds like the melodious music of grace. The reaction to this will be the joyous dance of the members of the household. The Lord has reproached His contemporaries for not having responded to the tones of the music of His grace with expressions of joy in a dance (Lk 7:31-32). He brought heavenly music to earth in the melodious words of grace, but there was no answer. The house of God is a place where servants play the flute and where those present react with joy. How often, however, is there only criticism.

That resembles the remarks of the older son. The older son needs to know what is going on. Instead of going inside, to his father, he asks one of the servants outside what that music and dance can mean. He understands nothing of the manifestations of grace. He is a tightened man who knows no joy in the Lord. He abhors cheerfulness. That is the mind of the Pharisees and the scribes who see how the Lord Jesus eats with sinners. The servant knows exactly what the reason of the joy is. His brother has come back safe and sound. His father is so happy about this that he has killed the fattened calf. The servant draws attention to the fattened calf as the center of the feast.

The younger son is inside, the older son is outside. There he stays because he doesn't want to go inside. He is outside and stays outside because his heart is outside his father's house. The older son is a type of religious man who does not grant the grace to others. The older son becomes angry, while the father celebrates. There was and is no fellowship between the father and this son. He does not breathe the spirit of love shown to the returned prodigal son. Grace is something strange to him and so he does not share in its joy. He pursued his own interests.

He was undoubtedly zealous and intelligent 'in the field', in the world, far away from the scene of Divine mercy and spiritual joy. Yet the father, in his love for him, goes outside to encourage him to also come inside. The father's love also goes out to him. But the older son repulses his father and his love for him with heavy accusations. He is brutal enough to condemn his father, just as the self-righteous man does not hesitate to judge God.

In the thoughts of the unbelieving, but very religious, legal man, God is hard and demanding. He is completely blind to all the favors of God; his heart and conscience are totally insensitive. With all was joy, except for man in his own righteousness, the Jew, of whom the older son is a picture. People who live in their own righteousness, legal people, can't tolerate the fact that God is good to sinners, because if God is good to sinners, what then benefits their righteousness?

The older son accuses his father of never giving him a young goat to celebrate with his friends, even though he has served his father for so long and flawlessly. With these statements, the older son shows that he has no affection for his father. He has only acted out of duty, as a servant. He has lived according to the rules, leading him to judge of himself that he has done so blamelessly. His self-righteousness is obvious.

The fact that he has no affection for his father is also evident from his accusation that he would have liked to celebrate with his friends at times, but that his father never provided him with a young goat for that. He wanted to celebrate *with* his friends, but *without* his father. He has no eye for the fact that a young goat can only be enjoyed in the father's house and *together* with the father.

It is clear what an aversion he has to grace and the way grace works. He does not call the prodigal son his brother, as the servant he had addressed did, but speaks scornful of “this son of yours”. He also makes it seem as if his brother has consumed all his father’s wealth, while it was the part that the father had given him. He also knows how that wealth was consumed, namely with prostitutes. The father’s conduct in grace for his younger brother brings out the worst side in the older brother in every respect.

Lk 15:31-32 | An Urgent Appeal

31 And he said to him, ‘Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours. 32 But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and [has begun] to live, and [was] lost and has been found.’”

The father does not defend himself against the reproaches of his older son. He also does not defend his younger son against the charges of his older son. He also has patience with his older son and acts in grace. The Lord Jesus addresses the Pharisees and the scribes. He also wants to have them inside, in the house of the Father. That is why He tells how the father reacts.

The father shows to his older son what he has. What the father says also applies to the whole people of Israel toward God. The father calls him ‘son’ to emphasize the intimate relationship. He also points out to him the place of blessing close to him, a place that has always been his share. Finally, the father reminds him that everything he owns, also belongs to him. This is the place that the Jew took under the law.

It is also the same position taken by every unconverted person in professing Christianity who tries to live a religious life and walks according to the flesh. That is exactly how the natural men in our continent think and speak. The Jews undoubtedly had the most important place, the only place God claimed on earth. All other lands God had given to the children of men, but He had reserved His land for Israel. He had brought them to Himself by an external redemption and put them under the law.

The same is true in principle of every human being who is full of his own righteousness. He tries in his own way to do good and serve God, while he is insensitive to the truth that he needs mercy and redemptive grace.

The father tells his older son that there is reason for joy and celebration, namely the return of his brother. He wishes his older son to share in it. But only those who have become the object of God's searching and receiving love share in that joy. Such a person sees that God Himself rejoices in the joy of grace and shares it with others. "And indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1Jn 1:3). The father, like the servant before him, speaks about his younger son as "brother" of his older son. He emphasizes it by saying "this brother of yours".

The older son has neither an eye nor a heart for the fact that it's about someone who is in the same relationship with his father as he is. God does not tolerate that the real relationships between them are denied. Therefore, the final judgment on Jews comes not only because of their gross ingratitude to God, but also because of their aversion to the grace He has shown to poor Gentiles in their misery and sin. This is powerfully expressed by the apostle Paul (1Thes 2:16). They could not bear that others, those dogs from the nations, would hear the gospel of grace. They were so proud of the law that they despised grace for themselves.

Luke 16

Lk 16:1-7 | The Unjust Steward³

1 Now He was also saying to the disciples, "There was a rich man who had a manager, and this [manager] was reported to him as squandering his possessions. 2 And he called him and said to him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an accounting of your management, for you can no longer be manager.' 3 The manager said to himself, 'What shall I do, since my master is taking the management away from me? I am not strong enough to dig; I am ashamed to beg. 4 I know what I shall do, so that when I am removed from the management people will welcome me into their homes.' 5 And he summoned each one of his master's debtors, and he [began] saying to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' 6 And he said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' And he said to him, 'Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.' 7 Then he said to another, 'And how much do you owe?' And he said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.'

The Lord is going to teach His disciples about management, or better, stewardship ["manager" is "steward", Darby Translation] and thus about the place that every person has before God. It is in line with what He has shown about sonship in the previous chapter. Sonship is a thing that is enjoyed in the house of the Father on earth. Stewardship suggests another side. A son is a steward outside the house on earth.

This teaching connects to the squandering by the younger son of his father's possessions. There we have seen the grace of God for someone as the younger son. In what follows, we see the responsibility of sons on earth. In the previous chapter the Lord speaks to the Pharisees, for He wants to make clear to them why not they, but sinners share in grace. Here the Lord speaks to His disciples.

The rich man is a picture of God. The steward is a picture of each of us because we are all stewards. We also have all been unfaithful to God in the stewardship of what He has entrusted to us. What the younger son did, all people did in general, but the Jews in particular. After all, they have been

given the highest privileges and, as a result, greater responsibility. The Jews have been entrusted with more than anyone else, and they are rightly accused of squandering their Master's goods.

What have they done with what God has entrusted to them? They should have been a light on earth, a guide for the blind, a witness of the true God (Rom 2:17-20), but they turned their backs on Him. If God reveals Himself to them in Christ, they are in that state. And now they are about to reject God Himself in the Person of the Messiah, His Son, the clearest gracious manifestation of God. Thus, in all respects, they have let the opportunities pass by and squandered the goods of their Master.

The squandering behavior of the steward comes to the attention of the rich man. He calls the steward and asks him to account for all his actions, after which he will be removed from his position. The steward sees the seriousness of his situation. He does not protest either, acknowledging that his dismissal is due to himself.

In that mind he speaks to himself. He wonders what to do. Two things that would qualify for him in such a situation both are no option. He cannot dig, he is not strong enough to do that. He is not used to physical labor. He doesn't want to beg either because he is ashamed of that. This means that he is at the mercy of the people around him.

The next question then is how to make them his friends. Then a good plan comes to his mind so he can win people for himself, so that they will treat him with compassion when he is dismissed. He wants to assure himself of food and shelter when he has nothing left, by doing deeds of mercy. What he proposes will be the final act of his stewardship. It is a wise act in view of his situation. He summons each one of his master's debtors individually. He seeks personal contact.

He asks the first who comes, how much he owes his master. The man answers that he still has a hundred measures of oil to pay back. The steward has the authority to reduce that quantity. He also knows the means of the man. Because of the urgency, the man must sit down quickly and may reduce his debt by 50%. The steward remits fifty measures of oil. That will have meant an enormous relief for the debtor and how grateful he will be to the steward.

Then the next one may come. To the question of what he owes his master, the answer is: hundred measures of wheat. The steward allows this man to apply a 20% discount on his debt. He also knows this debtor. He doesn't just remit the whole debt and not to everyone the same amount. He acts shrewdly.

He deals with his master's goods with the greatest generosity. That will undoubtedly cost him little or nothing, but that is also not the lesson of the parable. The lesson is that the steward acts with an eye to the future to secure shelter and food. The Lord Jesus is going to explain this.

Lk 16:8-13 | The Lesson

8 And his master praised the unrighteous manager because he had acted shrewdly; for the sons of this age are more shrewd in relation to their own kind than the sons of light. 9 And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by means of the wealth [literally: mammon] of unrighteousness, so that when it fails, they will receive you into the eternal dwellings. 10 "He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much. 11 Therefore if you have not been faithful in the [use of] unrighteous wealth [literally: mammon], who will entrust the true [riches] to you? 12 And if you have not been faithful in [the use of] that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? 13 No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth [literally: mammon]."

The steward has used his right to grant debt reduction and has done so with a view to his future. He did act without any consultation with his master. Yet his master praises him for his shrewdness and insight. By dealing with his master's possessions in this way and doing good to others, he has secured future shelter. With his favors and indulgence he has won over these debtors, that they may take him into their homes, when his stewardship has been taken away from him.

What the unfaithful steward has done is to use the present possession over which he had control and the present opportunity with a view to the future. Although he was unjust, he was wise. The behavior of the steward

is the behavior of someone who lives in the world and by circumstances becomes wise in the stewardship of what has been entrusted to him. He had previously been unjust by squandering his master's possessions. Now he is dealing with them wisely.

Unfortunately, the Lord must say that the believers, "the sons of light", are generally not that wise. Those who are certain of a future with the Lord often forget to live with that in mind. "The sons of this age", the unbelievers, are often more shrewd. They set themselves a goal and do everything in their power to achieve it. They save and deny themselves current benefits to be able to buy whatever they want later. They train and deny themselves all kinds of pleasures to be able to deliver a top performance in the future. They study intensively and do not go out to have a good job in the future.

The Lord connects to the actions of the unjust steward the lesson for His disciples that they will use their money and goods to make friends with them for the future. The Lord calls the money "the unjust mammon". 'Mammon' is an Aramaic word for 'wealth, money', and is presented here as a person.

The love of money, the craving for riches, is "a root of all sorts of evil" (1Tim 6:9-10). Money is always coveted and misused by the people of the world, and also to many believers money has a great attraction. For disciples of the Lord, it is a means to make friends with it. We do this by giving it away. Then we show that our hearts are not attached to it. We show that we see the relativity of it. Money and possessions can escape us just like that (Pro 23:4-5) and if we die, we cannot take anything with us (1Tim 6:7).

What goes beyond this is that the way we deal with our money determines where we will be in eternity. The Lord Jesus speaks of "the eternal dwellings", which are the dwellings in heaven. It's not about perishing if we misuse our money once. It's about the way we deal with our money which shows what our life is focused on. The Christian's life is focused on the future. If someone who professes to be a Christian lives for here and now and uses everything for himself, he shows that he is not born again. Even if he occasionally gives away something, it is only to reassure his own conscience and not the result of thinking about the future.

The Lord connects to His teaching some important principles. First and foremost, it is about faithfulness. Our faithfulness is tested in our dealings with “a very little thing”, which are the earthly things, like money and possessions. If someone is faithful in this, he will also be faithful in “much”, these are the many spiritual blessings that a believer has received. Conversely, whoever is unjust in earthly things is also unjust in spiritual things.

If we are not faithful in the stewardship of the unrighteous mammon or wealth, the money, we cannot be entrusted with the “true”, that is, the spiritual riches. The money is “that which is another’s”. Everything we have received we have received from God and He asks us to be accountable for it. It is about borrowed goods. If we treat it as if it were our own, we use it wrong. How then will we get what really belongs to us, which is “your own”?

By “your own” the Lord means the spiritual blessings God has in His heart to give to those who give their life to Him with all that goes with it. Also the spiritual blessings belong to God, but He gives them to us forever. He does not *lend* us the spiritual blessings, but *grants* them to us. Every man is God’s property with all that he possesses. We get our life and our property on loan. Our dealing with money shows whether we are aware of this.

Then the question is not what we will give to the Lord, but what we may use for ourselves, for everything belongs to the Lord. Whoever is aware of this will receive “the true”, “your own”. In this light, the importance of earthly wealth is completely lost. For those who realize this, it is already gone, for they are in possession of their true riches that cannot escape them.

The Lord concludes His teaching on this subject with the truth that no servant can serve two masters. It simply cannot be done. If he does, the one or the other one falls short. The masters are not equal parties, but each other’s opposites. God and the god of money are opposite each other. Whoever thinks he can serve God and at the same time live the life of a rich fool (Lk 12:16-20), indicates that he hates God and loves the money. We either hate God or the money. It is impossible to love a little bit the One *and* to love a little bit the other.

Lk 16:14-18 | The Lesson for the Pharisees

14 Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, were listening to all these things and were scoffing at Him. 15 And He said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God. 16 "The Law and the Prophets [were proclaimed] until John; since that time the gospel of the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it. 17 But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail. 18 "Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries one who is divorced from a husband commits adultery.

The word of the Lord has also entered the ears of the Pharisees, and their conscience has been irritated by it. These people are lovers of money. If you are a lover of money, you do not feel comfortable with the teaching the Lord has just given. The money loving Pharisees have a completely different view on money. They are looking for a lot of money and even misuse certain statutes of God by distorting them so that they themselves benefit (Mt 15:3-5). By their distorting of God's Word they even eat up the houses of the widows (Lk 20:47).

They express their resistance to the Lord's teaching by scoffing at Him. These people are hardened by their love for money and insensitive to the Lord's teaching. He exposes their hearts, which He knows. He is God. He sees through them completely as people who are lovers of money, and who are only righteous in appearance. Everything they do, they do before the eyes of the people to gain prestige among them.

But what is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God. God sees how these people give alms on the corners of the streets to be honored by the people. He also sees what they keep in their pockets and how they secretly increase their treasures. Their lust for the honor of men robs God of the honor to which He is entitled. It also deprives man of the place of blessing and plunges him into ruin instead.

With what the Lord then says about the law, He indicates how false their accusation is that He does not take the law seriously. He refers to the law and the prophets as a period that lasted until John. With the coming of

John another period has come, the period when the kingdom of God is proclaimed. The Lord has proclaimed the kingdom as imminent, but He has been rejected and thus the kingdom in its public form has been postponed.

Yet, the kingdom is still proclaimed as a kingdom that can be entered by persons. Instead of a kingdom that is established with power, power is now needed to enter it. To enter the kingdom of God you need the power of faith. Someone who wants to be part of it, gives up his life to God and puts himself under the authority of a rejected King.

Anyone who makes this decision will encounter a great deal of opposition. Whoever enters in the power of faith may share in the blessing that that kingdom already has in it for everyone who is in it. It is the kingdom of the Son of the Father's love (Col 1:13), where everything speaks of the Father's love for the Son.

The fact that the kingdom is introducing a new order of affairs does not mean that the law no longer has any meaning. Everything that is written in the law, including the prophets, will be fulfilled down to the smallest detail. None of it remains unfulfilled. Even more easily heaven and earth would pass away than the smallest part of God's Word would lose its meaning.

To illustrate the truth of His words about the law, the Lord refers to the institution of marriage and the deviation from it. He points to the law, as God in the deepest essence purposed it for His kingdom, and points to the indissolubility of marriage as an example.

There is no clearer example that shows the Pharisees that they themselves manipulate the law, which also makes it clear how foolish it is to accuse Him of not taking the law seriously. The Jews had made it easy for someone who wanted to divorce his wife and then it was just as easy to marry another one. They called upon Moses who had written that you could divorce your wife if only a certificate of divorce was given. The Lord says that this opportunity has been given in view of the hardness of their hearts (Mt 19:7-8).

He Himself brings forward God's original meaning of the law and refers to what God said in the beginning. In light of the true meaning of the law,

entering into a second marriage means committing adultery, for to God the first marriage continues as long as husband and wife live (Rom 7:3). A marriage is annulled only by death (Rom 7:2). The same goes for someone who marries a woman who has been divorced from a husband. He is not allowed to marry her, because she is married as long as her husband lives.

Lk 16:19-21 | A Rich and a Poor Man on Earth

19 "Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day. 20 And a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores, 21 and longing to be fed with the [crumbs] which were falling from the rich man's table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores.

In this history, the Lord reveals a glimpse of the veil that lies over the hereafter. It is not a parable. In no parable does He mention names of persons. He does so here. He mentions the name of Lazarus and also that of Abraham, who to Him is a living one (Lk 20:37-38). He speaks in omniscience of a situation He knows.

First He presents the situation on earth. There was a rich man. This man was doing very well and he enjoyed it very much. His clothing looked beautiful, like a prince. That's how he behaved. To this man, life on earth was one great feast that he enjoyed every day to the fullest. He had everything that can be bought with money.

The name of the man is not mentioned. He did not do well with his money, opposite to what the unrighteous steward did in the previous section, but used everything for himself. In doing so, he closed the access to "the eternal dwellings" for himself. Not that anyone can buy heaven, but he can show by his way of dealing with his earthly possessions what he lives for. It is not about a wicked, debauched life, but a question of the orientation of life. There is no indication whatsoever that he was focused on God, for he had no eye for his poor neighbor who was laid at his gate. He did not love his neighbor as himself.

The contrast with the poor man who was laid at his gate, Lazarus, was great. This man looked hideous. He had nothing to eat and no medicine for his sores. He looked with longing at the wealth of the rich man's table.

If only he would have had what fell from the table to the ground, he could eat himself full. No, the dogs were better off than he was. They could saturate themselves with what fell from the rich man's table (Mt 15:27). The dogs did come to lick his sores and gave him some relief from the pain.

The rich possessed everything except God. Poor Lazarus had nothing except God. This is evident from the meaning of his name. Lazarus – the Greek version of the Hebrew name 'Eleazar' – means 'God is my help'. There is nothing else to show that he was in connection with God. His whole position on earth seems to contradict this. It seems rather the other way around. In Israel, the position on earth was proof of God's favor or of God's displeasure. The rich man must have been in God's favor in a special way and Lazarus must have had displeased God in a special way. The Lord Jesus shows us that things are not like that, but that it is about the eternal dwellings.

Lk 16:22-26 | The Reversed Roles After Death

22 Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. 23 In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. 24 And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.' 25 But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. 26 And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and [that] none may cross over from there to us.'

Life on earth, however beautiful, is finite. The moment of death comes irrevocably. Then it turns out that the contrast between the rich and the poor is much greater than it was on earth. The poor dies. For him this means a transition from misery on earth to a wonderful place. The angels take him up and carry him into the bosom of Abraham (Heb 1:14), a place of pure blessing and joy and pleasure. This must have sounded very remarkable in the ears of the Pharisees.

The rich also dies. Then the enormous contrast is revealed. He dies and is buried. There are no angels, and even less there is the bosom of Abraham, the place that every Jew coveted. As soon as he has closed his eyes on earth, he opens them in Hades and immediately experiences the pains of that place. Except that, he sees “far away”, that is, seen from the place where he is, Abraham, and Lazarus in his bosom. It is one of the torments of hell to see the place of blessing from that place, which is far from the blessing, and to remember that one could have been there and also to be aware that one could never get there. That is the worm that does not die, the eternal remorse.

The rich is fully aware of his situation of pain. He does not think of his sins, but of his misery. He also does not ask to be freed from it. In hell, there is no change of mind. He who did not desire God on earth, and did not love Him, does not desire God in hell either, nor does he love Him there. There is no one in hell who begs God to be saved from it. The only thing the rich man is looking for is a little bit of cooling for his tongue, which could soften the pains a bit.

He asks Abraham to send Lazarus to him with some water at the top of his finger. On earth he did not look after Lazarus. He would not have thought of asking a favor from someone like Lazarus. The thought alone would have been disgusting. Now he begs for a favor from Lazarus! Egoism brings a person to deeds he would not have thought of in other circumstances. In the hereafter, earthly reality is seen in its true light.

Abraham answers the rich man that his request is not granted. Hell is the place of people’s lusts and desires for the least that they had on earth, but which will never be fulfilled. The answer shows that the roles, compared to the situation on earth, have been reversed completely. Abraham calls him “child”, reminding him of the privilege he had on earth to belong to the chosen people of God.

Abraham reminds him of his life, how he had received the good in it. The rich, who is now the poor, sees his richly filled tables and his life of celebrations before him again. Abraham also reminds him of Lazarus who received bad things there. The man also sees Lazarus lying at his gate with dogs around him licking his sores. He did not look after him. Everything

the rich man has denied to Lazarus, Lazarus now receives. And everything the rich in his egoism had no eye or heart for, he receives now.

Moreover, we should not think that the rich receives the pains as punishment for his richness. He has not entered the place of pain because of his wealth, but because of his egoism, for living only for himself. He was a steward who consumed the possessions of his Lord and did not care about “the eternal dwellings”. He has never gone to God with his sins, he has never confessed his selfishness. He never acknowledged that all the riches he “received”, so Abraham says, in his life came from God. Everything was his own. All the others, like Lazarus, could watch, but they got nothing from it.

Just as the rich man does not receive the punishment only because he was rich, thus Lazarus also receives the comfort in the hereafter not only because he was poor and rejected on earth. As said, Lazarus means ‘God is my help’. In his life on earth he has shown the meaning of his name. Lazarus did not revolt against God because of his fate. It could easily have happened, but he continued to rely on God. He had nothing but God on earth, and He has nothing else in glory.

Abraham speaks of comfort for Lazarus, not of blessing, although it is all blessing there. Comfort is a provision for someone who has suffered a lot and who now receives relief and a way out. The suffering is over for Lazarus and he now enjoys the opposite. By the way, it is clear from what both the rich and Lazarus consciously experience that the doctrine of soul sleep is a false doctrine.

Abraham goes on to point out that it is impossible to change places in the hereafter. He speaks of a great chasm between the place of pain and the place of comfort and blessing. The doctrine of purgatory – an intermediate state of purification in the hereafter, after which someone still enters heaven – is a gross deception. Purgatory is a roman-catholic, devilish invention. It is impossible to make a change in the place one is in after death (Ecc 11:3).

Lk 16:27-31 | Repentance Only Through the Word of God

27 And he said, ‘Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my father’s house — 28 for I have five brothers—in order that he may warn them, so that

*they will not also come to this place of torment.’ 29 But Abraham *said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’ 30 But he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!’ 31 But he said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.’”*

Then we hear something from the man that he never showed on earth: care for other people. If Lazarus can't come to him, let him go to his family to warn them. Lazarus must earnestly testify to his brothers, so that they will escape the terrible thing that is his part. This request cannot be granted either. Hell is the place of unanswered prayers. There is a lot of begging in hell, but there will never come anything from hell that means blessing to the earth. The time to beg is over, it is too late. Begging belongs to life on earth, not to hell.

Abraham refers to Moses and the prophets. His brothers are not without witnesses. They can read God's Word, as he could have done in his life on earth. While the Lord cites the words of Abraham from the hereafter, the Pharisees are standing by, who know and use the law and do not listen to it. It is an indication for them to really go and listen to Moses and the prophets, because then they will escape that terrible place.

The man thinks he knows better and wants to convince Abraham that they will repent if anyone from the dead goes to them. Abraham repeats that the only thing that can convince someone of his sins is the Word of God. The biggest wonder doesn't bring someone to repentance.

Shortly after the Lord tells this story, a man also called Lazarus stands up from the dead indeed when He calls him. Many brothers of the rich man have come to see the one who is raised (Jn 12:9). With what result? That they come to faith? No. On the contrary, instead of repenting, at least the ruler, and also the chief priests, deliberate that they should also kill the risen Lazarus as well as Him Who by the power of His resurrection aroused their deadly hatred against Himself (Jn 12:10-11). There is no question of them being persuaded and listening to Moses and the prophets.

So it is when the Lord has died and risen. Then they bribe the soldiers who stood on watch at the tomb. Those soldiers must spread the lie about His resurrection that He was not risen, but that His disciples stole His body

(Mt 28:11-15). The only light for an ignorant, the only testimony that brings eternal life to the dead sinner, is the Word of God if it is accepted in faith.

Luke 17

Lk 17:1-4 | Stumbling Blocks

1 He said to His disciples, "It is inevitable that stumbling blocks come, but woe to him through whom they come! 2 It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea, than that he would cause one of these little ones to stumble. 3 Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. 4 And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' forgive him."

The Lord warns His disciples of coming stumbling blocks. He says this in view of the Pharisees who are still among His audience. These are the people who do not listen to Moses and the prophets, but to their own interpretations of them. However, they do appeal to Moses and the prophets and that makes them so dangerous. Therefore the Lord warns His disciples of those who cause people to stumble.

He foretells them that there will be no escape from situations in which they will face great temptations and deceptions that will test their faith in Him. If their eyes of faith are not constantly focused on Him, they will stumble and will follow such deceivers.

The Lord addresses His disciples in their responsibility. The words "woe to him through whom they come" are especially addressed to the religious leaders, who will try to prevent the disciples to follow a rejected Lord in His kingdom. He judges sharp about people who seem to serve God, but who are deceivers of those who want to follow Him in simple faith.

The Lord does not think only of the religious leaders. He also warns the disciples that they have to take care of themselves. A disciple is also capable of doing wrong things and can become a stumbling block for someone else. It is no excuse when we say that the other person is weak when he stumbles because of our behavior. It is precisely because this other person is weak that this must be a reason to help him and to make sure that we do not bring him to sin.

The stumbling block the Lord points to here, is the lack of willingness to go to a brother who sins. If we don't go to him, the sinning brother is encouraged to think that sin doesn't matter, and what will he fall into then?

Another stumbling block is that we do not forgive a brother who has sinned against us. If we tell others in detail about the sin that has been committed, it will be a stumbling block or blockade for forgiveness and restoration. We should not tell others what happened, but rebuke the brother in love. True brotherly love will convince the other of his sin, for through his sin the brother is not in fellowship with God, but in the power of satan.

If there is repentance, he must forgive his brother. He must let him know that it is good between him and God and between each other through his confession (1Jn 1:9) and let him know this by having brotherly contact with him again (cf. 2Cor 2:8). Cooled relationships by a done, but also confessed sin blocks real forgiveness.

Another stumbling block is to set a limit to forgiveness. The Lord points this out when He speaks of sinning "seven times". The number, seven times, indicates that the other is completely wrong. The fact that everything happens in one day makes the test even greater. It is clear, however, that humanly speaking it is a hopeless case. Forgiveness does not seem to make any sense.

Then let us remember that in His indefatigable grace, God is thus dealing with us. If it weren't so, it would be completely hopeless for us, not only when we were still in our sins, but also now as believers. In the same way as God has dealt and acted with us, we must also deal with our brother.

Lk 17:5-10 | Unworthy Slaves

5 The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" 6 And the Lord said, "If you had faith like a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and be planted in the sea'; and it would obey you. 7 "Which of you, having a slave plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come immediately and sit down to eat'? 8 But will he not say to him, 'Prepare something for me to eat, and [properly] clothe yourself and serve me while I eat and drink; and afterward you may eat and drink'? 9 He does not thank the slave because he did the things which were commanded, does he? 10

So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy slaves; we have done [only] that which we ought to have done.'"

What the Lord has said about forgiveness every time there has been sinned and repentance is expressed about it, is followed by the question of the apostles to increase their faith. They feel that to be able to act like this, they need a lot of faith.

Luke here changes the form of address from disciples to "apostles". They are the spiritual leaders in the kingdom. They must set an example in these things. It is precisely in this place of responsibility that it is important to be humble, to be the least, to be the servant of all. It may also have to do with the special authority that the apostles have received from the Lord to forgive sins (Jn 20:23). This has nothing to do with forgiveness of sins for eternity. That forgiveness can only be given by God on the basis of the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross and faith therein.

For the earth there is a forgiveness that people can give to others. First, if it is a sin against someone personally, as has been suggested by the Lord before. Secondly, more generally when it comes to sins that have not been committed against someone personally or sins that can no longer be confessed to the person against whom they have been committed. Then a person can discharge the burden of his conscience to a believer who lives with the Lord. The believer can assure him on the basis of God's Word that God forgives sins when there is repentance.

The Lord shows that it is not the *quantity* of faith that matters, but whether it is *living* faith. A mustard seed is small, but it is alive. If there is living faith, it is capable of supernatural things. The Lord does not say that by faith we should uproot a mulberry tree and then plant it in the sea. What He wants to teach us is that we can only be redeemed from our own 'I' by faith. That own 'I' is stuck with its roots deep in our soul. That tree has to get out. This can only be done by faith that focuses on Christ, so that He increases and we start thinking smaller and smaller about ourselves (cf. Jn 3:30).

Then the Lord warns of another danger: that there could be boasting about deeds we have done in faith. If in faith we do not let our own 'I' work and if we have committed deeds of faith, then that is something we could boast

about. To this end, the Lord tells us that we are only slaves engaged in the task given to us. If we have been able to do anything in faith, we should not think that we have made God our Servant, Who, because of our work, will let us directly sit down to eat to enjoy our achievements.

The slave must know his place. He is at his master's complete and constant disposal. When he finishes the work for his master outside, he must continue inside to serve his master. The service to the master is paramount and asks everything. Only when the master's wishes have been fulfilled to his satisfaction the slave can go to eat and drink. That's not hard, it's normal. There is no thanks to the slave. Surely he only did what he was told to do, didn't he? He gets no thanks for that.

Grace in no way weakens our obligations. Certainly, we may know that the Lord will reward all the good we have done for Him. But is He obliged to do so? And that is what this is all about. We are not entitled to anything as slaves of the Lord. Is it not already an enormous privilege to serve such a Lord Who with all the love of His heart has delivered us from the power of darkness and sin at the expense of His own life? What a moderation it would be to assume that He had to reward us for what we do for Him. We owe our life to Him.

When we have done what we should do, we also realize that there was a lot that wasn't as it should have been. It should not be difficult to say in all honesty that we are "unworthy slaves". The progress of the Lord's work is not dependent on us. He works it through us as His slaves. Often we are unwilling or ignorant. That He continues with us is as great a proof of grace as that He ever began with us. He knew what He began when He saved us, and yet He did it. That makes Him so great. For that He is worthy of all worship. This is reflected in the following history.

Lk 17:11-19 | Cleansing of Ten Leprous Men

11 While He was on the way to Jerusalem, He was passing between Samaria and Galilee. 12 As He entered a village, ten leprous men who stood at a distance met Him; 13 and they raised their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" 14 When He saw them, He said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they were going, they were cleansed. 15 Now one of them,

when he saw that he had been healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice, 16 and he fell on his face at His feet, giving thanks to Him. And he was a Samaritan. 17 Then Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine—where are they? 18 Was no one found who returned to give glory to God, except this foreigner?" 19 And He said to him, "Stand up and go; your faith has made you well."

Luke reminds us again that the Lord is on His way to Jerusalem to die there. His route has been determined. On this route are Samaria and Galilee. The disciples are not mentioned. In the history with the ten leprosy men it is about how someone becomes a worshiping disciple.

When the Lord enters a village, He meets ten leprosy men. These men, in accordance with the law of the leper, remain standing at a distance (Lev 13:45-46). But instead of shouting 'unclean, unclean', they call to the Lord that He will have mercy on them. They shout more in their distress than in faith. Yet that is enough to draw His attention to them.

And He does not only hear them; He also sees them. He sees how miserable they are. He does not speak a word of healing, as in a previous case of healing, nor does He touch them (cf. Lk 5:13). He orders them to go to the priests and show themselves to them. He sends them to the priests who will soon condemn Him to death (Mt 26:66; Mk 14:64). His command means as much as 'you are healed'. It would have been useless to have them declared unclean by the priest. They knew that.

They accept the word of the Lord and go away in that conviction and are healed on the way. The Lord, by His command, challenges the faith of these men, while also maintaining the prescriptions of the law for those under the law. The law requires that a person who has been healed from the plague of leprosy, without saying how this healing could happen, will show himself to the priest to be cleansed. This is carefully described in detail in Leviticus 14.

It is an important prescription that these lepers must follow, for thus it becomes a testimony of the power of God now at work on earth. For, of course, the question will arise: How are these lepers healed? This will in this case immediately draw attention to the fact that the Christ of God is present and that He truly reveals the power of God in grace.

They have to go first. They do not see anything on their bodies when they are told to go, but when they go, it happens that they are cleansed. When one of the ten, a Samaritan, sees that he is healed, he does not walk on to the priests. He returns to the Lord, for in Him He has found God. He acknowledges that Christ is the source of God's blessing.

The Samaritan is outside Judaism and therefore not entangled in the traditions with which the Pharisees imprison the people. He is therefore free to go back to the Lord. The other nine could say that he is presumptuous, disobedient, and they are not. For they act according to the word of the Lord and he doesn't do that. He told them clearly that they had to go and show themselves to the priests. However, he is the only one who understands that the Lord Jesus is God. Therefore he goes back to show himself to Him, to throw himself down before Him at His feet and to thank Him. He no longer has to stand at a distance.

The Lord sees the one and asks for the nine others. He has cleansed all ten of them of their leprosy, but the nine have only benefited from His power and are content to remain Jews. They do not leave the old sheepfold, but remain locked up in the legal system. Neither in Him nor in the power of God have they seen anything attractive. After having experienced the advantage of it, they carry on in the same old way. There is no thanks to Him in them.

The Lord asks where they are, a question that still has to be asked today. Where do Christians still come together with the aim of worshiping Him and God for the great work that He accomplished on the cross for their cleansing?

He emphasizes the difference between the nine and the one by asking for it, more by remarking, that only this one stranger gives glory to God. He expresses His disappointment that the nine Jews, the members of His people, did not go to God. At the same time He emphasizes the gratitude of him who stands outside the people of God, but has now in reality become part of them.

The Lord has an additional blessing for the Samaritan, for only he receives the word of salvation ['has made you well' is literally 'has saved you'] from Him, while the nine have only received the announcement of the cleansing

of their leprosy. He no longer says a word about showing themselves to the priest. The Samaritan has found God. In the healing of his leprosy he has experienced the gracious power of God, a power he has recognized in Christ and because of what he has given glory to Him.

Lk 17:20-21 | The Kingdom of God Is in Christ

20 Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; 21 nor will they say, 'Look, here [it is]!' or, 'There [it is]!' For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst."

The Pharisees have a question. They want to know when the kingdom of God will come. They think, they are ready for the kingdom. They think, the question is only when the kingdom will be ready for them. It is a question of blind unbelief. It's like asking for a sign. They have no eyes to see, because they are blind and because they are blind, they do not see the kingdom of God, because it "is not coming with signs to be observed". By this, the Lord means that it does not come in external power and glory.

Yet He has provided an abundance of evidence that the kingdom of God is present among them, because it is present in His Person. However, they do not recognize God's King in Him, although He revealed the true power of the kingdom in the many victories over Satan and over all the consequences of sin in this world. The true power of the kingdom is revealed in the dependent and obedient Man, in the never failing power of God that is working through Him.

They are blind to all of this. They do not appreciate it because they do not appreciate God. As a people they long for what would exalt them and destroy the enemies, but they do not long for what will glorify God and humiliate man. Therefore, the Lord shows them in His answer that, from the time of His rejection until He returns to glory, it is not a matter of "Look, here [it is]!" or, "There [it is]!", but of faith to acknowledge the glory of His Person and to see that the power working in Him is the power of God.

The kingdom of God is in their midst and they do not see it because they do not see Him. They think little of the Lord Jesus. This is the downfall for anyone who hears the testimony, but refuses to accept it.

Luke speaks of the kingdom *of God*, not of the kingdom *of heaven*. Only Matthew speaks of the kingdom of heaven, and he says nowhere, as long as the Lord was on earth, that the kingdom of heaven had come. He does say, however, in accordance with what Luke says here, that the Lord said: “But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Mt 12:28).

The kingdom of *God* was present when Christ was on earth. He proved this by revealing the power of the Spirit in countless victories over satan. The kingdom of *heaven* came only after He went to heaven, and from heaven began His hidden reign over the earth. When He returns in glory, He will exercise that government in public form, and there will be no difference between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven. Then will the kingdom come in power and glory and be established.

Lk 17:22-25 | The Days of the Son of Man

22 And He said to the disciples, “The days will come when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it. 23 They will say to you, ‘Look there! Look here!’ Do not go away, and do not run after [them]. 24 For just like the lightning, when it flashes out of one part of the sky, shines to the other part of the sky, so will the Son of Man be in His day. 25 But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.

The Lord addresses the word to His disciples. For the Pharisees, He has no further information about the kingdom. For His disciples He does have further teaching about the kingdom of God in its future form and even more about the days that precede it. These will be days when they will long for one of those days they enjoyed during the time of the Lord’s presence on earth.

To His disciples He can speak freely about the future form of the kingdom, that is the form to which the thinking of the Pharisees was limited. The disciples had accepted the Lord by faith, and however little insight they might have, they understood that the kingdom of God was among them.

Therefore He can give them Divine light about the future, when He will visibly establish the kingdom.

He warns them not to be deceived. Just before His coming there will be many false christs who present themselves as the promised Messiah. He points out that one will say: "Look there! Look here!" He has just said to the Pharisees that this will not be said (verse 21) because He, the King of God, stood before them in Person.

The Lord gives His disciples insight into the way He comes. They don't have to listen to all kinds of misleading voices, because when He comes, it will be unmistakably clear that it's Him. They don't have to think they should search for Him, as if He will be somewhere in a hidden place. He comes like lightning lightens over the whole earth. Every eye will see Him (Rev 1:7). No one will have to tell another that He is there. His glory and majesty will then be perceptible to all, while His glory can now only be seen by faith (Jn 1:14). Then it is "His day".

Before that, He must first suffer a lot and be rejected by this generation. Their wickedness and rebellion against God must reach their summit. Then comes the judgment.

Lk 17:26-33 | The Days of Noah and of Lot

26 And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: 27 they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. 28 It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building; 29 but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. 30 It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed. 31 On that day, the one who is on the housetop and whose goods are in the house must not go down to take them out; and likewise the one who is in the field must not turn back. 32 Remember Lot's wife. 33 Whoever seeks to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses [his life] will preserve it.

The Lord compares the days of the Son of Man with the days of Noah. Then people lived their own lives in a way that God had to say that the

earth was corrupt in His sight and that it was filled with violence (Gen 6:11-12). The days of the Son of Man are the days when He exercises His dominion as the Son of Man over creation. That reign will begin with the righteous judgment of sin.

In verse 22, “the days of the Son of Man” means the days when the Lord Jesus was on earth. In verse 26, “the days of the Son of Man” are the days preceding His second coming to earth. These are the days in which we also live. Next comes “His day” (verse 24), the period that refers to His reign in glory.

That we too live in the days before His coming, we see from the references to the days of Noah and of Lot. Those days were characterized by the same things that characterize our days. The Lord describes the life of the days of Noah from a different perspective than in the book of Genesis. He points to the everyday life of ordinary people. That life consisted of eating and drinking and marrying. You might ask yourself why this should be judged. Surely, these are not sinful things, but all ordinances instituted by God Himself, aren’t they? That is true, but when these things make up man’s life and they have excluded God from their world, they are evil activities. Therefore the judgment has come on all, no one has escaped.

The Lord also refers to the days of Lot. We know from the book of Genesis what kind of a depraved city Lot lived in. But also here the Lord presents Sodom as a city in which people lived to whom the daily activities consisted of various activities that were not in themselves wrong or sinful. Remarkable is that He no longer speaks about marriage. That had been discarded in wicked Sodom.

Judgment comes because they do all ordinary activities without even giving God a place whatever in them. Ban God from daily life and judgment comes. Sodom has experienced that. Lot could be saved with difficulty. He even had to be dragged along (Gen 19:16), because he delayed leaving Sodom. The judgment has come on all, no one has escaped.

The judgment on the earth and the judgment on Sodom, the two examples of total and final judgment, represent the situation that will also arise on the day the Lord Jesus appears as the Son of Man. In the case of Noah, a warning has preceded it. For one hundred and twenty years he built on

the ark and all this time he preached that the judgment would come (2Pet 2:5), but they did not believe him. Therefore, the judgment for all those people has suddenly come. The judgment on Sodom has also suddenly come, with only a warning for Lot and his family. Likewise, the coming of the Son of Man to judge will suddenly take place (1Thes 5:3). Then will all those who have corrupted the earth become corrupt (Rev 11:18).

When the Son of Man comes, there is no time to lose. Then it will become clear what the heart is focused on. The Lord warns not to consider anything important. Any delay in fleeing is fatal. Delay is caused when someone thinks of valuable things he has at home. Wherever someone is, there is only one thing important at that moment and that is saving his life. Anyone who, despite the seriousness of the situation, chooses for his goods, proves that these things are idols for them. They have him in control. The result is that he dies.

Faithfulness to the Lord and to His testimony shall be true and saving wisdom. Anyone who considers some earthly possession more important than his life will lose his life. The Lord remembers to the wife of Lot. She could not come loose from Sodom in her heart, and that was fatal to her (Gen 19:17,26). Her heart was at the place where God brought judgment.

How is that with us? He who thinks he can hold on to life in this world, while the Lord says he must let go of it, will lose his life. Whoever lets go of his life and gives it into the hand of the Lord, will be allowed to preserve it.

Lk 17:34-37 | Taken or Left

*34 I tell you, on that night there will be two in one bed; one will be taken and the other will be left. 35 There will be two women grinding at the same place; one will be taken and the other will be left. 36 <Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other will be left.> 37 And answering they *said to Him, "Where, Lord?" And He said to them, "Where the body [is], there also the vultures will be gathered."*

God knows who really are disciples of the Lord Jesus and who are only disciples in appearance. Whosoever does not belong to Him, He takes by judgment. Those who do belong to Him will be left to enter the kingdom of peace.

In His judgment He distinguishes between the closest relationships, such as those of husband and wife who lie together in bed during the night. Another scene is that of two women grinding flour in the morning to bake bread. One of them will also be taken by the judgment, while the other will be left to enter the kingdom of peace. Another scene is the work on the field that two people are working on during the day. There, too, the separation takes place.

Thus we see three situations in which people will find themselves when the Lord appears suddenly: at night, in the morning and during the day. It shows that His coming is seen everywhere on earth. In one part of the hemisphere it is night and people lie on their bed, in the other hemisphere it is day and people are at work.

The character of the judgment makes it clear that this is not about the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in the year 70. We see the hand of God Who knows to distinguish between what He must take by judgment and what He must leave to enter the realm of peace. Nor is it the judgment of the dead, but a judgment on earth: they are in a bed, at the mill, in the field.

The disciples ask where the judgment will take place. The Lord answers that it will be where the dead body, the bait, is. A dead body is a body without a spirit. It represents the wicked Israel that has rejected God in Christ. It is also every other dead body, wherever it is, because it is generally applicable to every human being individually. On anyone who has no life of God and is therefore a dead body, judgment will descend as vultures to whom prey does not escape because that prey is lifeless.

Luke 18

Lk 18:1-8 | Parable of the Unrighteous Judge

1 Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart, 2 saying, "In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man. 3 There was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, 'Give me legal protection from my opponent.' 4 For a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, 'Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, 5 yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out.'" 6 And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge said; 7 now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? 8 I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"

In connection to what He said about the characteristics of the last days, the Lord, through a parable, places particular emphasis on the importance of persevering prayer. Prayer is the resource for the faithful in all times, but especially in the days of the Son of Man who are so similar to the days of Noah and the days of Lot. These are the days in which we live. That is why this parable is also full of teaching for us.

It is a question of persevering in prayer and not to lose heart if the answer is delayed. These are difficult times when faith is put to the test. Continuous prayer is the only thing that gives us the strength to persevere. It shows confidence in God, even if we have the appearance against us.

The Lord proposes a situation in which a judge plays a role who disregards the whole law. This judge does not love God nor his neighbor. To love God and neighbor is the summary of the law. And this man is a judge!

At a certain moment, a widow comes to him and asks for legal protection. She has an opponent who wants to exploit her. However, the judge does not want to give her legal protection. He cannot earn anything from this case. It is completely uninteresting to him. Nevertheless, the widow

persists. After all, there is a result. He says to himself that he will do something for the woman, despite the fact that he does not fear God and does not respect man.

His consideration to give the widow legal protection is that he wants to get rid of her whining and prevent worse. He believes she will wear him out if he holds on to his refusal. That is why it is better to give her legal protection anyway. Then at least he is rid of her. He acts purely in his own interest.

The unjust judge does not represent God here, just as the unjust steward in Luke 16 does not represent a disciple. The Lord tells these parables in order to encourage His disciples powerfully and encouragingly to such an action in which they can count on a benevolent God.

Here the Lord Jesus wants to encourage them to always pray without losing heart, even though the answer seems to delay and evil increases. If an unjust judge comes to a verdict, even if it is in his own interest, will God then let the constant praying believer call without paying attention to it?

Real faith is heard in crying to God day and night, even though He waits with giving an answer. This is not to delay the promise, but because of the efficacy of His mercy by which He leads sinners to repentance, that they too may be saved (2Pet 3:9). As far as the praying believer is concerned, he needs perseverance until the answer comes. If faith is found somewhere that is acceptable to Him Who seeks it, it will not be ashamed or disappointed.

But will the Son of Man find faith when He comes? How many disciples will there eventually be who truly hold on to the real trust in God? How many will live in the same faith that has become visible in the widow? We live in the end time with few real disciples, in which the real disciples are put under severe pressure to give up faith. Do we have the faith that God will really give us legal protection even though we have the appearance against us? Who are the truly righteous is made clear by the Lord in the following parable.

Lk 18:9-14 | The Pharisee and the Tax Collector

9 And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: 10 "Two men went

up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.' 13 But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' 14 I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

In this parable the Lord again describes new character traits that are appropriate for the kingdom into which those who follow Him will enter. Self-righteousness is anything but a recommendation to enter the kingdom. People who trust themselves to be righteous have no need to pray. Nor do they lose heart and they do not need faith confidence that seeks God's help in prayer.

The Lord tells this parable in view of those who think of themselves that they stand head and shoulders above others, while also looking down contemptuously on the others. He opposes two people who both go into the temple to pray. They are opposites of each other.

He first describes the Pharisee's attitude and prayer. In him we recognize both the older son from Luke 15 and the rich man from Luke 16. In the tax collector we recognize both the younger son from Luke 15 and Lazarus from Luke 16. The Pharisee represents the religious world in the most respectable form. The tax collector represents people who have no honor to maintain, but whatever they may have been, now truly repentantly judge themselves and look forward to the mercy of God.

We read from both the Pharisee and the tax collector that they "stand". However, there is a fine distinction contained in the form of the two verb forms, both of which are translated as 'stand'. In the Pharisee's case, it means that he has taken a place as someone automatically does when he addresses a gathering. He stand there. In the case of the tax collector it is the common expression for 'standing' in contrast to 'sitting'.

Then the Lord speaks of the prayer of the Pharisee. He prays "to himself", which seems to suppose that what he says is not heard by others. When we

read his prayer, there is actually no question of praying, of asking anything of God. There is also no question of giving thanks to God for Whom He is. He is so very satisfied with himself that he is only commending himself to God. He thanks God for everything he is not.

Nor is there a confession of sins. There is not even an expression of any need, of anything he would need. He himself is the subject of his thanksgiving. He is not, like the others, violent and depraved, nor is he like the tax collector. When he talks about "this tax collector", we hear a trace of contempt. To him that man is a despised tax collector because he is conspiring with the enemy.

Finally, he lists at length his own habits. He praises himself for his fasting and his excessive religious accuracy. Not that he makes false claims, not that he excludes God, but that he trusts in these things. They form the ground of his righteousness toward God. He thinks all this makes him a pleasure to God. Other people he doesn't like. This is because he has never seen his own sins as God sees them. This Pharisee is a 'believer', but as someone who believes in himself tremendously.

How totally different are the attitude and prayer of the tax collector. The tax collector is standing some distance away. He feels like the leprous men of whom this also is said (Lk 17:12). He acknowledges his unworthiness to come near to God. He does not even dare to see God in the eyes, but stands with his head bent and beats his breast as a sign of deep remorse. He stands as a supplicant who begs God for mercy.

By calling himself "the sinner" he says as it were that he is the only sinner (cf. 1Tim 1:15). He does not generally say that he is 'a' sinner, as if he is one of many and wants to hide a bit in the crowd. He sees only himself and his own unworthiness and sinfulness in God's eye.

At the same time he begs God for mercy. He does so without covering up anything of his sins. A person only appeals to grace if he is convinced that he does not deserve anything. In the word "merciful" used by the tax collector, the question of reconciliation is contained. There is no mercy with God without reconciliation.

The Lord justifies the tax collector because he has taken the right place toward God and he has given God the right place. The tax collector becomes

justified because he has become a penitent. Justified means justice done, what meets justice. God declares that the tax collector has done justice through his confession as a sinner and as a result God declares the tax collector free from his sins.

In the letter to the Romans, Paul deals with the doctrine of the righteousness of God. There it becomes clear that the righteousness of God, that is being declared righteous by God, means that God declares of someone that he has never sinned. It is not an acquittal for example because the accusation is unfounded or because of lack of evidence, but He really declares him righteous. The righteous basis for this is that there is Another Who says that He has committed these sins and has also undergone the judgment for them.

Through this dealing of God based on His righteousness, the tax collector is truly free from the burden of his sins. This is the part of everyone who sincerely, like the tax collector, has confessed his sins and in faith sees the work of Christ as also accomplished for him and fully accepted by God.

The tax collector has humiliated himself and is thereby exalted at the heart of God. The Pharisee, "the other", goes home very self-satisfied, but with an increase of his debt. He has exalted himself and will be humbled when he stands before the great white throne on which the Judge, the Lord Jesus, is sitting.

Lk 18:15-17 | Babies Brought to the Lord

15 And they were bringing even their babies to Him so that He would touch them, but when the disciples saw it, they [began] rebuking them. 16 But Jesus called for them, saying, "Permit the children to come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. 17 Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it [at all]."

After the temple scene with the examples of pride and humility, babies are brought to the Lord. The previous temple scene contains the warning to be humble in view of our sins which God knows all. It also contains the beneficial outcome for all who take this humble place. Now babies come to Him who are naturally humble. They are brought to Him "so that He

would touch them". The Lord is the Lord of those who are humble. They may count on being touched by Him to be blessed by Him.

That is not to the disciples' liking. They reveal the spirit of the Pharisee. They have no eye for the small, the humble. They judge this action as a hindrance in the work that they find so important and that also makes them important. If a distinguished person had come, they would have given room, but babies are of no interest to them.

The Lord clearly disagrees with them. When the disciples want to send them away, He calls for them. He has a lesson for them. He wants the children to come to Him, and they must not hinder this. It is precisely the children of whom the kingdom of God is. A little child has the special characteristics that he believes everything that is said to him, that he trusts those who take care of him, that he is of little significance in his own eyes and that he cannot defend himself if he is forced to leave.

All these characteristics are exactly those appropriate for the kingdom of God. Only if someone is willing to become a child with the appropriate characteristics can he receive the kingdom of God. Then he gets an eye for it, because receiving the kingdom means receiving the Lord Jesus. Those who don't can't enter. It is impossible to enter the kingdom with high thoughts about oneself. To enter the kingdom one must become small, stripped of all glory and greatness. That is the lesson of the rich ruler in the next history. Because he doesn't become small, he can't enter.

Lk 18:18-25 | The Rich Ruler

18 A ruler questioned Him, saying, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" 19 And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone. 20 You know the commandments, 'DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, DO NOT MURDER, DO NOT STEAL, DO NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS, HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.'" 21 And he said, "All these things I have kept from [my] youth." 22 When Jesus heard [this], He said to him, "One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." 23 But when he had heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich. 24 And Jesus looked at him and said, "How hard it is

for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God! 25 For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

A ruler comes to the Lord with a question. His question shows that he trusts in the goodness of himself and that because of this the mind of a child lacks with him. He does not understand that nothing good is found in man. He believes he can do something to inherit eternal life, while only those who become as children can receive eternal life by grace. Eternal life is the life of the kingdom. Hence he speaks about inheriting it. His request to inherit eternal life means that he wants to enter the kingdom.

The answer given by the Lord must make the ruler think. In His answer, the Lord asks why he calls Him "good Teacher". The Lord does not wait for His answer, but helps him on his way by saying to him that no one is good except God alone. If the ruler means that He is really good, he will have to acknowledge Him as God. If He means that He, as a human being, and no more than a human being, is a good teacher, someone from whom you can learn how to inherit eternal life, the ruler is blind to His glory.

The Lord knows what is in the heart of the ruler. To make him see it for himself, He tells him what he can do to inherit the kingdom. That is simply keeping the law. The Lord therefore confronts him with the commandments. He does not ask if the ruler knows them, for He knows that he knows them. Knowing the commandments and actually keeping them, however, are two things. The Lord holds out to him five commandments and not all ten. And note what commandments He presents to the ruler. The five He confronts him with are commandments that govern the relationship between men.

In all sincerity, the ruler can say that he kept these commandments from his youth. It does not sound like boasting. Nor does the Lord rebuke him as one who pretends to be pious, while in his inner being he is no good. At the same time, his answer proves that he has no sense of sin at all and that he therefore does not know God and Christ.

Then the Lord comes to the essence. He says to the ruler that he lacks one thing. He knows that the ruler is rich and that his heart is attached to his possessions. By saying to him that he must sell everything and distribute it

to the poor, He puts him to the test. If he really desires eternal life, he will do everything for it.

If he does what the Lord says, it has a twofold effect for him. He will be assured of treasure in heaven. He may also come to the Lord and follow Him. Following the Lord means rejection on earth, but in the future the enjoyment of the treasure. It is about Who the "Me" Who says this is for the heart. That determines everything. When He stands before the attention, there is power to leave everything on earth and there is faith that the true treasure is in heaven.

When the ruler hears what the Lord asks, he does not get angry, but very sad. He sees the reality before him that he must give up everything to inherit eternal life and he cannot give up his possessions. They are too precious for him. That's because he doesn't see any attraction in the Lord Jesus and the things He holds out to him. The ruler would have wanted to buy eternal life with his wealth, but to sell and give away everything and then go a way of humiliation in the faith that the treasure is safe in heaven, that he does not want.

The Lord has put His finger on the covetousness which dominates him and which is nourished by the wealth he possesses. The riches that seem to be a sign of God's favor in man's eyes only appear to be an obstacle when it comes to his heart and to heaven.

The Lord's question makes it clear that he loves his wealth, his money, mammon, something he had never expected of himself before. Now comes to light what has always been dormant in him. This happens because he is in the presence of Him Who, while He was rich, became poor for our sakes, in order that we might become rich by His poverty (2Cor 8:9). The ruler found his position and his possessions valuable and could not tolerate having nothing and being nothing.

What a difference with Him Who "did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, being made in the likeness of men". This is already a tremendously deep humiliation, but it goes much deeper. "Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Phil 2:6-8).

When the Lord sees that the ruler is saddened, He points to the danger of wealth as an obstacle to enter the kingdom of God. He compares a rich person to a camel who is unable to go through the eye of a needle and often has so much cargo that it becomes even more impossible to go through it.

The metaphor is an exaggeration that clearly indicates to everyone that a rich man who depends on his money cannot enter the kingdom. Someone who has a lot of money and possessions can often find it difficult to give that up. To enter the kingdom, all riches, whether material or spiritual and intellectual, must be renounced.

Lk 18:26-30 | The Lesson for the Disciples

26 They who heard it said, "Then who can be saved?" 27 But He said, "The things that are impossible with people are possible with God." 28 Peter said, "Behold, we have left our own [homes] and followed You." 29 And He said to them, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, 30 who will not receive many times as much at this time and in the age to come, eternal life."

If someone is rich, it means to the disciples that such a person enjoys God's favor. For earthly prosperity is promised by God to those who keep His commandments. That is why the question arises in their minds who can be saved if it is impossible for such a person to be saved.

The point is not that a rich person cannot be saved, but that his wealth is no guarantee of this and in practice often proves to be a major hindrance. There are certainly rich people who have been saved, for example Joseph of Arimathea (Mt 27:57). To be saved is an impossibility with all people, rich or poor, but not with God. God is the only One Who can give salvation. He can do that through the work of the Lord Jesus.

Peter has heard what the Lord has said to the rich ruler about selling his possessions and following Him. He says that they did. He doesn't say it in haughtiness, but with a little question in it about what it will bring him and the others. This is evident from the Lord's answer. Maybe he even said it with a hint of disappointment because it has not yet produced more than they have now. He has a wife and had a boat and beautiful work. He left it all behind.

The Lord encourages them by telling them what they will receive. He responds to Peter's remark by saying that nothing is given up that is not abundantly compensated by Him. Giving everything up must be done for the sake of the kingdom of God. Only those who have seen the glory of the kingdom in the King of it, give up everything. They leave their homes, their living area, with all those who belong to it, and who are dear to them, to follow Somebody Who offers them nothing but a cross.

The Lord promises that they will receive "many times as much". This "many times as much" consists of spiritual blessings received by someone who has given up everything for the sake of Christ (cf. Phil 3:8-9). That is already the case today. The enjoyment of spiritual blessings, of fellowship with the Lord, compensates for much of the loss of the most intimate earthly fellowship that is abandoned. These blessings and fellowship will be enjoyed in their fullness in the future age.

Eternal life is now only the inner possession of the believer. In the future age, when the Lord Jesus reigns, eternal life will also be the atmosphere, the environment, of life. Outwardly everything will be in accordance with Him Who is the eternal life. His government, His life, then determines life on earth.

Lk 18:31-34 | Third Announcement of Suffering

31 Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished. 32 For He will be handed over to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and mistreated and spit upon, 33 and after they have scourged Him, they will kill Him; and the third day He will rise again." 34 But the disciples understood none of these things, and [the meaning] of this statement was hidden from them, and they did not comprehend the things that were said.

The kingdom of God and eternal life do not yet determine life on earth. Before this can happen, the Lord and His disciples must go to Jerusalem. There the disciples will see that what is written about Him by the prophets will also happen to Him. They will see that the Son of Man did not go to Jerusalem to establish the kingdom of peace, but to be rejected and killed.

The Lord speaks again of Himself as the Son of Man, with which He says He will not only reign over Israel, but over all creation and that this will happen through the way of suffering and death. The title Son of Man speaks both of His rejection and of His glory.

He will be handed over to the Gentiles. He is not talking here about what the Jews will do with Him. The Gentiles will also be guilty of His death. Nothing will be spared Him. Every imaginable mockery and torture will be done to Him. Finally, He will be killed. But that is not the end. The Lord clearly declares that He will rise again on the third day. His resurrection proves His Divine power (Rom 1:4) and the acceptance of His work by God on the basis of which God can justify the sinner (Rom 4:25).

Everything He said about His suffering, death and resurrection has not found entrance to the disciples. That is because their thoughts are only focused on a reigning King. A suffering and dying King does not fit into their thinking. Here we see how a preformed opinion has such power, that even the clearest statements in their true meaning remain hidden from the listener.

Lk 18:35-43 | Healing of a Blind Beggar

35 As Jesus was approaching Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the road begging. 36 Now hearing a crowd going by, he [began] to inquire what this was. 37 They told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. 38 And he called out, saying, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" 39 Those who led the way were sternly telling him to be quiet; but he kept crying out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" 40 And Jesus stopped and commanded that he be brought to Him; and when he came near, He questioned him, 41 "What do you want Me to do for you?" And he said, "Lord, [I want] to regain my sight!" 42 And Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well." 43 Immediately he regained his sight and [began] following Him, glorifying God; and when all the people saw it, they gave praise to God.

This event is the starting point for the first three evangelists to describe the last part of the Lord's journey to Jerusalem (Mt 20:29-34; Mk 10:46-52). Matthew and Mark speak about leaving Jericho, Luke says he was "approaching Jericho".

According to excavations there seem to have been two cities called Jericho. One city is the old original city, the other city is a Roman Jericho, not far from there. The blind man sat between the two cities. Then the situation is that the Lord Jesus leaves the old Jericho and is on his way to the Roman Jericho and on His way He meets the blind man who is begging along the way. There are also translations here that translate that the Lord was "in the proximity of Jericho".

The blind man hears that a crowd is passing by. He concludes that something special is going on and wants to know why the crowd is there. He asks for it. He receives the answer that "Jesus of Nazareth" (Mt 2:23), passes by. The blind man knows enough and starts calling out. He does not call out "Jesus of Nazareth", but "Jesus, Son of David". He Who to the crowd is no more than the Man of Nazareth, is to the blind man the Son of David.

The blind sees more than the crowd. His faith gave him the right view of Christ and led him to appeal to His mercy. The Lord will never pass by here again, for He will die in Jerusalem. The blind man did not know this, so it is all the more beautiful that he should seize the opportunity offered to him.

He takes his decision as soon as it is possible and does not postpone it until later, which also would never come again. It is important for any decision that it is taken when it is possible. The people at the front of the parade tell him to be quiet. He must stop his shouting, for if the Lord listened to it, it would cause undesirable delay.

The warning has the opposite effect. The blind man keeps crying out all the more. He does the same as the widow at the beginning of this chapter who also continued asking. Once again he appeals to the mercy of the Lord as the Son of David. He experiences that someone in need who calls to Him never calls to Him in vain. It is even so, that such a persevering call to Him sounds pleasant in His ears.

The Lord stops. There is nothing that can stop Him on his way to Jerusalem except someone who appeals to His mercy. Then He commands that the blind man shall be brought to Him. That order is followed without contradiction. The blind man approaches the Lord in faith and thereby enters into the circle of blessing.

Before he receives the blessing, the Lord asks him what he wants Him to do. It seems like an unnecessary question and the Lord knows the answer of course, but He wants to hear it from the mouth of the blind man. In the same way He would like to hear from our mouth what we want from Him, even though He knows what our desires are. This is so that we can express the feelings of our heart and experience the answer to our prayer as something that comes from Him Himself.

After announcing his wish, the Lord with authority says: "Receive your sight!" He immediately adds that the blind man owes his healing to his faith in Him. The blind has not come to faith by healing, but he believes and is healed. The result is immediate. He regains his sight. The result is that he follows the Lord on His way to Jerusalem. He is born again and sees the kingdom of God (Jn 3:3). People start to see through the power and activity of the Holy Spirit.

While he follows, he glorifies God. This is also an example for us. Following the Lord may happen while glorifying God. The people also see, but different than the blind man. The people see that a wonder has happened and praise God for it, but they do not see the specialness of the Lord Jesus.

Luke 19

Lk 19:1-10 | Zaccheus

1 He entered Jericho and was passing through. 2 And there was a man called by the name of Zaccheus; he was a chief tax collector and he was rich. 3 Zaccheus was trying to see who Jesus was, and was unable because of the crowd, for he was small in stature. 4 So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree in order to see Him, for He was about to pass through that way. 5 When Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, "Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house." 6 And he hurried and came down and received Him gladly. 7 When they saw it, they all [began] to grumble, saying, "He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." 8 Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much." 9 And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

The Lord does not go around Jericho. It is the city of the curse, but if He is there, He is there to give blessing. So it is with the world He came into. The world lies in the evil one (1Jn 5:19), but He came into the world to spread blessing. He has to go through Jericho because He knows that there lives a man called Zaccheus, who is a rich chief tax collector and who seeks Him.

Zaccheus is touched by the Spirit of God. When he hears that the Lord Jesus is coming, he makes an effort to see Him. He is not like Herod who also wanted to see the Lord (Lk 9:9). With Herod it was an evil curiosity, which, by the way, was also satisfied (Lk 23:8). With Zaccheus it is a hungry curiosity. He gets to see the Lord and more than that.

However, there are two obstacles: there is a crowd and he is small. As so often, here too the crowd is a hindrance for someone who wants to see the Lord. People stand in the way (Lk 5:19) or consciously keep someone away from Him (Lk 18:39a). In addition, he is small in stature, which seems to be

an additional impediment to seeing Him. But whosoever genuinely seeks the Lord will find Him (Lk 11:9).

Just as the blind man in the previous chapter did not let himself be hindered by the crowd (Lk 18:39b), so Zaccheus is not prevented from seeing the Lord by the crowd, nor by his physical disadvantage. Like the blind man, he shows the power of faith. He sees a solution in a sycamore tree. Like a little boy he climbs into the tree. He is small and makes himself small. He also has a foresight. He knows the Lord Jesus' route and takes his place on that route. Faith feels the way He is going, even though there is no direct relationship with Him yet.

The desire and the faith of Zaccheus are not ashamed. When the Lord comes to the place where Zaccheus is in the tree, He looks up. Not only does He know there is someone in the tree, but He also knows his name. His searching heart has met someone who longs for Him. This is for His heart a great joy on His way to the cross.

He says to Zaccheus to come down quickly and makes a great proposal. He invites Himself to come into the house of Zaccheus. He asks not only for dominion over our personal life, but also over our house, our family. Hence believing parents will raise their children according to God's standards (Eph 6:1-4).

This is more than Zaccheus expected, but of which his heart immediately grasps the meaning. He comes down quickly and receives the Lord with joy. The surrounding people find it strange. They even grumble about it. It's something they don't understand. How can He enter a sinful man's house and even stay there? What is the joy of faith is a stumbling block to unbelief.

The people see an in their eyes distinguished rabbi entering a sinful persons house. In their thinking that doesn't fit together. This is because they do not see themselves as sinful, while the Lord Jesus is indeed to them nothing more than a distinguished rabbi.

Although Zaccheus may be a rich chief tax collector, he must have been lonely. The people will have shunned him. He has also felt within himself the emptiness of his life and has a need for real peace.

Opposite to the grumble of men, Zaccheus takes the place of respect before the Lord. He stands up. Then he says what he is doing with his possessions. He doesn't say this out of pride, but to show that there is a desire in his heart to clean up his past. He does not spare himself if he says that he has extorted people. By repaying it fourfold, he goes further than the law prescribes. He wants to repair the damage so abundantly that the injustice done will no longer be remembered.

Zaccheus met the Lord and received Him in his house and in his life. With Him the salvation has come to this house. Zaccheus has found what he sought: peace for his soul. He had already been converted, he was already a son of Abraham in the true sense of the word (cf. Lk 13:16), but he still lacked the certainty of the forgiveness of his sins and the knowledge of salvation.

In response to what He said to Zaccheus, the Lord Jesus points to the great purpose of His coming into the world. He has come to seek that which was lost. It is the searching grace for people who need forgiveness and salvation. Salvation means the escape of judgment through repentance and the entering into the kingdom. He has come to seek people in whom He has worked the need for grace, and then to fulfill that need.

Lk 19:11-14 | A Nobleman

11 While they were listening to these things, Jesus went on to tell a parable, because He was near Jerusalem, and they supposed that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately. 12 So He said, "A nobleman went to a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself, and [then] return. 13 And he called ten of his slaves, and gave them ten minas and said to them, 'Do business [with this] until I come [back].' 14 But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We do not want this man to reign over us.'

The disciples hear the Lord Jesus speak of salvation. That reminds them of the kingdom of peace. They see in Him the Messiah. All their thoughts are that He will go to Jerusalem to sit on the throne of David and establish the kingdom of God in public glory and majesty. Because they are always busy with this, they understand nothing of it every time He speaks about His suffering and death that await Him in Jerusalem. Again, they assume

incorrectly that He is going to Jerusalem to ascend the throne and accept His reign.

The Lord knows their thoughts, and so He tells a parable. He Himself is the nobleman. He is the Son of God, also as Man. He came to the earth to establish the kingdom of God, but He was rejected. Now He travels to a distant country, heaven, to receive the kingdom there. He is truly King with a real kingdom. He reigns not yet publicly, but in the hearts of those who profess Him as Lord. But He comes back to establish His kingdom on earth.

Before He goes to heaven, He gives to ten of His slaves – who are those who profess Him as Lord – ten minas, i.e. each slave one mina, with the instruction to do business with it. He adds “until I come”, i.e. until He comes back. All slaves, who are expressly called “His” slaves, are entrusted with the same sum. The number ten represents responsibility. All slaves are responsible to do business with what the Lord has given them. The fact that they receive the same sum means that the difference in results is the result of their diligence, commitment, motivation and the like and not of their capacities.

In Matthew 25, the Lord tells a parable that is very similar to this parable. However, there is a difference. There He speaks of a lord who goes abroad and who entrusts to his own slaves each a *different* sum (Mt 25:14-15). In Matthew 25 He emphasizes the power and wisdom of the Giver Who distinguishes in His gifts, according to the ability of each slave. The result is a yield in accordance with the difference in the gift, but an equal reward (Mt 25:19-23).

Whereas in Matthew 25 the sovereign power of the Lord is more in the foreground, here it is more about the responsibility of the slaves. In the mina we can see the entrusted deposit (1Tim 6:20). What is entrusted to us is the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2Cor 4:6), with the purpose that we make it visible in our lives. In the Gospel according to Luke this means that we show the grace given to us in Christ to those around us. If the grace from us goes to others, it will also work in others and thereby increase the effectiveness of grace. So we can do business with grace.

Apart from slaves, there are also citizens. The citizens are the Jews. They have rejected the Lord Jesus, for they hate Him. Their hatred is so great that once He is gone they even send a delegation (or: an embassy) after Him to emphasize that they do not want His kingship.

This happened when they stoned Stephen who, in the power of the Holy Spirit, offered them, as it were, a last chance to accept Him as their King (Acts 7:54-59). By killing him, they sent Christ the message, as it were, as a statement that they wanted nothing to do with Him. With this they signed their own verdict which was later, in the year 70, executed by the Roman armies under the leadership of Titus in the destruction of Jerusalem.

Lk 19:15-19 | Reward of the Faithful Slaves

15 When he returned, after receiving the kingdom, he ordered that these slaves, to whom he had given the money, be called to him so that he might know what business they had done. 16 The first appeared, saying, 'Master, your mina has made ten minas more.' 17 And he said to him, 'Well done, good slave, because you have been faithful in a very little thing, you are to be in authority over ten cities.' 18 The second came, saying, 'Your mina, master, has made five minas.' 19 And he said to him also, 'And you are to be over five cities.'

The citizens did not want Him to be King over them, but that did not prevent Him from receiving the kingdom. After He has received it, He returns. Luke does not speak about the time that has passed between His receiving of the kingdom and His return. Now, some two thousand years ago, He received the kingdom, and He has not yet returned, but the moment of His return is ever closer. When He returns, He wants His slaves to whom He has given money to be called to Him. He wants to know what they have earned from the business. That is His good right. He gave His slaves that money to make profit for Him.

The first to come before Him says to Him that His mina – the slave speaks of “Your” mina – has yielded tenfold profit. He is one who, with dedication to his Lord, has been occupied with the mina entrusted to him. The profit is not the number of converts that someone can show or the number of speeches that someone has made, but what has become visible of Christ in the slave’s entire life.

The life of Christ brought abundant praise to God. Wherever people saw and heard Him, they glorified God, even though many of them did not accept Him and even rejected Him. The more the life of Christ is seen in the life of a believer, He will reward it. This is not a question of possessing a special gift, but of a mind that does everything for Christ. This is open to every believer without distinction. It is about a choice to be made or not to be made.

As has been said, it is about responsibility. This slave receives the Lord's approval. The Lord praises him and says to him "well done" and calls him a "good slave". The Lord also rewards him. Because the slave was faithful in a very little thing (cf. Lk 16:10), much is entrusted to him. He may reign in the kingdom together with Christ (Mt 19:28; 1Cor 6:2-3; 2Tim 2:12; Rev 2:26-27) and rule over ten cities. He has shown in his life that he has dealt well with the goods of his Lord. The reward he receives is a part in the kingdom in accordance with his work.

The second slave comes. He also speaks of "Your" mina and can give his Lord five extra minas. He too has been diligent in his service to the Lord, but not with the same dedication as the other. The Lord, therefore, does not express His approval in the same way as with the first. However, this slave also receives the reward that matches his profit. He also gets his share in the kingdom and may rule over five cities.

Lk 19:20-27 | The Worthless Slave and the Citizens

20 Another came, saying, 'Master, here is your mina, which I kept put away in a handkerchief; 21 for I was afraid of you, because you are an exacting man; you take up what you did not lay down and reap what you did not sow.' 22 He said to him, 'By your own words I will judge you, you worthless slave. Did you know that I am an exacting man, taking up what I did not lay down and reaping what I did not sow? 23 Then why did you not put my money in the bank, and having come, I would have collected it with interest?' 24 Then he said to the bystanders, 'Take the mina away from him and give it to the one who has the ten minas.' 25 And they said to him, 'Master, he has ten minas [already].' 26 I tell you that to everyone who has, more shall be given, but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. 27 But

these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slay them in my presence."

Then comes the next slave before his Lord. He also calls Him "Master" and thereby acknowledges His authority, and he also speaks of "Your" mina. He thereby acknowledges that what he has received is of His Lord. But it is all just a lip confession. In their inner being, there is no connection between him and his Lord. Therefore, there has been no dedication to Him at all. There was nothing in his life that led people to glorify God. He put the mina he had received in a handkerchief. He did not intend to work hard for his Lord. So he didn't do that.

His conduct resulted from a totally false perception of his Lord. He did not understand anything of His grace, he never got to know Him. He was afraid of Him, and found Him exacting and unrighteous. He had his own view of that Lord and thought that you'd better not have to deal with Him. He did not face the fact that he would have to deal with Him anyway. Living for such a Lord seemed unbearable to him. There were a lot of things you were not permitted to do and there were a lot of things you had to do. It was all 'not permitted' and 'had to'. In that view on his Lord, he did not want to be corrected either. He held on to it and it determined his life.

With his statements about his Lord, the slave makes his own judgment. If he really was afraid of that Lord, and if it really was so that He was exacting and, to his judgment, dealing unrighteous, that should have led him to act differently from what he has done now. The Lord calls him a worthless slave because he has not done according to what he knew. He used his idea about Him as an excuse to do nothing at all with his mina. If he had been really scared, he would have given His money to a bank. Just thinking soberly would have led him to the conclusion that the money would at least have been a little bit profitable for Him. After all, it was *His* money and the task was to do business with it.

The Lord does not blame him for not having done business. If he had no energy to do business, by bringing the money to a bank he would have acknowledged that his Lord was entitled to profit. Because he was led by selfish fear, he showed that there was no love for his Master (1Jn 4:18). He

lacked not so much the power to act, but the right *spirit* or *mind* to act. He did not know grace. If we have a legalistic mind, we serve only ourselves.

The worthless slave not only does not receive a reward, he also suffers loss. What he was entrusted, he loses because he did nothing with it. He never really possessed it because he had put it away. Yet he knew he had it, for he could give it to his Lord, but it was something outside of him, not in him. The external appearance, the beautiful appearance, is taken from him. What was for him a covering for his inner depravity is for the faithful, dedicated slave the decoration of the authenticity of the faith that is in him. That is why the faithful slave gets what the evil slave has abused.

Those who stand by point out to the Lord that this slave already has so much. He already has ten and now he gets another one. The answer shows how much the Lord appreciates complete faithfulness and dedication and commitment. Such a person cannot be rewarded enough. From those who have no inner connection with Him, but only the appearance to possess something, also that appearance will be taken away.

At the end of His parable, the Lord returns to the citizens whom He spoke of in the beginning (verse 14). He calls them here His enemies. He reminds us that they did not want Him to rule over them. For them, too, comes the day of retribution. For them there is an appropriate judgment. They must appear before Him like the slaves, but there is no conversation with them. They must be slain in His presence. His kingship is a righteous kingship. He rules in righteousness, both in reward and in judgment of evil.

Lk 19:28-36 | The Lord Has Need of It

28 After He had said these things, He was going on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. 29 When He approached Bethphage and Bethany, near the mount that is called Olivet, He sent two of the disciples, 30 saying, "Go into the village ahead of [you]; there, as you enter, you will find a colt tied on which no one yet has ever sat; untie it and bring it [here]. 31 If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' you shall say, 'The Lord has need of it.'" 32 So those who were sent went away and found it just as He had told them. 33 As they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, "Why are you untying the colt?" 34 They said, "The Lord has need of it." 35 They brought it to Jesus, and they

threw their coats on the colt and put Jesus [on it]. 36 As He was going, they were spreading their coats on the road.

After pointing out in the parable the characteristics of the kingdom in the time of His absence, the Lord is going on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. The journey to the distant country to receive the kingdom (verse 12) goes for Him via Calvary near Jerusalem. He comes near the mount that is called Olivet, the mountain that reminds us of the future after His rejection and death. When He is risen, He will go from there to heaven (Acts 1:9-12) and return there (Zec 14:4). The olive is the fruit that produces the olive oil. Oil is a picture of the Holy Spirit. From heaven the Lord Jesus will first give the Holy Spirit.

This fruit is found in the villages of Bethphage and Bethany which are close to Mount Olivet. Bethphage means 'house of the figs' and Bethany means 'house of the afflicted'. These are places that by their names point to a remnant of the people who receive Him. This remnant is formed by the righteous, of which figs are a picture (cf. Jer 24:5-7), because they have acknowledged their affliction before God. These places are the last stops before the final destination of His journey on earth.

God will still provide an appropriate testimony for His Son by working in the hearts of the crowd. In preparation for this, the Lord Jesus sends out two disciples. This mission follows the parable of the minas. It is about executing a command that corresponds to acting with the entrusted minas. Later they get another command, that is to prepare the Passover (Lk 22:8).

They now have to go to the village opposite Mount Olivet. He tells them what they will find there and what to do with it. They will find a colt tied up. He also knows that it is a colt on which no one yet has ever sat. They have to untie it and bring it to Him.

In this command lies a similarity that shows how grace frees a person from all the slavery of the law. The colt is a picture of man (Exo 13:13) who is bound by the law and therefore not free. To be used by the Lord in His service, it must be untied (cf. Lk 13:16). If a person is delivered from bondage through teaching from God's Word by the Lord's servants, he can 'carry' the Lord around. The Lord can only commit Himself to something that

has never served under any other yoke. New life has never been subject to the law.

The Lord knows that there are people who will ask why they untie the colt. He gives His disciples the answer to that question in the mouth. They can simply say that the Lord needs it. That is enough. He, Who does not need to be served by anyone because everything belongs to Him, says of the colt He needs it. This proves His great grace when we think of the picture that is presented to us in this colt, that of the bound human being. He wants to use such people and commit them to His work. He needs them for that. That is an encouragement for each of us.

Obedient, the two disciples set off. They find it "as He had told them". So it is with every mission by Him whereby He gives specific directions. It will then go as He has said.

It is understandable that the owners of the colt ask the disciples why they untie the colt. They give the answer which the Lord has put in their mouth. Then there are no more objections, for Christ has worked in the hearts of the owners the willingness to give the colt to Him. The colt is brought to the Lord Jesus.

Under the working of God's Spirit, the disciples spontaneously throw their coats on the colt and put Him on it. It is an act of homage to Him. They subject their coats – which speak of their outer behavior, the deeds people see – to Him, they make themselves available to Him. Then they exalt Him by putting Him on the colt and on their coats. Thus, this act has a rich symbolic meaning for our lives. Do we subject our lives to Him so that He may have authority over it and the people around us may see Him?

They throw their coats not only on the colt, but also on the road. The whole road is covered with coats over which He, seated on the colt, goes forth. Not only our deeds, but also our walk should be subject to Him. He desires that we give our path of life to Him so that He can use it to reach His purpose with our lives. If we only remember that the world will reject us if we surrender our way of life to Him.

Lk 19:37-40 | The Lord Jesus Is Praised

37 As soon as He was approaching, near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the miracles which they had seen, 38 shouting:

“BLESSED IS THE KING WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD; Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

39 Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Him, “Teacher, rebuke Your disciples.” 40 But Jesus answered, “I tell you, if these become silent, the stones will cry out!”

The disciples who follow Him massively know nothing about what is going to happen to Him in Jerusalem. They think He is going to Jerusalem to reign. On the way to that glorious accession to the throne, they would like to submit themselves to Him. They start to praise God with joy and a loud voice. They have seen so many miracles, i.e. works of power, that this must be the Messiah of God.

Unfortunately, these are only outward impressions of Who the Lord is. For His message of grace they are and remain deaf. Yet God uses them to glorify the Name of His Son. Touched by God’s Spirit, the crowd praises the Lord Jesus as the Blessed, the Highly Praised, as the King Who comes in the Name of the LORD, Yahweh. That He is indeed to the full.

When they speak of peace in heaven, they say more than they realize. It is indeed so that the kingdom depends for its establishment on earth on a peace established in the highest heavens. This indicates the place which He will take in heaven, exalted as the Son of Man and as the Conqueror of satan. The kingdom of peace and justice that will be established on earth is only a consequence of the glory that grace has already established in heaven since His coming into the distant country to which He is here on His way.

When He was born as Man, the angels spoke of “peace on earth” (Lk 2:14) because the Man on Whom the good pleasure of God rested had appeared. They glorified the full scope of His work. By now it has become clear that death awaits Him and that His rejection results in a period that will be anything but peace. But the heavens will be the stage of peace. There He will go after accomplishing the work on the cross. There He will receive the

honor of God to which He is entitled (Jn 13:32). There is peace in heaven because He entered there as Conqueror and there is peace in the hearts of those who have received Him (Col 1:20-23; Eph 2:14,17).

The Pharisees are not part of the praising crowd. As declared opponents of the Lord, they are very disturbed by what is happening. They have the nature of the older son who was also annoyed by the feast for his returned brother (Lk 15:25-30). In doing so, they have closed themselves for every work of the Spirit. What they see, is unacceptable in their eyes and must be stopped.

In their approach to the Lord, they call Him “Teacher”. To them He is nothing more than an itinerant rabbi who, in their eyes, has far too much of a following and receives far too much honor. This is at the expense of the honor they claim for themselves. In their religious zeal they see that what the crowd calls can only apply to the Messiah.

Their conclusion is correct, only to them He is not the Messiah because their eyes are darkened too much by hatred to see even a glimpse of Divine glory in Him. They say to Him to rebuke His disciples. He gives a short answer which is therefore significant. God wants to give a testimony about His Son as the Blessed. He can work the hearts of people who have recognized something of God in the actions of His Son. He is even able to make dead stones bear a similar testimony. The fact that the Pharisees do not recognize anything of God in Him and therefore do not give Him any honor, but rather oppose Him, shows how dead and hardened they are.

Lk 19:41-44 | Lamentation of the Lord About Jerusalem

41 When He approached [Jerusalem], He saw the city and wept over it, 42 saying, “If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes. 43 For the days will come upon you when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, and surround you and hem you in on every side, 44 and they will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation.”

However impressive the testimony of the crowd may be and however justified it is that it is given of Him, the Lord knows that it is unfortunately

only a superficial emotion. The reality is that they will reject Him. So when He approaches the city and sees it, He knows what the city will do to Him, and what the consequences will be for the city. Therefore, after the jubilation of His disciples we hear His weeping.

The King weeps over the city. It is a repetition of the lamentation of the LORD, Yahweh, in Psalm 81 (Psa 81:13), which is expressed even more strongly here because the greatest sin is now about to happen. His powerful testimony does not prevent Him from being deeply saddened by their rejection of Him. Weeping belongs to the announcement of judgment and to seeing things that throw reproach on the Lord (Phil 3:18).

A strict and just judgment must be given, but never harshly. The judgment concerns someone's evil, the weeping concerns someone's person. In Scripture there is always a perfect balance between the two. In Christ we see a wonderful and perfect harmony between anger and grieve (Mk 3:5).

The Lord expresses His intense desire that Jerusalem on "this day", the day of salvation, on which God in Christ visits the city in grace, should nevertheless be able to know the things which makes for peace. Its peace is within reach. They only need to touch Him in faith, only to repent and accept God's atonement in Him.

But Jerusalem has no eyes to see. Christ has "no [stately] form or majesty" for them; there is in Him no "appearance" that people "should be attracted to Him" (Isa 53:2b). Because Jerusalem does not recognize what serves its peace, there can be no peace on earth. Jerusalem is still in that position.

The Lord speaks of the dramatic consequences that His rejection will have for Jerusalem. He points forward to the days when their enemies will march against the city and besiege it. There will be no escape possible. Completely surrounded by enemies, they will get oppressed, to the point of suffocating. Finally, the city will fall and be levelled to the ground.

Here the Lord points to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans almost forty years later. This judgment comes over them because they did not recognize the time when God in grace in Christ looked after them, that they were visited by God in Christ. They did not know Him, but rejected Him. Then there can be no other result than this. Who rejects peace, dies in battle.

Lk 19:45-48 | Cleansing and Teaching in the Temple

45 Jesus entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling, 46 saying to them, "It is written, 'AND MY HOUSE SHALL BE A HOUSE OF PRAYER,' but you have made it a ROBBERS' DEN." 47 And He was teaching daily in the temple; but the chief priests and the scribes and the leading men among the people were trying to destroy Him, 48 and they could not find anything that they might do, for all the people were hanging on to every word He said.

He entered Jerusalem and now He enters the temple. As the Lord of His house, He drives out those who abuse His house for their own gain. The way things are going in the temple reveals the true condition of the people. The Lord goes to this center of their religion and finds there how the power of evil controls everything.

The house of God is in the hands of men completely alienated from His original purpose. The temple is meant by God as a house of prayer, a house where His help in need is sought, but these wicked people have made it a robbers' den. A robber is someone who robs the possessions of someone else. By using the temple as a marketplace they rob God of His honor. They also rob their fellow men of their possessions by their unfair trade.

By learning daily about God and the kingdom in the temple, the Lord gives the temple back its true meaning. The temple, the house of God, becomes a house of teaching when it first has become a house of prayer. The church is primarily a house of prayer (1Tim 2:1). Only in a mind of dependence, of which prayer is the expression, we are able receive instruction from the Lord in His house. The teachings here in the temple are mainly the result of the Lord's discussions with diverse groups of opponents. This teaching, which begins here, continues until Luke 21:38.

As the Lord teaches in the temple, religious leaders and influential people seek opportunities to kill Him. Those who have to teach the people about the true God appear to be potential murderers. However, they see no means of turning their plans for murder into action. In their perseverance they see how the people is hanging on to Him, listening to every word He says. At this moment, taking any action against Him is out of the question, for by such an action the people would turn against them.

Luke 20

Lk 20:1-2 | Question About the Authority of the Lord

1 On one of the days while He was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes with the elders confronted [Him], 2 and they spoke, saying to Him, "Tell us by what authority You are doing these things, or who is the one who gave You this authority?"

Although the temple has become a robbers' den, the Lord teaches the people there daily and tirelessly continues to proclaim the gospel. The people are a flock that lies down weary and over which He remains moved with compassion. It is a flock with ruthless shepherds. Those shepherds confront Him. In the last week of His life on earth before the cross, the temple becomes the area where enmity becomes stronger and stronger. This chapter describes the conflicts the Lord has with the leaders. He unmasks them and silences them, but the murderousness is not extinguished.

The first issue the Lord teaches in the temple is that of authority. The teaching about this is of great importance to the church, that is the temple of God now (1Cor 3:16). The question is how to recognize Divine authority. The Lord responds to this question in response to a question of dispute with which the religious leaders come to Him. They do acknowledge His authority, but they ask Him in a critical spirit about its origin.

People who eagerly claim authority, always question true authority. They are never able to recognize true authority because they do not want that. With their question they assert to be able to judge Him. They want to know whether He has personal authority, for example through education, or whether He exercises authority on behalf of someone else, a higher authority on behalf of whom He speaks. It is both true for Him. He is personally the highest authority. He is God the Son. He is also as Man the Son of God Who has taken the place of dependence and obedience to God. These are the questions of blind people who refuse to see.

Lk 20:3-8 | The Answer of the Lord

3 Jesus answered and said to them, "I will also ask you a question, and you tell Me: 4 Was the baptism of John from heaven or from men?" 5 They reasoned among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say, 'Why did you not believe him?' 6 But if we say, 'From men,' all the people will stone us to death, for they are convinced that John was a prophet." 7 So they answered that they did not know where [it came] from. 8 And Jesus said to them, "Nor will I tell you by what authority I do these things."

The Lord wants to make it clear to them that they are blind, that they may acknowledge their blindness and then receive sight. Therefore He has an answer to a question for them. With the words "tell Me" He commands them to answer Him. His counter-question must make it clear whether they are capable of forming a real judgment about His authority. Their answer will bring their mind to light.

His question concerns the baptism of John. John was His forerunner and herald. John announced Him and preached the baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Lk 3:3). Many have come to his baptism (Lk 3:7) and have even wondered, as to whether he was the Christ (Lk 3:15). However, the reaction of John was clear that he was not himself, but that it was He Who came after him.

The answer to the question about John's baptism therefore determines their view of the Lord. He presents them with two possibilities: the baptism of John was from heaven or from men. It is one of two. Let them say it.

In their falsehood and insincerity, the religious leaders consult with each other. They don't discuss what the right answer is, but what He will answer to a particular answer. They are so corrupt that they only look at the result of their answer and not at its truth. They discuss what His answer will be when they say that John's baptism was from heaven. They know His answer: He will say: "Why did you not believe him?" They cannot deny that John's baptism was from heaven, but they do not want to admit it.

The other option is also being considered. They refrain from that because they know the great admiration of the people for John. Instead of joining the people and acknowledging that John was a prophet, they consider that

an answer that John would bring down could cost them their life. They are afraid to lose the people's favor and to get the people against them, even fearing for their life.

Both answers turn around themselves. Because they think they will suffer the least loss of sight if they say they don't know where John's baptism is from, they give that answer. With this answer they indicate that they do not deserve an answer to their question from the Lord. He has made it clear that they have reprehensible intentions. It is tragic that they do not want to repent, but rather, as His declared opponents, are becoming increasingly murderous. They can be stopped by nothing. The Lord shows in the following parable how they consciously want to kill Him.

Lk 20:9-12 | The Unrighteous Vine-Growers

9 And He began to tell the people this parable: "A man planted a vineyard and rented it out to vine-growers, and went on a journey for a long time. 10 At the [harvest] time he sent a slave to the vine-growers, so that they would give him [some] of the produce of the vineyard; but the vine-growers beat him and sent him away empty-handed. 11 And he proceeded to send another slave; and they beat him also and treated him shamefully and sent him away empty-handed. 12 And he proceeded to send a third; and this one also they wounded and cast out.

The second topic in temple teaching is bearing fruit. The Lord tells a parable on this, not to the religious leaders, but to the people. He wants to warn them about the attitude of their leaders. The leaders also listen. Verse 19 shows that they know they are meant. It infuriates them instead of leading them to repentance.

The parable is about someone who plants a vineyard, rents it out to vine-growers and then goes on a journey for a long time. The vineyard is a picture of the people of Israel (Isa 5:1) who were expected to produce fruit for God. It is important to apply this history to ourselves as well because we are also expected to bear fruit (Jn 15:1-5). The vine-growers are the responsible leaders among the people. The man, the owner, is God, Who has withdrawn into heaven.

The man has rented out the vineyard with a view to fruit. He would like to receive of the produce of his vineyard. The produce of the vineyard is joy,

for wine is a picture of joy (Jdg 9:13; Psa 104:15a). God wants His people to serve Him with joy and to come to Him with sacrifices of gratitude.

To receive of the fruit, the owner sends a slave to the vine-growers. But the slave, a prophet who reminds the people of God's right to fruit, is abused by the vine-growers and sent away empty-handed. If God sends us His Word through His servants to bring us to fruit bearing to give this fruit to Him, how do we react?

Sending another slave shows the patience of the owner. But also this slave is beaten and treated shamefully and then sent back empty-handed. When the owner sends the third slave, the vine-growers become very violent. The slave is not only beaten, but also wounded. Mercilessly he is thrown out of the vineyard. Away with him.

All these messengers of God are as many proofs of His love for and patience with His people. Although His prophets were so mistreated every time, God continued to send them (2Chr 36:15-16). And yet that is not the end of God's patience and His attempts to obtain fruit from His people. In this parable another step is taken, the last and most far-reaching step: the beloved Son is sent.

Lk 20:13-16 | The Beloved Son Killed

13 The owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him.' 14 But when the vine-growers saw him, they reasoned with one another, saying, 'This is the heir; let us kill him so that the inheritance will be ours.' 15 So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What, then, will the owner of the vineyard do to them? 16 He will come and destroy these vine-growers and will give the vineyard to others." When they heard it, they said, "May it never be!"

The owner is looking for ways to persuade the vine-growers to give him his fruit. It is no longer so much about the fruit, but of the attitude of the vine-growers. It cannot be better tested than by sending his son. The owner may assume that they will in any case respect and spare him.

From this attitude God finally sent His Son. He considered the chance present, which is indicated by the word "perhaps", that they will not give Him such treatment as they have given the slaves, but will respect Him.

Although God as the Omniscient knew what they would do with His Son, His assumption that they would respect His Son is perfectly justified. By the fact of sending His Son He places man under the responsibility to acknowledge His Son. He couldn't have expected anything else, could He?

The purpose of the coming of the beloved Son is presented here and that is to receive fruit for His Father. The Father wishes to receive fruit through His Son from the hands of the vine-growers. That goal is still valid today. God still seeks the fruit of the lips (Heb 13:15). We may offer praise to God through the Son. It is even so, that the beloved Son Himself starts the song of praise and we may sing together with Him (Psa 22:22b). In connection with the temple, the area where the Lord is when He tells this parable, we can also think of the church as a temple, as a spiritual house, where we offer spiritual sacrifices (1Pet 2:5).

When the Son comes, they also acknowledge Him as the Heir. At that same moment, their true nature comes fully to the surface. They reveal themselves as people who do not want to acknowledge God's rights because they want to be lord and master themselves. What God has purposed as the last possibility to obtain fruit from His people becomes the opportunity of revealing the incorrigible wickedness of man who consciously rejects God in His Son. The intent of the vine-growers is followed by their deeds. The Son is thrown out of His vineyard and killed and shares in the fate of the prophets sent before Him (Lk 13:34).

The Lord asks the question what the lord of the vineyard will do now. Isn't the measure filled up? Everything has been tried to bring the people to the producing of fruit. There has not only been shown unwillingness, but utter enmity and rebellion against the Lord of the vineyard, that is God. God's grace is not endless. If every attempt to prove grace is answered with deadly hatred, God is left nothing but to execute judgment. The Lord pronounces judgment on the vine-growers. And not only that. He says that the vineyard will be given to others.

Verse 19 clearly states that the leaders understand that He has spoken this parable against them. Also their spontaneous reaction "may it never be!" makes that clear. They have followed the Lord's story well and recognized themselves in it. When He speaks of "others", they understand that these

must be the Gentiles. That thought makes them furious. This is the expression of people who themselves despise grace and begrudge it to others.

But how is our reaction? The thought can easily take hold that the church where we are is the only right one and that it will never depart from us. In pride we can hold on to what God must take from us precisely because of our pride. If we forget that grace is the power in which we may be a church and also experience that when we come together to bring God the fruit of our lips, we cease to be God's church and witness.

Lk 20:17-19 | The Rejected Stone Becomes the Chief Corner Stone

17 But Jesus looked at them and said, "What then is this that is written:

'THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED,

THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone?'

18 Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust." 19 The scribes and the chief priests tried to lay hands on Him that very hour, and they feared the people; for they understood that He spoke this parable against them.

On their reaction "may it never be!" the Lord responds by telling them a word from the Scripture that they know well. Here He changes the metaphor. What at first was a vineyard now becomes a building (cf. 1Cor 3:9). This change of metaphor is no problem for the leaders. They know that it's about the same things.

The Lord Jesus, like the stone, was rejected by the leaders, but God made Him the chief corner stone of His building. He will realize that building in the church. The stone is a touchstone. For God and those who belong to Him, Christ is the corner stone on which God's building is unshakably fixed. He who falls upon Him, he who stumbles over and rejects Him (Rom 9:32) as the leaders do now, of that person nothing will remain. He will also fall on those who rejected Him and chose the antichrist. This will happen at His second coming when He falls as judgment from heaven (Dan 2:34). On whomever He falls will be scattered like dust by Him.

After the Lord has said this, Luke describes the feelings of the scribes and chief priests. How much would these leaders have liked to have seized Him now. They understand that the parable was about them. Instead of

repenting now, their hatred and murderousness only increases. They are only withheld because they are afraid of the people. That they cannot lay hands on Him yet is also because God's time has not yet come.

Lk 20:20-26 | Question About Paying Taxes to Caesar

20 So they watched Him, and sent spies who pretended to be righteous, in order that they might catch Him in some statement, so that they [could] deliver Him to the rule and the authority of the governor. 21 They questioned Him, saying, "Teacher, we know that You speak and teach correctly, and You are not partial to any, but teach the way of God in truth. 22 Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" 23 But He detected their trickery and said to them, 24 "Show Me a denarius. Whose likeness and inscription does it have?" They said, "Caesar's." 25 And He said to them, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." 26 And they were unable to catch Him in a saying in the presence of the people; and being amazed at His answer, they became silent.

The third topic of the Lord's temple teaching is about the relationship to the government. We are not only members of the church, but also subject to authorities of the world (Rom 13:1).

The leaders do everything in their power to eliminate the Lord. Now that they have been silenced themselves, they are looking for new ways to obtain information that will give them material to carry out their plan. They don't risk having to suffer defeat again. Blind and foolish as they are, they send spies toward Him as if they could deceive Him with them. What follies does a man indeed come to if he wants to accuse God!

The fact that these spies are also people of low quality is evident from the remark that they pretend to be righteous. In addition to spying, they are also excellent actors. They are instructed to catch Him in some statement. It is about having something for which they can deliver Him to the rule and the authority of the governor.

Hypocrites are good in using flattery. They approach the Lord with the insincerely used title "Teacher". Then they say flattering things about His speaking. They mean it as flattering and even say they "know" it, but inwardly they reject Him and have corrupt intentions. Yet they unintentionally

tionally give a wonderful testimony of His speaking and teaching. They themselves are luring him into the trap via a sneaky, crooked way, but at the same time they testify of Him that He speaks without detours. They themselves seek the honor of men, but from Him they testify that He teaches the way of God in truth, without regarding the person before whom He stands.

Following on their flattery, they ask Him a trick question about paying taxes. They want to know from Him whether or not according to Him it is lawful for them to pay taxes to Caesar, or not. With this question they think they can catch Him. If He said 'yes', they could discredit Him among the people as one who accepts Roman rule and thus cannot be the Messiah. The Messiah would come after all to deliver them from the rulers and establish His kingdom. If he would say 'no', they could accuse Him to the Roman government as an insurgent and agitator.

Of course the Lord sees through their cunning. He knows their true intentions. The whole inner thinking of man has no secrets for Him, but is open and laid bare to His eyes (Heb 4:13). He will discover them to themselves and make them go away ashamed. He – Who Himself had no money! – commands them to show Him a denarius, a Roman payment currency. They take one from their purse, put it on their hand and show it to the Lord.

Then the Lord asks whose likeness and inscription it does have. Their answer is correct: "Caesar's." Both likeness and inscription on the money in circulation in Israel, the likeness and what is written on it, indicate that Israel is under strange dominion. This is the result of the people's unfaithfulness to God (Neh 9:34-36).

When the spies have given the correct answer, the Lord Jesus does not so much give an answer to their earlier question but a command. This command is twofold. On the one hand they have to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's. This also applies to us (Rom 13:7). By using the money of the occupier, they acknowledge that a stranger rules over them. If they are honest, they know that this is so as punishment for their deviation from God. On the other hand, they have to render to God the things that

are God's. And God stands before them. In this way He places them in the light of God, which always happens to everyone who comes to Him.

It is also important to see that the Lord does not sacrifice one duty for another. They do. They set one duty against the other, but they do not fulfill either as it should be because they seek themselves and not the honor of God. The plans of these cunning people and those who had sent them are exposed, reversed and directed against themselves.

If the answer gets through to them, they are amazed. They must have been clever people who have reviewed all kinds of plans and questions before they came up with their ultimate question. Spies are resourceful. The question they asked gave them, they were convinced, a guarantee that they could catch Him. How sobered they are now, completely knocked out by it. The spies have not been able with their cunning approach to catch Him in a statement that would have made it possible for them to take Him out of favor with the people or deliver Him to the rule and the authority of the governor.

Lk 20:27-33 | Question About the Resurrection

27 Now there came to Him some of the Sadducees (who say that there is no resurrection), 28 and they questioned Him, saying, "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that IF A MAN'S BROTHER DIES, having a wife, AND HE IS CHILDLESS, HIS BROTHER SHOULD MARRY THE WIFE AND RAISE UP CHILDREN TO HIS BROTHER. 29 Now there were seven brothers; and the first took a wife and died childless; 30 and the second 31 and the third married her; and in the same way all seven died, leaving no children. 32 Finally the woman died also. 33 In the resurrection therefore, which one's wife will she be? For all seven had married her."

The fourth topic in the temple teaching given by the Lord is about the resurrection and about life in the world of resurrection. The reason for this is the question of another group of opponents that presents itself, because satan has more accomplices. The Sadducees come forward in the fight to overthrow the Lord Jesus. These people are the rationalists. They only believe what they can reason with their intellect. That's why they say that there is no resurrection (Acts 23:8), for there is no proof for it, they claim.

The Sadducees come to the Lord with an ordinance from Moses about the duty of a husband's brother (Gen 38:8; Deu 25:5). They do not doubt this ordinance, but in their unbelief they do signal a problem here when they think of the resurrection. That they present to Him as a trap.

To ridicule the resurrection, they present Him with the imaginary case of seven brothers who all marry the same wife one after the other to comply with the ordinance of Moses. They indicate that the first one marries, but dies after a short time, childless. According to the duty of a husband's brother, the second of the seven brothers takes her, but he also dies after a short time, also childless. So it goes on until all seven brothers have had her and all have died childless. Finally, the woman dies.

Then they ask their question. We can imagine the hidden smile of someone who thinks that the other one has no solution. The question that the Sadducees ask is who of the seven she will be married to in the resurrection. She was the legal wife of all seven brothers. How should this be done in the resurrection? She can't be married to all seven men at the same time there, can she? The law is clear about that too.

With this difficult, if not unanswerable question, they think that the Lord is at a loss for words. With this example, they have cleverly demonstrated that the resurrection is nonsense. Satisfied they cross their arms and wait for His reaction. It comes faster than thought and overpowers them.

Lk 20:34-40 | Teaching About the Resurrection

34 Jesus said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, 35 but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; 36 for they cannot even die anymore, because they are like angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. 37 But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the [passage about the burning] bush, where he calls the Lord THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB. 38 Now He is not the God of the dead but of the living; for all live to Him." 39 Some of the scribes answered and said, "Teacher, You have spoken well." 40 For they did not have courage to question Him any longer about anything.

In His answer, the Lord first refers to the age in which they now find themselves as the age in which is married and given in marriage. It is part of life on earth, on this side of death. Then He speaks about the age and the area after death. The Spirit also speaks about this through Paul in 1 Corinthians 15. The Lord says here, and Paul through the Spirit there, that on the other side of death very different ordinances apply. It is the same body, but after the resurrection it is no longer natural but spiritual (1Cor 15:42-44).

Those who attain to the resurrection are “those who are considered worthy”. These are the people on earth who have chosen Him and shared in His rejection. “That age” is the future age of the kingdom of peace, but then the heavenly side of it, where all those who have risen from the dead or changed at the coming of the Lord are to be found (1Cor 15:51). The resurrection from the dead means a resurrection from among the dead, a resurrection whereby others remain in death.

The dead who remain in death are the dead who are not considered worthy to attain to that age and the resurrection. They are “the rest of the dead” (Rev 20:5), by whom are meant those who died in unbelief. They only become alive after ‘that age’, that is after the millennial kingdom of peace, to appear and be judged before the great white throne (Rev 20:11-12).

In the resurrection, for those who are considered worthy to attain to it, the circumstances are completely different from those on earth. One of those changed circumstances is that there is no marriage anymore. Marriage is purposed by God to populate the earth (Gen 1:28) and since the Fall also to preserve the human race. In the resurrection, however, it is so that no one can die anymore. There is no decrease in the number of people who participate in it and therefore there is no need to provide for offspring through marriages. In this respect the believers are like angels.

However, they are much more than angels. They are sons of God, for they are sons of the resurrection. They have left death behind them and everything that goes with it and have been brought into connection to God as His sons.

God is the God of the resurrection. The Sadducees had appealed to Moses for their cunning questioning. The Lord now also points them to Moses, namely to a statement by Moses at the burning bush (Exo 3:6,15-16). He

uses this statement to make it clear that Moses also believed in the resurrection. This is evident from the fact that Moses calls the Lord, Who is the LORD, Yahweh, “the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob”.

It is remarkable that Moses here calls God the God of each patriarch individually and not of them together, as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God is in a personal relationship with each of them individually. The Lord says that Moses said this, while in Exodus 3 it says that God says it (Exo 3:15). That is because Moses wrote it down and agreed to it.

Another important aspect of this quotation is that it shows that with death man does not cease to exist. The moment God makes this statement to Moses, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob have long since died. But to God they are not dead, because for Him they are alive, they live in His presence.

The Sadducees assume that the relationship that is formed between God and man in this life is only temporary. That is not the case. Because God is eternal, the relationships He forms with someone are also eternal. God has no connection with those who are dead, that is to say those who died in unbelief, but with those who died in the faith. To Him, all who have died in faith, live.

Some of the scribes think this a wonderful answer to their doctrinal enemies, the Sadducees. They are complimenting the Lord for it. They judge He has spoken well by taking the Sadducees down. They are indeed silenced and remain silent, afraid to ask Him something else so as not to suffer another defeat. For the scribes, who enjoy the Lord’s answer, the Lord in His turn has a question.

Lk 20:41-44 | Question About the Son of David

41 Then He said to them, “How [is it that] they say the Christ is David’s son?

42 For David himself says in the book of Psalms,

‘THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD,

‘SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND,

43 UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET.’”

44 Therefore David calls Him ‘Lord,’ and how is He his son?”

The fifth topic of temple teaching concerns the place and glory of the Person of the Lord Jesus. To make this clear, He finally asks the scribes a question. They know the law so well, don't they? It is clear from the law that the Christ is David's Son. There is no doubt about that in any scribe, it is their firm conviction and pride. But, the Lord asks, how in fact is that possible? For "in the book of Psalms" it says that David calls Him Lord.

The Lord Jesus quotes the first verse of Psalm 110 for them (Psa 110:1). It is the special verse from which the Old Testament shows the exaltation of the Messiah at God's right hand in heaven after His death and resurrection, to which is also linked an "until". It is a Messianic verse that refers to a period when He is in heaven, while the enemies on earth still have the say over God's people. That period comes to an end – indicated by the word "until" – when God will say that the Messiah may claim His right to the earth (Psa 2:8). Then God will make His enemies a footstool for His feet. It is not that far yet. Only faith sees that He is glorified at God's right hand after the people and especially the leaders have rejected Him as their Messiah.

Faith also sees that He, Who is the great Son of David, is also the Lord of David. Faith sees that the Lord Jesus can say with regard to David what He says with regard to Abraham, namely that He was already there before David was there (Jn 8:58).

Faith sees in Him the summary of all previous teaching:

1. The authority in the temple, the church, is with the glorified Lord (verses 1-8).
2. Through Him we go into the sanctuary to bring offerings to God (verses 9-19).
3. All rulers on earth reign by the grace of God. They have derivative authority which we have to respect because it comes from God. We have also to bear in mind that the Lord Jesus is God (verses 20-26).
4. Only in Him do we learn about the resurrection in its true meaning and what its glorious consequences are (verses 27-40).

Unbelief is blind to all this. Therefore, there is no answer to the Lord's question as to how it is possible that David calls Him Lord while He is His

Son. The last category of opponents is also silenced, but they do not subject themselves either.

Lk 20:45-47 | Beware of the Scribes

45 And while all the people were listening, He said to the disciples, 46 "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love respectful greetings in the market places, and chief seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets, 47 who devour widows' houses, and for appearance's sake offer long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation."

After the Lord has silenced all His different adversaries with their different attacks, He turns to His disciples. All the people hear what He says to them. His words contain a warning especially for the last category of opponents, that of the scribes. They are thoroughly corrupt people. The disciples must beware of these people.

Those people like to walk in conspicuous robes, so that they can be admired by everyone. They also love to be greeted exuberantly in the market places, so everyone can notice how important they are. In the enclosed rooms of the synagogues and the houses they like to take the first places, so that everyone can look up to them. How do they want their pride to be caressed!

With their very hypocritical, pious appearance, they are in reality devouring monsters. The defenseless widows are prey to their greed. While praying for the sake of appearances and giving the impression of how much they live with God, they think up evil in their heart against their socially weak neighbor.

God stands up for the widows. He is their Judge (Psa 68:5). He will severely punish these corrupt leaders for their feigned piety, which they use as a covering for their rapacity. Their punishment will be more severe than that of those who have lived wickedly without hypocrisy.

Luke 21

Lk 21:1-4 | The Offering of the Widow

1 And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury. 2 And He saw a poor widow putting in two small copper coins. 3 And He said, "Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all [of them]; 4 for they all out of their surplus put into the offering; but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on."

When the Lord looks up, He sees that rich people put their gifts into the treasury. He knows every giver of every gift and knows whether they are rich or poor. He also knows *how much* they give and also *how* they give, from which mind. He observes and notices that a poor widow puts two small copper coins into the treasury. Perhaps it is one of those widows about whom He has just spoken, at the end of the previous chapter, a widow whose house is eaten. Instead of complaining about it, she brings her last money to the treasury as a gift to God, for the maintenance of the temple, God's house (cf. 2Kgs 12:9).

Isn't it a useless gift, since the temple will be destroyed, as we see in the following verses? No, for she does not give to a temple that is about to be destroyed, but to God, and He appreciates every gift that comes from a completely dedicated heart.

A gift may be small or even negligible in amount, but the true value lies in the motive of giving. That may also be a great comfort for us. The Lord praises the poor widow for her gift. According to His appreciation, she has put in more than all the rich together have put in. He knows that all the rich have put in from their abundance and that their abundance has not decreased by their gift. He also knows that the poor widow did not give a little from her lack, but everything she had.

She has had nothing left for herself. She has even, as the Lord has said, given "all that she had to live on", that is, she has given herself. This means that she has given in the full confidence that God will take care of her (Jer

49:11). That is giving according to the heart of God. True disciples give like this widow.

Luke writes more about widows than the other evangelists (Lk 2:36-38; 4:26; 7:11-17; 18:1-8; 21:1-4). He presents the Lord Jesus as a Man Who was born, lived and died in poverty. The Lord pays special attention to these women. That must be the case with us too. It is even an important expression of pure and undefiled religion (Jam 1:27).

Lk 21:5-11 | Signs of the End Time

5 And while some were talking about the temple, that it was adorned with beautiful stones and votive gifts, He said, 6 "[As for] these things which you are looking at, the days will come in which there will not be left one stone upon another which will not be torn down." 7 They questioned Him, saying, "Teacher, when therefore will these things happen? And what [will be] the sign when these things are about to take place?" 8 And He said, "See to it that you are not misled; for many will come in My name, saying, 'I am [He],' and, 'The time is near.' Do not go after them. 9 When you hear of wars and disturbances, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end [does] not [follow] immediately." 10 Then He continued by saying to them, "Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, 11 and there will be great earthquakes, and in various places plagues and famines; and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven.

After the Lord's teaching about giving, in which He has focused the attention of His disciples on a poor widow, the disciples' eyes wander to the temple building. Some disciples express their feelings of admiration for that building. They are impressed by what they see with their eyes. Beautiful, as the temple is standing there.

They have forgotten how this building was actually made to a house of commerce by the apostate people and that it is no longer the house of God, but a house of men. Only for faith does it retain its value, as the poor widow has shown. The disciples, as always, are concerned with outward glory. Therefore they are blind to the inner reality of corruption.

The Lord responds to their remark and speaks about what will soon be happening with everything they too are so attached to. His speech about

the future of the temple, the city and the people will have been very sobering for them. He says that the things they see with admiration will be completely destroyed. By this He refers to the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem by the Romans in the year 70. The disciples want to know more about that. They ask Him about the time it will happen and by what things they can know that this time has come.

The Lord gives as the first characteristic of that time that there will be deceivers. People will present themselves under His Name, people who present themselves as Messiah. They will use the same words He has used in saying that the time is near. They should not follow these deceivers. Besides deceivers, there will also be wars and disturbances. If they hear about it, they don't have to become terrified. These are things that have to take place first, but do not yet herald the end. Everything the Lord says here relates to the time after His ascension and the formation of the church.

The Lord continues with His teaching on coming events. He does not predict a time of peace, but of great unrest. Nations will fight each other and kingdoms will take up arms against each other. Creation does not fail to express itself either. The earth will be moved by great earthquakes. Natural disasters will cause famines and terrible diseases. Heaven will also speak. At the firmament, terrible things will happen that make a big impression. Great signs from heaven will be seen on earth.

Lk 21:12-19 | Persecution and Endurance

12 "But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name's sake. 13 It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony. 14 So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves; 15 for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute. 16 But you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put [some] of you to death, 17 and you will be hated by all because of My name. 18 Yet not a hair of your head will perish. 19 By your endurance you will gain your lives.

Before the events of which the Lord speaks in the previous verses take place, the disciples will be the targets of people's hatred. They will be

taken prisoner and to this end being prosecuted. Then they will be delivered to religious leaders in the synagogues and brought before worldly authorities, as happened to the Lord Jesus. It also happens because they are connected to Him, it is for the sake of His Name. We see this happening in the book of Acts (Acts 4:3; 5:17-18; 6:8-12).

The Lord encourages them by telling them that it will be a testimony to them instead of destroying their testimony. He reassures them that they do not need to prepare beforehand how to account for their actions. They may rely on Him in this. We also find this regularly in the book of Acts (Acts 4:8,19; 5:29). Every speech we have there cannot be prepared because they will suddenly be forced to.

He will give them the words in their mouths. They will show wisdom that will silence their opponents (Acts 6:10). Their opponents will not be able to offer reasonable resistance. So they will fall into unreasonable, cruel reactions. Their opponents will not only be the religious leaders or the secular authorities, but even in relations where security and safety should be expected and which they have always enjoyed until then.

Thus, the members of the family they belong to will turn against them and also other family members. Also their friends, people with whom you share everything and who are there for you in times of need, will reveal themselves as opponents. The only reason for this massive, general hatred is the Name of the Lord Jesus. Choosing Him will result in a radical change in all existing relationships. The hearts of all will turn against them.

The Lord also has the encouragement for them that nothing will be lost of what they have received, even, so to speak, not a single hair of their head. This does not mean that they cannot be killed (verse 16), but He says that even if they were to be killed, all will be made right in the resurrection. This is pointed out in verse 19.

In all distress and suffering it comes down to endurance. By endurance they will gain their lives. This does not mean that it comes down to doing it in own strength. It means that the true faith in the Lord Jesus is shown by endurance and not succumbing under the pressure. In order to endure, they may seek their strength from the Lord.

Lk 21:20-27 | Fulfillment of the Times of the Gentiles

20 "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near. 21 Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city; 22 because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled. 23 Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people; 24 and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. 25 "There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, 26 men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 27 Then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN A CLOUD with power and great glory.

The siege of Jerusalem to which the Lord refers cannot be the siege that has taken place in recent days by the armies of the Assyrians led by the king of the North. The Lord speaks here of the siege with the subsequent destruction that will happen by the Romans in the year 70. It proves that it are "the times of the Gentiles" (verse 24) that started with Nebuchadnezzar, but that will also one day be "fulfilled". During the times of the Gentiles Jerusalem is trampled under foot by the nations. This shows that the Lord Jesus speaks of the present time. The times of the Gentiles will come to an end when He returns to earth.

What the Lord describes with respect to the situation that arises when the Romans rise up against Jerusalem, does have the same character as the siege of Jerusalem in the last days. In the last days Jerusalem will also be trampled under foot and destroyed, but shortly thereafter saved from distress by the coming of Christ from heaven on earth. Then He will destroy His enemies with the sword coming out of His mouth (Rev 19:15).

The destruction that Luke writes down from the Lord's mouth cannot be an end-time event. The destruction was followed by the humiliation of the Jewish capital, which was then occupied by one nation after another. This

continues until the term God has set for the domination of the Gentiles has come to an end. This is typically something for our evangelist. Matthew and Mark speak of “the abomination of desolation” (Mt 24:15; Mk 13:14), which can only be about the last crisis. Although the circumstances are like those “on the day the Son of Man is revealed” (Lk 17:30), here it is about an imminent event.

That there are certainly similarities is shown by the Lord’s warnings. As in view of the last days, the Lord warns here not to lose any time and to flee from the advancing enemy (cf. Lk 17:31). Wherever they are, they have to make sure they are away from Jerusalem. It is folly to believe out of an unhealthy love for the city that something valuable can be taken away from it, or even to think that it would make sense to defend the city. God’s judgment comes on the city. Therefore it is not only unwise, but also disobedient to be guided by any connection with the city.

God fulfills the word He has spoken. He has said that if the city continues to resist Him, He will destroy it. The Lord Jesus foretold it (Lk 20:16). Revenge will strike all life, even in its earliest stages. The need will be great in the land because of the wrath that God must bring on “this” people, that is the people of Israel that killed Christ. Any resistance is meaningless. The enemy is supreme. Many inhabitants will be killed by the sword. Others will be captured and taken to all nations.

That doesn’t happen in the end time, but in the year 70. Then Jerusalem will lose its glory and independence. It will not so much be a subdued city, but a despised city on that the nations will trample on. This is how it was until 1948, when Israel became an independent state again. Yet even today it is still a land that exists by the grace of certain powerful nations and at the same time is despised and seen with the greatest enmity by the surrounding nations.

“The times of the Gentiles” is the period when world domination is given to the Gentiles. We see that this is expressed in the rule by the four world empires about which we read in the book of Daniel. When Nebuchadnezzar received from God world domination including authority over Israel, the times of the Gentiles began (Dan 2:37-40; 7:2-7,17).

But there is an “until”. This word indicates that this situation is coming to an end. The end of the domination and the trampling under foot of Jerusalem by the nations is heralded by signs that will appear in sun and moon and stars. These signs in heaven are accompanied by dismay among the nations and not only in Israel. There will be an increasing fear among the nations of terrible things, of threats of disasters of all kinds. The nations are in perplexity.

At the moment I write this (March 2008), in the Netherlands the movie ‘Fitna’ by the politician Geert Wilders about islam is one of the boosters of this general feeling of fear. Climate change, for example, also causes panic. The fact that people’s leaders speak soothingly about such signals or claim to have things under control with grandiloquent speech does not take anything away from the fear that people feel in their innermost being.

The fear will be so great, that people will faint. They see the threat of doom growing ever greater. They will try to do everything to turn the tide, but it will turn out to be useless. They have to do with forces in the heavens, spiritual forces. People have surrendered themselves to them because they have excluded God.

The greatest disaster that will strike them is the coming of the Son of Man. They will see Him come in a cloud (Dan 7:13), the sign of His glory. He will then reveal power and great glory. They despised the Baby in the manger, wrapped in cloths. They did not want Him, and rejected Him, and killed Him. Then they will stand face to face with Him (Rev 1:7) and will not escape.

Lk 21:28-33 | The Fig Tree and All the Trees

28 But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” 29 Then He told them a parable: “Behold the fig tree and all the trees; 30 as soon as they put forth [leaves], you see it and know for yourselves that summer is now near. 31 So you also, when you see these things happening, recognize that the kingdom of God is near. 32 Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place. 33 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.

What is a horror for the world is an encouragement for the disciples. They may know that their redemption is drawing near when these things begin to take place. In the same way, instead of worrying about the developments in the world, we too should be encouraged by these developments, because thereby we know that our redemption is near. To the people of Israel, redemption means that the Lord Jesus comes to redeem them from their enemies by judging their enemies. To us as members of the church, redemption means that Christ comes to take us out of the world, from among our enemies. In our days we see the omens of everything He has said. It is therefore important to pay attention to the signs of the times.

To help us with this, the Lord tells us a parable with which He illustrates His teaching. With this He shows us how we can recognize the things that begin to take place even more clear. We have to behold the fig tree and all the trees. It is again characteristic of Luke that he not only speaks about the fig tree, but also about all the trees. The fig tree is a picture of Israel and all the trees are a picture of the nations around Israel. It shows again how much Luke is the evangelist for the Gentiles, the nations. When we see that these trees put forth leaves, we know that winter is over and summer is near. The putting forth leaves of the trees indicates new life.

We recognize this picture in the beginning of the restoration of Israel as a nation. After being trampled on and despised by the nations for a long time – and this is still the case – we have seen since 1948 that Israel is once again a state. Life begins to come into it (cf. Eze 37:1-8). It is not yet summer, but we can see the first signs of the people's restoration.

The nations around Israel also come to life. The nations spoken of by the prophets, will make themselves heard again after many centuries. We could think, for example, of Syria and Egypt, but also of the restoration of the Roman empire that we are seeing taking shape again in the Europe Union. They are trees putting forth leaves. With this we see the signs of the times presenting themselves. By observing these developments the disciples, and we too, know that the kingdom of God has come near. Summer is coming.

The Lord Jesus, when He was on earth, preached the kingdom of God as having come near. Then it did not come because He was rejected, but

it will not pass away. He will not be rejected again. When He comes, He will establish it in public glory. What we see happening in the Middle East indicates that the kingdom of God, in terms of its public form, has come near again in our days and will soon actually be established.

The Lord adds to His example the assurance that “this generation” will experience everything He has painted. This generation is the kind of people living around Him at that moment, the kind that brings Him to the cross. The same kind is still present, for He is still the rejected One and the world still has no place for Him.

The certainty of His words – “My words”, the words of the Lord Jesus – is more certain than heaven and earth. Heaven and the earth will pass away and instead a new heaven and a new earth will come (2Pet 3:11-13). Such a change His words does not know. He is God and His words are God’s words. What is true of God’s Word applies to His words in the same way (Lk 16:17; 1Pet 1:25).

Lk 21:34-36 | Alertness Required

34 “Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap; 35 for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth. 36 But keep on the alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

The Lord concludes His temple teaching with an emphatic appeal to His disciples to keep on the alert. He imposes on them the responsibility to hold on to what He has told them as a guideline for their life. They must not forget His warnings, which can easily happen when they let their hearts be weighted down by what life offers. If they don’t stay sober, but are influenced by worldly thinking, they become dissipated. Dissipation is a condition resulting from excessive wine consumption that causes drowsiness.

Drunkenness goes a step further. Someone who is drunk is also unable to think soberly, but nevertheless believes that he is still in complete control of the matter, while he utters nonsensical language and swings back and

forth. By associating with the world and being integrated into the world, someone completely loses sight of reality. The worries of life can also take up so much of a person's mind that he no longer thinks of the coming of the Lord Jesus.

For such people who once professed to be Christians, but who have not continued to look forward to the coming of Christ in their hearts, that day comes like a trap. The same goes for people who see life only as a party or for people who only see the worries. They do not lift up their heads, but look down to the earth. It turns out that they belong to the earth.

The day of the Lord comes like a trap for all who dwell on the face of all the earth. This kind of people is regularly mentioned in the book of Revelation as people who claim life on earth and live in revolt against God and are judged for it (Rev 8:13; 11:10; 13:8,12,14). They see the earth as their home and live for everything there is on earth. They don't think of heaven, it doesn't exist for them. Therefore it will come on them suddenly when they see that heaven opens (Rev 19:11). They never thought about it and when they heard about it, they rejected it as ridiculous.

The disciples are warned not to resemble them. Hence the Lord says once again that they must keep on the alert at all times. They should not think that they will be able to resist all deception in their own strength. He therefore urges them to pray at all times, that is to say to constantly turn to God and ask Him for help to keep them from all dangers of deviation. Only then will they be able to escape the things He has described.

Only in this way will they also be able to stand before the Son of Man when He comes in His glory. When the Son of Man comes, He will consume those who have shown that they have no life of God. This is evident from the fact that they did not look forward to Him. All who have life of God will continue to look forward to Him praying and will be allowed to share in His glory. There is no judgment for them; for He bore it in their stead on the cross.

Lk 21:37-38 | The Lord Continues to Teach In the Temple

37 Now during the day He was teaching in the temple, but at evening He would go out and spend the night on the mount that is called Olivet. 38 And

all the people would get up early in the morning [to come] to Him in the temple to listen to Him.

In this last week of His life on earth before the cross, the Lord teaches the Word of God during the day. He continues until the end, tirelessly. He spends the night on Mount Olivet because He has no house, but especially because He separates Himself from the guilty and condemned city. Mount Olivet is also the mountain of the future.

The nights are not long for the Lord. Early in the morning all the people come to Him again in the temple. They want to hear His words because they are hungry for them. And the Lord teaches, however much He knows that, under the influence of the religious leaders, in a few days' time they will cry: "Crucify Him." What a grace!

Luke 22

Lk 22:1-6 | The Plan to Kill the Lord Jesus

1 Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is called the Passover, was approaching. 2 The chief priests and the scribes were seeking how they might put Him to death; for they were afraid of the people. 3 And Satan entered into Judas who was called Iscariot, belonging to the number of the twelve. 4 And he went away and discussed with the chief priests and officers how he might betray Him to them. 5 They were glad and agreed to give him money. 6 So he consented, and [began] seeking a good opportunity to betray Him to them apart from the crowd.

It has now become Thursday of the last week of the Lord's life on earth before His death. The events of the previous chapter took place on Tuesday. Of Wednesday we hear nothing. Thursday is the eve of the Passover that will take place the next day, Friday. According to the Jewish calendar, Friday starts on Thursday evening at six o'clock.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread is here identified with the Passover, although it follows the Passover. The Feast of Unleavened Bread, which lasts seven days, is a picture of the whole life of the believer. Leaven is a picture of sin, which may no longer have a place in the life of the believer. It may be rightly called a 'feast' to be allowed to live like this.

The foundation is the Passover, the sacrifice on the basis of which the people were delivered from Egypt. However, the Passover was not only a testimony to the deliverance from Egypt, but also an example of the great sacrifice that was yet to come. It points ahead to it. This sacrifice will soon be brought in the Person of the Lamb of God, for the Passover "was approaching".

During the Passover there may not be any leaven in the houses (Exo 12:8,15). The Passover is celebrated on the fourteenth day of the month of Nisan (Lev 23:5). The Feast of Unleavened Bread begins a day later. Because leaven is already not allowed to be present during the Passover, the two feasts are very much interwoven by the Jews.

While the people are preparing for the feast, the religious leaders are making plans to kill Christ. Here we see how the wickedness of man and the counsel of God coincide. God uses man's wickedness to fulfill His plans without taking anything away from man's responsibility. Satan sees his chance and takes possession of Judas, of whom it is mentioned that he is also called "Iscariot". This is to avoid confusion with the other Judas.

The most tragic mention is that he "belonged to the number of the twelve". He accompanied the Lord Jesus for three years and now makes himself available as an instrument of Satan to commit the greatest crime ever. The contrast is incomprehensible. Judas is the proof that someone can be in the closest relationship to Christ and yet reveal himself as His adversary because he has no new life.

He goes away to offer himself to the leaders and to discuss with them how he might betray Him to them. Judas, who has seen so many acts of the Lord's grace, has himself remained cold to it. Deliberately he wants to hand over the greatest Benefit ever given to people into the hands of murderers to earn some money.

When he comes to the leaders and offers himself, they are filled with devilish joy. They all agree that they like to use the services of Judas and they want to pay him for that. Here, two parties find each other, each acting out of their own interest. Judas knows their murderousness and they know his greed. The Christ of God is the stake. He brings out the worst in every person who does not surrender to Him in His light.

Judas agrees with the amount they offer him. With the money in his pocket (Mt 26:15) he begins a search for an opportunity to hand over the Lord to them. This must be done without causing much of a stir, because care must be taken to ensure that there is no popular uprising. After all, the people are still very much on this Benefactor's side.

Lk 22:7-13 | Preparations to Eat the Passover

7 Then came the [first] day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover [lamb] had to be sacrificed. 8 And Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, so that we may eat it." 9 They said to Him, "Where do You want us to prepare it?" 10 And He said to them, "When you have entered the

city, a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him into the house that he enters. 11 And you shall say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher says to you, "Where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?"' 12 And he will show you a large, furnished upper room; prepare it there." 13 And they left and found [everything] just as He had told them; and they prepared the Passover.

Then the first day of the Unleavened Bread begins, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. Time goes on and the events that have been anticipated and foretold in previous centuries are about to be fulfilled. The shadows fade away and that to which they refer, comes into the light.

That the Gospel according to Luke is the introduction to Paul's letters finds here a new proof. Paul connects the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Passover spiritually. He speaks of "Christ our Passover" and of "celebrate the feast ... with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1Cor 5:7-8). Further on in the first letter to the Corinthians he speaks about the Lord's Supper as represented here by Luke (verses 19-20; 1Cor 11:23-26).

If we understand the Passover, we will also understand the Lord's Supper. The Passover is about the judgment of the firstborn, the pride and strength of Egypt, but also the pride and strength of the Israelites. The firstborns could only be spared if they were hiding behind the blood of the lamb. But that is not the only thing. Sparing, not dying, is only negative. The sequel to Exodus 12 shows that God spares to take for Himself. The firstborns must be sanctified for Him. That is positive. The Passover is a feast of sanctification, a feast of dedication. The church is the "church of the firstborn" (Heb 12:23). We are all of and for Him. That is why the Passover is followed by the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

The Lord Jesus is not handed over to Judas or the religious leaders or the Roman government at the time *they* decided. *He* determines the time, the way, the place for the Passover and thus the time of His being handed over into the hands of men. While He knows perfectly well the evil plans that His enemies make together with the traitor, He acts in perfect dependence on His Father. His Father's plan states that He will eat the Passover together with His disciples. So that has to happen.

To prepare the Passover, the Lord sends two of His disciples, mentioned by name, Peter and John, to prepare it for them. It is striking that only they write about the Lamb in their writings (1Pet 1:19; Jn 1:29,36; Rev 5:6). Peter and John ask where He wants them to prepare it. This is also the important question for every believer today when it comes to where he will celebrate the Lord's Supper.

The Lord does not give an address, but does give indications. He wants them to look out for a man they will meet and who carries a pitcher of water. There are not many men with pitchers of water walking around. Water carriers are mostly women. So it will be a remarkable appearance. They must follow him and enter the house he enters.

For us, this is an important indication when it is about the question where believers will celebrate the Lord's Supper. Discovering the place where the Lord wants to come together with His own is accompanied by spiritual exercises. This was also the case when God spoke to the Israelites about the place He had chosen for His Name to dwell there (Deu 12:5; cf. Song 1:7-8; Jn 1:38-40).

The man with the pitcher of water on his head represents someone who in his life – of which the pitcher is a picture – applies the Word of God – of which the water is a picture – in its cleansing power (cf. Eph 5:26) and does the same with regard to the place where the Lord is. The Lord uses believers who are faithful to His Word to tell other believers who also want to listen to Him and be with Him about that place of coming together.

The man brings the water to the house. With that water, the Lord may have washed the disciples' feet (Jn 13:1-20). We must be aware that we have to submit to the cleansing power of the Word when we come together to celebrate the Lord's Supper. The place where Christ gathers His own is a clean place.

When they entered, they had to ask the lord of the house on His behalf, the Master, for the guest room to eat the Passover. The word "guest room" is the same word as in Luke 2 where it is translated "inn" (Lk 2:7). It only occurs once more in the New Testament, in Mark 14, where the Lord speaks of "My guest room" (Mk 14:14).

In the first guest room there was no place for the Lord (Lk 2:7). This is as it were the inn of the world where there is only room for people of the world, for people 'from below'. The Lord also does not seek a dwelling place in the world. Opposite this inn He has His own 'guest room' where He is the Host and invites His own to be a guest with Him. There is room there for all true disciples, however weak and often unspiritual they may be.

The Lord foretells His disciples that the lord of the house will be of immediate service to them. He worked in the heart of that lord the willingness to do so, as He did in the hearts of the owners of the colt He needed (Lk 19:31-35). He will show them a "large, furnished upper room".

The accommodation where Christ invites His own is an "upper room", an exalted room, a room above the level of the world, a room that is connected to heaven and not to the earth. There is a heavenly atmosphere. It is also a "large" room, there is room for many. And it is a "furnished" room, a place prepared by Him, no one needs to do anything about it as if something was missing.

Peter and John go on their way and it all goes as the Lord has told them. In accordance with His command, they prepare the Passover at the designated place. They didn't look forward to a place along the way that seemed suitable to them, but they simply followed His command.

Lk 22:14-18 | The Celebration of the Passover

14 When the hour had come, He reclined [at the table], and the apostles with Him. 15 And He said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; 16 for I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." 17 And when He had taken a cup [and] given thanks, He said, "Take this and share it among yourselves; 18 for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes."

The Lord reclined at the predetermined time. The apostles may recline with Him. He takes the initiative. He knows that everything now goes to the fulfillment of what is written about Him. In the law everything points to Him. He is the true Lamb. The prophets also pointed to Him as the suffering Servant of the LORD.

In His infinite and therefore incomprehensible and at the same time overwhelming love for us, He is addressing Himself at this moment to His apostles with an expression of His heart from which His deep desire for fellowship with them speaks. He expresses His earnest desire to eat "this Passover" with them.

It will be the last Passover, for during this Passover He shall be delivered, and He will suffer and die. During this Passover, the Passover will be fulfilled in His Person. That stands before Him. Before He will endure the suffering, He would like to share with His apostles something about the true meaning of the Passover for Him and for them. It is not about fulfilling a ritual, but about fulfilling God's counsel with a view to the kingdom in the hearts of His own.

The Lord informs His apostles that He no longer attaches any significance to the Passover as a meal of remembrance. The celebration and remembrance of the deliverance from Egypt on the basis of the lamb has lost its meaning through His rejection. When He establishes the kingdom of God, He will be the glorious center of that established kingdom. He will establish it after He has delivered His people from their enemies by judging them, as He did in Egypt. In the kingdom of peace which will follow then, His people will honor Him with their sacrifices, and He will have fellowship with them therein, of which eating is the symbol. Now suffering awaits Him.

In another sense, the Passover is fulfilled in the kingdom of God as it now exists in the hearts of those who believe in Him (Rom 14:17). Through His surrender to the cross He can eat with us, which means to have fellowship with us (cf. Rev 3:20).

The cup is also part of the Passover. He also gives it to them to share among themselves. The cup speaks of joy. It presents that joy to them. They may rejoice about the deliverance once from Egypt. We may rejoice in our deliverance from bondage of sin.

He Himself will no longer have any part in it on earth. Only when the kingdom of God is established He will rejoice with them about the foundation of that kingdom that He has yet to lay.

In another sense, the kingdom of God has already come, namely there where Christ is recognized in faith. All those born of God have entered into the kingdom of God (Jn 3:5) and with them the Lord rejoices about the consequences of His work. Every time we come together, we may experience it. Then we may express the joy in our hearts and share this joy with Him.

Lk 22:19-20 | Institution of the Lord's Supper

19 And when He had taken [some] bread [and] given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me." 20 And in the same way [He took] the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood.

Then the Lord takes bread to give it a new meaning, namely that of His body. Before He gives it to His disciples, He thanks God for it. He thanks God for the surrender of His own body, which will soon be hung on the cross. He knows the true meaning of the bread. Yet He thanks God for it. It is a proof of His unconditional surrender to the will of God.

Then He breaks the bread and gives it as broken to His apostles. With this he institutes a new meal of remembrance. It is no longer the Passover as a reminder of the deliverance from Egypt, but the Supper as the lasting testimony of His love. The Lord points out that this bread represents His body which is "given" for them.

The Lord's Supper is presented by Luke in connection with everything that has been *given* to us, as members of the church, on the basis of the work of the Lord Jesus. We can think about that when we meet on the first day of the week to celebrate the Lord's Supper. This is not about the "many", as in the Gospel according to Matthew, but about "you", who are the disciples as the ones who will form the church. It is about seeing what God has given us in this Man, for it is His *body*. It is not only a *given* body, but a body surrendered *to death*.

The Lord says to His disciples to think of Him when they celebrate the Supper. Doing it in "remembrance" of Him is not found in the Gospel according to Matthew and the Gospel according to Mark, but only here and

in 1 Corinthians 11 (1Cor 11:24-25). We think of Him as the dead Christ, while we know Him as the living Christ.

He gives us as members of the church many reasons to think of Him. We may think of Him as the eternal Son Who wanted to become Man for us and we may think about His perfect life and His complete surrender at the cross. We can also see Him in heaven, crowned with glory and honor (Heb 2:9) and we may look forward to His coming. These are all reasons to admire and worship Him.

The cup also receives a new meaning. The Lord Jesus connects to the cup “the new covenant” based on His blood. With this He indicates that the old covenant has fallen short. The old covenant did not bring the promised blessings because the people did not meet the conditions attached to it.

The new covenant does not depend on the faithfulness of man, but on the faithfulness of God and Christ. Christ takes upon Himself all the obligations of the new covenant. He has fulfilled them all and He has shed the blood for it. The blood is “My blood”. It is poured out for His own, so that they are free from the punishment that the old covenant brought with it, to enjoy the blessings that the new covenant brings with it.

Lk 22:21-23 | What Judas Will Do

*21 But behold, the hand of the one betraying Me is with Mine on the table.
22 For indeed, the Son of Man is going as it has been determined; but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!” 23 And they began to discuss among themselves which one of them it might be who was going to do this thing.*

Then the Lord speaks of the betrayer. He does not belong to the new covenant. It grieves His heart that the betrayer is so close to Him, that his hand is with Him on the table, but that there is no real connection between the betrayer and Him.

The fact that Luke mentions this after the Passover does not mean that Judas participated in the Supper. The description in the Gospel according to John clearly shows that Judas left the upper room after he had accepted the morsel of the Passover from the hand of the Lord (Jn 13:30). Luke changes the order – as he often does – to describe the behavior of the different disciples after he described the institution of the Supper.

He starts with Judas. The Lord speaks of what this disciple will do, but without saying who it is. We see what His announcement does to the other disciples. He also shows that immediately after that serious announcement they start a dispute about who is the greatest (verse 24).

He is aware that He as the Son of Man has to undergo everything that has been determined. At the same time He feels the pain that one of His disciples will play a horrible role in this. He can only speak the “woe” about that person. So close and yet so far away. The Lord speaks here of the counsel of God on the one hand, and of the responsibility of man on the other (cf. Acts 2:23).

The words about His being betrayed cause upheaval among the disciples. They wonder among themselves – not who it could be, but – “which one of them” it could be. They understand that there is a betrayer among them, but they have no idea who that might be. This means that Judas never gave any reason to think that he could come to that terrible act. He has always behaved neatly and carried out all the assignments well. He was not under any suspicion. But what is hidden from the disciples’ eyes is completely visible to the Lord.

Lk 22:24-27 | Who Is the Greatest

24 And there arose also a dispute among them [as to] which one of them was regarded to be greatest. 25 And He said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called ‘Benefactors.’ 26 But [it is] not this way with you, but the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant. 27 For who is greater, the one who reclines [at the table] or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines [at the table]? But I am among you as the one who serves.

What the Lord has said about His being betrayed has a moment of attention. For a moment they are touched and talk about who of them was going to do this thing. But soon the conversation takes a turn and a dispute arises about what they consider to be a more important point that has yet to be settled. They have talked about it before (Lk 9:46). They did not manage to solve it and the item is still high on their agenda.

It indicates how obstinate the evil of self-exaltation is. It has to be decided which one of them was regarded to be greatest. Still their thoughts circle around the kingdom to be founded. To their expectation this will be soon. They are sure that it is close by now. Only then the question of what position they will occupy in the kingdom becomes also more urgent.

The Lord puts an end to their dispute by pointing to the kings of the Gentiles who rule over others. They often do this by distributing presents to keep people friendly. The people therefore call them 'benefactors', and in this way, too, the kings and rulers keep their grip on the people. With that He says: "That's how you are trying to rule over each other." But that is not how it should be among believers. It should be the other way around. The greatest is only really great when he takes the place of the youngest.

It is the place that Joseph and David had among their brothers. That didn't give them an advantage, but contempt, to be of no importance. But where did they end? Both on the throne. This will also be the case with them if they take the place of the youngest, that is to say the place of a pupil, of someone who listens to another and receives teaching. And if they want to be a leader – literally 'one who leads' – let them serve. Serving is making oneself available to others, so that the other may benefit from it through their service.

The question of who is greater, the one who reclines or the one who serves, is not difficult to answer when it comes to judge relationships among the people of the world. Of course he who reclines is greater. He can let himself be served. He who serves only has to do as he is instructed. Among subjects of God's kingdom it is the other way around.

The Lord Jesus is and sets the great example in this. He has voluntarily taken the place of serving. He is in their midst as the Servant and His disciples are those who recline. This picture of reclining and serving guests at a table typifies the Lord's service. It shows that He cares for and nourishes others.

In everything He has ever asked of His disciples, He Himself has always been the perfect example. He not only *says* how to do it, He *shows* how to do it and not as a one-off example, but in His whole life. What He says that He is.

Lk 22:28-30 | Encouragements

28 *“You are those who have stood by Me in My trials; 29 and just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you 30 that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*

After the gentle exhortation to serve and not to want to be the greatest, the Lord has an enormous encouragement for His disputing disciples. This can only be said by someone who is truly the youngest. Such a person considers the other person high. We can only really serve if we hold our fellow believers in high esteem. The Lord gives an impressive testimony of those who have shown and will show so much weakness and failure. He tells them that they have always stood by Him in His trials. If we really know how the disciples are and how we as disciples are, such a statement can only be incomparable love.

He passes over the fact that they soon will all leave Him and that one of them will deny Him. He has called them into His service and He has helped them in their service and He has kept them all the time. And yet He explains the fact that they have always stood by Him in His trials as their perseverance!

He also has a huge reward for them. He has for them a kingdom, which means a task to rule and an area to rule over, just as His Father has given that to Him. Here the Lord Jesus places His disciples at the same level before the Father as He. The pleasure that the Father has in giving them the kingdom (Lk 12:32) is the pleasure of the Son. The Father and the Son agree in this and the disciples are the object of it. However, the first thing is not reigning, but fellowship with Christ, which is expressed in eating and drinking at His table.

What a great privilege that He calls us to do that. He has fulfilled the whole work, He deserves everything and in His great grace He lets us share in it, because we were allowed to believe in Him. How great He is!

From the fellowship with Him, His disciples may sit on thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel. The table is the symbol of personal family intimacy; the throne is the symbol of the public display of majesty.

There is a throne for everyone who has not sought a throne for himself here on earth, but has followed the Lord in His rejection. The disciples are given a task of reigning over Israel. Judging does not mean executing the verdict, because that has already happened when the time of reign for the disciples comes. The time of reign is preceded by the judgments we find in the book of Revelation. Judging here means governing with insight for the better, as a blessing.

Lk 22:31-34 | Denial of Peter Foretold

31 "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded [permission] to sift you like wheat; 32 but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." 33 But he said to Him, "Lord, with You I am ready to go both to prison and to death!" 34 And He said, "I say to you, Peter, the rooster will not crow today until you have denied three times that you know Me."

It is not yet the time to rule. The Lord Jesus has yet to be crucified and the disciples awaits a ministry. To be suitable for this they need to get to know their own heart. This is especially true for Peter, who occupies the most important place among the disciples. The Lord therefore addresses Himself especially to him, without forgetting the other disciples.

Satan points his arrows at all disciples. He gladly wants to sift them all like wheat. Sifting is the action of the farmer to separate the chaff from the grains of wheat after a harvest on the threshing floor. He is interested in the wheat because it provides food. The chaff is blown away, collected and burned. In the process of sifting in the life of the believer, the Lord is concerned that everything that is not food disappears from the life of the believer. Satan wants to destroy as many wheat as possible and let the chaff exist.

The Lord knows that His beloved disciple Peter is a special target of satan's attacks. He addresses him with his old name Simon. He does this twice, to remind Peter emphatically who he is by nature. He does this as a warning not to let his old nature work, because satan responds to that.

He also says that he prayed especially for Peter. He knows His weak disciple, how he is more exposed than the others to the danger of a false

trust in the flesh, in his own strength. This is also evident directly from his reaction to the Lord's words. Because he is the object of grace on the Lord's side, his fall will become the means for his strength. When he has learned the weakness of his flesh and the perfection of grace, he will be able to strengthen his brothers.

That the Lord's prayer for him is heard is evident from his repentance and restoration. That he subsequently fulfilled the Lord's commission is evident from his service in the book of Acts and especially from his two letters we have in the Bible. From what happened to Peter, we learn that we need to know our own heart in order to be able to serve others.

Peter immediately defends himself when the Lord tells him of his weakness. No, then the Lord does not know him. He is willing to go along with his Lord to the extreme. It is a sincere manifestation of his ardent love for Christ, but without self-knowledge and in reality pride, for the Lord has pointed out to him his weakness. Then the Lord Jesus tells Peter that he will deny Him three times, soon already and in quick succession. It will happen before the crowing of the rooster, before the dawn of the morning, that is, in the night.

Lk 22:35-38 | A New Situation – a Different Policy

35 And He said to them, "When I sent you out without money belt and bag and sandals, you did not lack anything, did you?" They said, "[No], nothing." 36 And He said to them, "But now, whoever has a money belt is to take it along, likewise also a bag, and whoever has no sword is to sell his coat and buy one. 37 For I tell you that this which is written must be fulfilled in Me, 'AND HE WAS NUMBERED WITH TRANSGRESSORS'; for that which refers to Me has [its] fulfillment." 38 They said, "Lord, look, here are two swords." And He said to them, "It is enough."

The Lord's care has always gone out to His disciples. He cares for a disciple who He knows will deny Him. He cared for them all when He sent them out. When He sent them out, He did so with the instruction to provide nothing and to go in confidence upon Him (Lk 9:3; 10:4). Now He asks them if they have suffered any lack in recent times. Without hesitation, it sounds wholeheartedly that they have lacked "nothing".

The Lord then announces a change in that policy. He will no longer be with them. This requires a different attitude from His disciples. Now they have to take the money belt, if they have one, to be able to take care for themselves. They do not have to rely on the support of others or that others will take care of them.

His rejection will make the coldness of the climate in which they live increasingly noticeable. When they travel, they have to take that into account. Then let them take enough supplies with them. They will also need a sword to defend themselves. That will be even more important than a coat against the nightly cold.

Essentially, however, it is not about literal provisions, but about spiritual provisions. This is evident from the Lord's reaction to the offering of two swords (verse 38). It is about providing spiritual food and arming themselves for the spiritual warfare. The coat speaks of the protection by the Lord when He was with them, which will no longer be there that way, when He is no longer with them.

This does not mean that He will no longer take care of them or protect them, but the situation will be completely different. We too must take into account that there may be changes in our circumstances. Do we obey the Lord's warnings and provide ourselves with what is spiritually necessary? The Lord imposes that responsibility on us. All these precautions are the result of His rejection.

He will be numbered with transgressors. This means that this perfectly obedient and dependent Man will be considered as someone who does not accept authority. The religious leaders in Israel will sue Him as a rebel and blasphemer and condemn Him. Thus will be fulfilled what is written (Isa 53:12).

What will happen to Him has consequences for His disciples. They belong to Him and will share in His fate. The disciples take the Lord's words literally and offer Him two swords. They show by this that they have not understood the spirit of the Lord's words. If He had meant it literally, what would two swords mean? As weapons to defend themselves these would have been totally inadequate.

The Lord let it be and in His wisdom and love gives no further explanation. With the words “it is enough” He leaves the matter for what it is and doesn’t go into it any further.

Lk 22:39-46 | Gethsemane

39 And He came out and proceeded as was His custom to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples also followed Him. 40 When He arrived at the place, He said to them, “Pray that you may not enter into temptation.” 41 And He withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, and He knelt down and [began] to pray, 42 saying, “Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done.” 43 Now an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him. 44 And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground. 45 When He rose from prayer, He came to the disciples and found them sleeping from sorrow, 46 and said to them, “Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not enter into temptation.”

The Lord leaves the guest room where He and His disciples celebrated the Passover and He instituted the Supper. He also taught them there about their feelings toward each other and the change of their position in the world. As usual, He proceeds for the Mount of Olives. He doesn’t let the threatening arrest and all that will follow, stop Him from going to that place. He does not go there because of the special situation that presents itself, but because He was always used to do that. It is not enough for us to pray only when there is a great need, but we must always pray. It is His custom to go to that place of prayer.

The disciples also go with Him. They do not stay behind in the guest room, but go out too and follow Him to the Mount of Olives. He wants to teach them to pray. He also tells them to pray, otherwise they will not be able to stand when the temptation comes.

We can only be kept by watching and praying. Through prayer we come into the presence of God and only there do we get an eye for the evil that would otherwise lure us into the trap. When we are in God’s presence, we will experience the grace to remain standing, for in ourselves we are not able to withstand satan. We need the strength and grace of the Lord.

Without the power of His strength we only dishonor our Master. When we rely on Him, the weakest believer is more than victor. Only in that way the devil can be resisted and he will flee from us.

Luke does not speak of the three disciples whom the Lord takes further in the garden. What He has said is an important word for all disciples. He does not ask to pray *with Him* either, but as the perfect Man He is their example. He tells them to pray. Then He withdraws from them about a stone's throw, as far as human strength reaches, not further. It emphasizes His truly being Man. There He kneels down and prays. He speaks to His Father about what awaits Him. The way He will endure the coming events determines the whole history of the world and all God's plans. He is perfectly aware of this.

Of the three evangelists who describe the Lord's struggle of prayer in Gethsemane, Luke gives the shortest description. While the Lord Jesus prays, the cup of suffering is presented to Him. He knows that it is the cup full of God's wrath over sin. He knows that this cup means that He will be made sin. His holy soul can only think of this in horror and therefore He expresses the wish that this cup will be removed from Him. At the same time, His complete surrender to the Father's will appears when He says that not His will, but that of the Father may be done. He is willing to drink that cup.

The burden presented to Him demands so much of his physical powers that an angel comes from heaven to strengthen Him. This does not mean to encourage Him, but to support Him physically. Never will an angel understand what it has been like for the Lord Jesus to spiritually enter into the suffering that is before Him here. Christ receives this support because He is the dependent Man on earth. We can also count on this support when we are in a severe struggle.

The struggle of His soul is getting greater and greater, and so He prays all the more fervently. That is the only way for us to stand in the greatest temptations and, finally, to overcome them. How fierce the struggle is, is shown by the fact that His sweat appears on His face as drops of blood falling down upon the ground.

It has been said that here in Gethsemane satan returns after he had departed from Him for a time after his earlier defeat in the wilderness (Lk 4:13). Satan would then return here to present to the Lord the cup of suffering, so that He might, if possible, be turned away from the path of obedience. If he could not bring the Lord Jesus away from the way of obedience by presenting him with all that was attractive, he would now try to bring the Lord away from his way of obedience by presenting to him the horrors of suffering.

The presentation of the suffering by satan could of course be no more and no different than the suffering that will be inflicted on Him by people who are in the power of darkness. It is clear that satan does not present the cup of suffering to the Lord. How could satan present to Him anything of the suffering that *God* will inflict on Him when He will be *made sin*? That is, of course, impossible. It is precisely that suffering of which the Lord feels the full weight, and of which He asks with horror not to have to drink that cup.

Suppose that the Lord here would be afraid of the suffering that will be inflicted upon Him by men led by satan. If the prospect of that suffering gave Him sweat drops as blood, He would be less than the many martyrs who have died while singing for His Name. That is impossible.

No, what causes His agony, is the full knowledge that He will be made sin, by which God will reveal Himself to Him as an Avenger. He Who has always been the Associate of God will meet God as an Adversary (Zec 13:7). He Who has always walked in fellowship with God will be forsaken by His God. That is what He is dreading and that is why He seeks His God in prayer to go through everything in His spirit in fellowship with Him, so that when that time comes, He can accept everything out of His hand.

After the Lord has prayed, He rises from His knees and comes to His disciples whom He finds sleeping. Luke aptly mentions that they have fallen asleep from sorrow. Their sorrow is more the result of a certain feeling than a direct sympathy with the Lord. They love Him and are aware of the seriousness of what is about to happen, without being able to say what exactly is going to happen.

The Lord's question "why are you sleeping?", should awaken them, not only physically, but especially spiritually. He says they have to get up and pray. This means that they must be in a prayer position in view of the events to come, otherwise they will be tempted to abandon Him or defend Him in a wrong way. They have not taken to heart His words which He has spoken to them with such care. It must be a warning example to us.

Lk 22:47-53 | The Lord Is Captured

47 While He was still speaking, behold, a crowd [came], and the one called Judas, one of the twelve, was preceding them; and he approached Jesus to kiss Him. 48 But Jesus said to him, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?" 49 When those who were around Him saw what was going to happen, they said, "Lord, shall we strike with the sword?" 50 And one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear. 51 But Jesus answered and said, "Stop! No more of this." And He touched his ear and healed him. 52 Then Jesus said to the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders who had come against Him, "Have you come out with swords and clubs as you would against a robber? 53 While I was with you daily in the temple, you did not lay hands on Me; but this hour and the power of darkness are yours."

As the Lord prepares His disciples for what is to come, a crowd comes. Someone is preceding the crowd to show the way. It is Judas. He is separate from the crowd. His crime is also much greater than that of the crowd. It is emphasized that he is "one of the twelve". That's what makes the whole betrayal so terrible. He knows where the Lord can be captured because he is familiar with His customs. After all, according to His custom, He is here (verse 39).

Judas approaches the Lord Jesus to kiss Him. His hypocrisy and betrayal reach their climax here. His horrible kiss of betrayal is proverbial for falsity hidden in an expression of love. It has touched the Lord deeply that Judas betrays Him, the Son of Man, with a kiss. He could have prevented it, but allows it. The Son of Man undergoes every conceivable humiliation. The first humiliation was to be kissed by one of His twelve disciples, a kiss intended to put Him in the hands of His enemies. This expression of love is abhorrently abused to identify Him, Who is love, as a criminal.

The Lord is surrounded by His disciples. In their love for Him they want to defend Him. They ask Him whether they will strike with the sword. They misunderstood His words about this. He did not gather them around Him to defend Him, but that they can learn from Him. Even before He has answered, one of them is so impulsive to strike with the sword. The only result is that he cuts off the right ear of the slave of the high priest. The doctor Luke has an eye for which ear it is.

An application is that in our zeal to defend the Word of God, we should not cut off ears. In a spiritual sense, it means that we should not make people reluctant to listen to God's Word by applying the Word to them in a harsh way.

While everything around Him is in confusion and excitement, the Lord radiates rest. The fellowship with His Father in the garden of Gethsemane was followed by rest in His appearance to His environment full of enmity. In grace, He undoes the damage caused by Peter in his recklessness. He touches the slave's ear and heals it. A healing process is not necessary. The use of violence was to be left to the crowd with swords and clubs. Christ continues to show mercy, even if He is surrounded by a crowd that's trying to kill Him.

After His beneficence to one of His enemies, He addresses the leaders of the crowd who have come to Him. They did not come with a need for a sick, but He has given healing. Nor have they come to hear Him, but He has a word for them. They have to listen to it first. He wants to show them their folly and injustice. Perhaps there is also someone in the crowd who is addressed in his conscience. Why did they go out as if He were a robber? Is He such a danger to society? No, He is not, but He is a danger to their position and in that sense to them He is a robber. They feel He is robbing them of their position among the people. Therefore He must be killed.

The Lord makes it clear that not they, but He governs the events. They didn't lay a hand on Him before, while He was with them daily in the temple. That was not because they didn't want it, but because they couldn't do it. That they can now stretch out their hands to Him is because they have received the power from God to do so. It is now their hour. They may do what they want because God's time has come for the fulfillment of His

plans. At the same time it is clear that they are completely in the power of darkness. How else could they come to capture Him as a robber, He, Who did only good to them?

Lk 22:54-62 | The Denial by Peter

54 Having arrested Him, they led Him [away] and brought Him to the house of the high priest; but Peter was following at a distance. 55 After they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter was sitting among them. 56 And a servant-girl, seeing him as he sat in the firelight and looking intently at him, said, "This man was with Him too." 57 But he denied [it], saying, "Woman, I do not know Him." 58 A little later, another saw him and said, "You are [one] of them too!" But Peter said, "Man, I am not!" 59 After about an hour had passed, another man [began] to insist, saying, "Certainly this man also was with Him, for he is a Galilean too." 60 But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about." Immediately, while he was still speaking, a rooster crowed. 61 The Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had told him, "Before a rooster crows today, you will deny Me three times." 62 And he went out and wept bitterly.

Then they arrest the Lord and lead Him out of the garden. Their destination is the house of the high priest. There lives the man who must maintain the connection between God and His people. This man is the great instrument of satan to radically establish the separation between God and His people.

At a distance Peter follows the crowd with his Lord in their midst. He makes use of the darkness to follow unobtrusively. He loves the Lord and therefore he follows. He is afraid of the people and therefore he follows at a distance. If we tremble for people, it is because we have not been with God.

The enemies of the Lord who captured Him have delivered their Arrestee, but they must remain available. It has become cold. That is why they kindle a fire. The cold outside also indicates the temperature of their cold hearts. Peter takes his place in their midst and identifies himself with the mockers (Psa 1:1). After following the Lord at a distance, a participation in warming himself to the fire of the Lord's enemies can't fail. Whoever

distances himself from the Lord automatically moves in the direction of the world. Peter is not an enemy of the Lord, but at this moment he is an enemy of His cross (Phil 3:18).

The fire not only gives warmth, but also light. It is not a sharp light and Peter thinks he is relatively safe. Then he is recognized by a servant-girl who looks intently at him. She discovers in him someone who was also “with Him” and says that out loud to the others. Peter is shocked by the discovery. A servant-girl frightens the apostle. Instead of confessing the Lord, he reacts to the woman with an outright denial to know the Lord. Later in his letter he will write about always being ready to give an account (1Pet 3:15). He does so after he has learned the humbling lesson he is learning here.

Peter is not ready for this giving an account because he did not pray in view of the temptation in which he finds himself now. This first wrong step leads to following steps that are worse and lead further away from God. Shortly after that another person sees him and makes a remark, this time to Peter personally, that he is one “of them too”. The woman said that he was with the Lord, this one says that he belongs to the disciples of the Lord. After his denial belonging to the Lord, he now firmly denies to belong to the disciples of the Lord.

After denying the Lord the second time, an hour passes. For an hour, Peter had already been among the Lord’s enemies, with a denial twice. His conscience cannot be quiet. Yet he remains where he is, and he warms himself with the Lord’s enemies to the fire they have made.

Then comes the third confrontation. He is recognized again. This time he betrays his origins through his dialect. Peter will not only have warmed up, but also talked with the enemies of his Lord. He can only have participated in their vain conversations. He is unable to testify of his Lord, by his false position and his double denial. On this third discovery, Peter once again denies that he knows the Lord Jesus. This time he pretends not to understand the other. He says as much as: ‘What are you actually talking about? You’re telling me something I’ve never heard of.’

After this far-reaching denial, even while he is still speaking, the rooster crows, as the Lord has said. Just as He controls the heart of men to give

Him what He needs, so He controls the animal He needs. At this unusual time he lets the rooster crow to remind His failing disciple of His word.

A crowing rooster is the symbol of awakening. The Lord makes the rooster crow to awaken Peter's conscience. But there is not only an awakened conscience. There is also the Lord. Without Him, an awakened conscience ends in despair and suicide, as with Judas. To true disciples He shows His face. He never fails. Just as He did not previously fail in His faithfulness to warn, so He does not hide His face from Peter after he has denied Him.

Amid all the mockery and abuse, He turns around and looks at Peter. Suffering does not occupy Him so much that He forgets Peter. When He looks at Peter, Peter remembers the word the Lord said about his denial. The memory of this leads Peter to repentance. He goes out and weeps bitterly. The tears are tears of true repentance about who he himself is and what he has come to. Also now God still leads people to repentance and conversion through His Word. God's Word is a mirror that shows man who he is in his sinfulness.

Lk 22:63-65 | Mocked and Beaten

63 Now the men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking Him and beating Him, 64 and they blindfolded Him and were asking Him, saying, "Prophecy, who is the one who hit You?" 65 And they were saying many other things against Him, blaspheming.

While the Lord has brought Peter to repentance and Peter weeps bitter tears of repentance outside the circle of mockery, He is mocked and beaten by those who are holding Him in custody. Evil man's hands attack Him Who is the eternal and holy God. Their tongues spit words that cover Him with derision.

Luke does not recount the interrogation by Caiaphas. He describes the mockery and mistreatment after it. They are having fun with Him. They want to see what is true of His prophetic gifts. They cover the face of Him Who came to give sight to the blind to mock Him. They beat Him and challenge Him to say who hit Him.

The Lord endures all this mockery and mistreatment without saying a word. He is like a sheep that is dumb to his shearers (Isa 53:7). Luke

further summarizes everything under “many other things against Him, blaspheming” they say to Him. It has all touched the Lord deeply. His creatures, whom He has showered with goodness, stand up against Him, their Creator, and humiliate Him to the depths of His soul. It is only the beginning of the mockery and abuse.

Lk 22:66-71 | Before the Council

66 When it was day, the Council of elders of the people assembled, both chief priests and scribes, and they led Him away to their council [chamber], saying, 67 “If You are the Christ, tell us.” But He said to them, “If I tell you, you will not believe; 68 and if I ask a question, you will not answer. 69 But from now on THE SON OF MAN WILL BE SEATED AT THE RIGHT HAND of the power OF GOD.” 70 And they all said, “Are You the Son of God, then?” And He said to them, “Yes, I am.” 71 Then they said, “What further need do we have of testimony? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth.”

After the servants have thus been busy with Him during the night, the leaders of the people come together and bring Him before their Council. The Council asks Him whether He is the Christ. He answers that question. It is a question about His Person. But He answers in a way that He holds them responsible for their actions and appeals to their conscience. He says they will not believe it if He says He is. It makes no sense to answer their question in the affirmative.

Even a possible question to them as to whether they believe this is of no use, according to the Lord. He knows that they will not answer Him, as has been shown on a previous occasion (Lk 20:7). It is also certain that they will not let Him go, in any case.

Then the Lord continues with a statement about the place He will take as the Son of Man at the right hand of the power of God. This goes beyond the fact that He is the Christ, the Messiah for His people. If they have rejected Him as the Messiah, He will take the place of glory as the Son of Man, but through death.

They draw the right conclusion from His words, which is confirmed by the Lord. They conclude their hearing by stating that they no longer need any

further testimony. The confession of the truth which they have heard from His mouth is for them the ground of His condemnation.

Luke 23

Lk 23:1-5 | Before Pilate

1 Then the whole body of them got up and brought Him before Pilate. 2 And they began to accuse Him, saying, "We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, and saying that He Himself is Christ, a King." 3 So Pilate asked Him, saying, "Are You the King of the Jews?" And He answered him and said, "[It is as] you say." 4 Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, "I find no guilt in this man." 5 But they kept on insisting, saying, "He stirs up the people, teaching all over Judea, starting from Galilee even as far as this place."

There is no one who takes the side of the Lord. They all stand up against Him and together they bring Him before Pilate (who was governor of Palestine from 26-35 AD). The Lord allows them to deal with Him without resisting or defending Himself (Isa 53:7). No threatening language comes out of His mouth. His surrender into the hands of His enemies is impressive.

When they stand before Pilate, the accusations come out in full force. They must and will show Pilate what a great criminal he has before him. Cunning as they are, before Pilate they do not accuse the Lord of religious transgressions, but of political transgressions.

Every accusation is – how could it be otherwise – a conscious, coarse lie. The leaders of the people act solely for their own sake. People who do so use all possible means to safeguard their own interests. If the truth must perish for that, they settle with Him Who is the truth.

The Lord Jesus has not misled the people anywhere, but has insisted in every preaching on submission to God. Those who in reality cannot bend under the Roman yoke and from time to time erupt in fierce resistance, are the prosecutors who stand at the forefront here to express their 'loyalty' to the Romans.

Also that He would have forbidden to pay taxes to Caesar, is a coarse lie. They know better from the spies they sent out not so long ago. The Lord

has pressed them to the heart that they will render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and no less to God the things that are God's (Lk 20:20-25). That He says of Himself that He is Christ, a King, is true and therefore cannot be called an accusation. This is only small compared to the blindness of the unbelief that denies their own Messiah. By the way, did He not leave them when they wanted to make Him King (Jn 6:15)?

Pilate goes into the last accusation, because it is the only accusation that is of interest to him. He asks the Lord a question about this. He does not ask whether He is a King, but whether He is "the King of the Jews". That is not how the Jews want to call Him, but Pilate does so. The Lord answers his question in the affirmative.

After everything Pilate has heard from both the chief priests and the Lord, he comes to the conclusion that he cannot find guilt in "this man". The expression 'man' for the Lord Jesus emphasizes that it is about Him as the true Man of God. It is the first testimony of the innocence of "this man" of the six testimonies of it in this chapter (verses 4,14,15,22,41,47).

He is the Sinless One. He is innocent and so Pilate should have let the Lord go. He doesn't do that. He knows the feelings of the people and their rebelliousness. That is why he operates carefully, taking care not to do anything they necessarily don't want to happen.

The leaders of the hate campaign have no intention of accepting Pilate's statement. They bring forward that the Lord by His teachings sets the people against Roman authority. And, they underline, this is not an incident. This dangerous Man has been doing this for a long time and everywhere. He started it in Galilee and continued it in Judea. His influence is great, and so He must be silenced forever.

Lk 23:6-12 | Before Herod

6 When Pilate heard it, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. 7 And when he learned that He belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who himself also was in Jerusalem at that time. 8 Now Herod was very glad when he saw Jesus; for he had wanted to see Him for a long time, because he had been hearing about Him and was hoping to see some sign performed by Him. 9 And he questioned Him at some length; but He answered him nothing. 10 And the

chief priests and the scribes were standing there, accusing Him vehemently. 11 And Herod with his soldiers, after treating Him with contempt and mocking Him, dressed Him in a gorgeous robe and sent Him back to Pilate. 12 Now Herod and Pilate became friends with one another that very day; for before they had been enemies with each other.

By indicating the area where the Lord taught, the leaders give Pilate a way out. He sees a possibility to get rid of this Prisoner without getting his hands dirty. He asks whether “the man” is a Galilean. When Pilate hears that He indeed comes from Galilee, the area where Herod is in charge, he sends Him to Herod. The Lord does not have to leave Jerusalem for this, because Herod is in Jerusalem those very days.

To Herod, this is a great opportunity. He sees a long cherished wish come fulfilled. He had wanted to see the Lord for so long (Lk 9:9). He had already heard so much about Him. Now he gets the opportunity, without asking for it or searching for it. That makes him very glad. But it is not the kind of gladness with which a sinner comes to the Lord Jesus to be redeemed by Him of his sins (cf. Lk 19:6). It is the gladness of a spoiled child getting a fervently coveted toy to have fun with.

Herod would like to see some sign from the Lord. He wants the Lord to entertain him with some magic. Herod sees no more in Him than a person with extraordinary gifts, things that astonish a person. He is out for thrills. His conscience is completely out of order.

Many people look at the Lord Jesus in the way of Herod. He is a great miracle worker, at least that is what is claimed of Him, but they want to experience that for themselves. They visit manifestations of so-called divine power hoping that it will bring them something. It can be about the kick and also about solving a mental or physical problem.

Herod does his utmost to get something out of the Lord, but the Lord does not say a word. He doesn't go into anything. He will have looked at Herod during all his questions, but not with eyes like a flame of fire. The Lord stands before Herod in all the dignity of the perfectly Innocent. He is not in the hands of Herod, but in the hands of God.

Just like before Pilate, the leaders of the people also accuse the Lord vehemently when He stands before Herod. If Herod then gets nothing to see

from Him, all that's left is to have some fun with this silent Prisoner. Herod and his soldiers play a game with Him, showing their contempt for Him. They mock Him. When the game is over, Herod puts on Him a beautiful robe, a mocking robe. He has said that He is a King, hasn't He? Then he will treat Him like this. So Herod sends Him back to Pilate.

In their common contempt for Christ, the sworn enemies find each other. The enmity between them melts like snow in the sun and they become friends. Hostility against Christ connects the hearts of people who are natural enemies. In the darkness, the powers of darkness unite.

In these two persons who are both representatives of an empire, we recognize the future union between the beast coming up out of the earth, the antichrist, and the beast coming up out of the sea. Herod is a picture of the antichrist, the false king of the mass of apostate Jews (Rev 13:11-18). Pilate is a picture of the beast, which is the dictator of the restored Western Roman Empire (Rev 13:1-10).

Lk 23:13-16 | Pilate Acknowledges the Innocence of the Lord

13 Pilate summoned the chief priests and the rulers and the people, 14 and said to them, "You brought this man to me as one who incites the people to rebellion, and behold, having examined Him before you, I have found no guilt in this man regarding the charges which you make against Him. 15 No, nor has Herod, for he sent Him back to us; and behold, nothing deserving death has been done by Him. 16 Therefore I will punish Him and release Him."

Pilate now tries through diplomatic means, through consultation and persuasion, to satisfy the instigators of this unfortunate event to him. He is trying to please everyone. For this consultation he summons the leaders of this uproar. He repeats their accusation. They brought "this man" to him on the accusation that He incites the people to rebellion. He points out that he has fulfilled his obligations by examining Him, even in their presence. It will be clear to them that he, Pilate, cannot be accused of bias or procrastination. But honest is fair, he must conclude that their accusation has no basis.

Thus, after verse 4, he gives a second testimony of the innocence of the Lord. He immediately adds a third testimony of His innocence. He does

this to reinforce his conclusion, hoping that the Jews will see the reasonableness of his arguments. Herod also found no guilt in Him, for he sent Him back without mentioning anything worthy of death.

Although Pilate should speak out 'innocent' and let go of Christ, he surely would like to satisfy them to some extent as well. He proposes to punish Him and then let Him go. It shows what a heartless man this Pilate is. He wants to befriend the emperor and not execute someone who is innocent. He also wants to keep the Jews as friends. They want to see blood. He wants to fulfill their wish by punishing Him. It seems to him that their thirst for blood will be appeased by then.

Lk 23:17-23 | Barabbas Chosen

17 <Now he was obliged to release to them at the feast one prisoner.> 18 But they cried out all together, saying, "Away with this man, and release for us Barabbas!" 19 (He was one who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection made in the city, and for murder.) 20 Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again, 21 but they kept on calling out, saying, "Crucify, crucify Him!" 22 And he said to them the third time, "Why, what evil has this man done? I have found in Him no guilt [demanding] death; therefore I will punish Him and release Him." 23 But they were insistent, with loud voices asking that He be crucified. And their voices [began] to prevail.

Luke goes from Pilate's proposal to punish and to release the Lord immediately on with the statement that Pilate had to release someone at the feast. Pilate sees this as a new opportunity to do justice to his determination of the innocence of the Lord on the one hand, and to satisfy the blood thirst of the Jews on the other. (Releasing someone at the feast can be a habit that the Jews have negotiated as a symbol of their deliverance from Egypt by God.)

Pilate believes that by using Barabbas as a comparison with Christ, he has someone they would rather not have seen at large. He is wrong again. Not that the Jews do not want to see blood, but they want to see the blood of *Jesus* and not only through scourging, but that it is shed in death. They preferred a murderer over the Prince of life. It is a repetition of the garden

of Eden where man exchanged the God of life for him who is the murderer of man from the beginning (Jn 8:44).

Massively and hysterically they cry out, led by the prince of darkness and by the whispers of leaders, their choice. It is clear: "Away with this man!" Without a cause He is hated (Psa 69:4a) and rejected. They are possessed by only one thing: His death. They want to see everyone free, as long as it is not Him.

The Lord's silence during this whole spectacle is impressive. The silence of God is more terrible than His speech in discipline. God's silence is as if someone were thrown into a pit (Psa 28:1). Although the Lord says nothing, His presence reveals the hearts of all who are there. It is for or against Him. There is no one for Him.

The choice is without any doubt for Barabbas because the choice is made against Him. In Barabbas we see both characteristics of satan expressed. We see in his troublemaking the *corruption* of satan and we see his *violence* in the murder he committed. He is the crafty "serpent" (2Cor 11:3) and the "roaring lion" (1Pet 5:8). Barabbas means 'son of the father'. It is clear that he is a son of the devil and a danger to the people. The fact that they choose him makes it clear how corrupt the condition of the people is.

With raised voice Pilate once again tries to bring the people to reason, because he wants to release Christ. It is all in vain. They have made the judgment and he must execute it, whether he will or not, and whether there is a legal basis or not.

Pilate still doesn't give up. For the third time, he personally establishes the innocence of the Lord Jesus. He asks again: "What evil has this man done?" Let them say it. To him the matter is clear. Once again, he makes his distorted proposal to punish the Lord before releasing Him, despite the fact that he has made such an abundant testimony of His innocence,.

The crowd cannot be persuaded. They continue to cry out their demand that He must be crucified. Law and truth have long since stumbled and been trampled underfoot (Isa 59:14). Nothing is important in the case of this process when it comes to the question of truth and law. The only thing is the outcome and that is certain: He must be crucified. They shout over the voice of Pilate who gives in and does what they asked.

Lk 23:24-25 | Delivered to Be Killed

24 And Pilate pronounced sentence that their demand be granted. 25 And he released the man they were asking for who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, but he delivered Jesus to their will.

Pilate makes a decision that defies all reasonableness. He will think he could not do otherwise. The reality is that he chooses against the Lord. He too is a puppet of satan. At the same time, he is fully responsible for this verdict. As the representative of the ruling authority, it is his decision.

If Christ is the stake, all means are deployed to reject Him. That is what is happening here. The fact that it is God's time to fulfill His counsel does not in any way change or diminish man's responsibility. Man will never be able to provide a valid excuse for this greatest crime of all times.

Pilate can only continue on the path of injustice. Luke emphasizes what kind of man he releases and that on the basis of their demand. It shows the total blindness of man who chooses against Christ. Whoever rejects Christ chooses the man of violence and blood. Pilate delivers Christ to their will. They can do with Him whatever they want. He wants to be rid of it. He must put an end to this popular uproar. Peace must return.

But what about the peace for his conscience? According to the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, Pilate committed suicide. Be that as it may, one day he will have to answer before the judgment seat of Christ for all his evil deeds. Then he is the accused, and a righteous judgment will be pronounced on him and executed on him.

Lk 23:26-32 | On the Way to Golgotha

26 When they led Him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, coming in from the country, and placed on him the cross to carry behind Jesus. 27 And following Him was a large crowd of the people, and of women who were mourning and lamenting Him. 28 But Jesus turning to them said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, stop weeping for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. 29 For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.' 30 Then they will begin TO SAY TO THE MOUNTAINS, 'FALL ON US,' AND TO THE HILLS, 'COVER US.' 31 For if they do these things when the

tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?" 32 Two others also, who were criminals, were being led away to be put to death with Him.

After this sham trial, with only a cry of distress instead of righteousness and bloodshed instead of justice (Isa 5:7b), the Lord is "like a lamb that is led to slaughter" (Isa 53:7). He has suffered so much from all the abuse that His strength has been weakened in the way (Psa 102:23a). Again it turns out that He is truly Man.

However, the Jews do not want Him to die ahead of time (nor is it God's will). That's why they seize a man, a certain Simon of Cyrene. He just comes from the country. He will have looked strong and healthy. They place the cross of Christ on him to carry it behind Him. He is like the angel who has strengthened the Lord in Gethsemane (Lk 22:43).

Simon must not have been aware of the great honor that has fallen to him at the moment. Later he will have understood and appreciated it. What he does is what we as disciples of the Lord should do. The Lord has said that we should take up the cross of reproach daily (Lk 9:23). That means that we do not live for this life, but live for heaven, while on earth we have nothing to expect but death and on the way the scorn of the people.

It becomes quite a procession. A great mass of the people follows the Lord. There are also women. Empathetic as women in general are, they see that He suffers very much and feel sorry for Him. They are mourning and lamenting about Him. Then the Savior stands still. He turns around and addresses Himself to the women.

For the first time after a long time we hear something coming out of His mouth again. What we hear makes it clear that He still thinks of the well-being of those who belong to Jerusalem. It must have been dead quiet for a moment, there in that street of Jerusalem. He is always Lord of the situation, even when He is seemingly the plaything of the feelings of hatred of His people and their leaders.

Then His impressive words sound, words that are meant to bring them to the right insight into the situation in which they find themselves. People who can't keep their eyes dry because they are emotionally affected by so much suffering are people who don't have an eye for their own needs. The Savior does not seek such compassion.

He warns the women about the coming judgment. God's righteous wrath will erupt over this greatest of all injustice ever done on earth. But also hear the Savior's grace. He seeks tears of sincere remorse about sins, not tears as a result of an emotional touch. He seeks sorrow that leads to repentance (2Cor 7:10), not sorrow that gives the human feeling a certain satisfaction.

He calls on the women to cry about themselves and their children. He wants them to understand the malicious crime of which they are guilty. The Son of God is about to be murdered, proving man's supreme wickedness. There is no greater wickedness imaginable than the rejection of the Son of God Who, in love and grace, showed on earth Who God is.

The Lord predicts that there will be days when they will wish to be childless. What will come on them and their children is terrible. The enemy will come to destroy Jerusalem and their children in them. They will wish they had never given birth to children when they experience how these children die in judgment. That judgment is imminent. The enemy, the Romans, who will destroy Jerusalem in the year 70, will rage fiercely and with unimaginable hardness. The inhabitants of Jerusalem will ask the mountains and hills to fall on them and cover them (Rev 6:16), so that the enemy can no longer inflict his cruelty on them.

The reason for these horrors is what they are doing to the green tree at this moment. The green tree symbolizes the Lord Jesus (Psa 1:3; 52:8; cf. Psa 102:24a). In Him is life and His life is all fruit for God. They reject Him. If they reject Him, what will happen to the dry tree? The dry tree is a tree without life. It is Judaism without God, without fruit for Him. This dry wood will be burned in the fire of God's judgment.

With Him, two criminals are led away to be killed just like Him. They are mentioned to indicate how much He is seen as a criminal. Of Him is spoken ill as if He were a criminal (cf. 1Pet 3:16) and thus He is condemned, while no evil deed of Him can be mentioned (1Pet 4:15). He is the One Who truly and only did good deeds. This is how He went through the land (Acts 10:38).

Lk 23:33 | The Crucifixion

33 When they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left.

When they have reached the place called The Skull, that is the place of execution, He is crucified there, together with the criminals, one of whom is crucified on His right and the other on His left. It emphasizes that the Lord Jesus hangs in the middle as if He were the greatest criminal.

Luke describes the fact of the crucifixion in a single word, but what a world of pain is hidden in it. That pain is certainly physical, but above all spiritual. The Lord Jesus is not insensitive to the fact that *His people* give Him this place, the people He came to bless.

Lk 23:34-39 | Prayer for His Enemies and Mocked

34 But Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves. 35 And the people stood by, looking on. And even the rulers were sneering at Him, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if this is the Christ of God, His Chosen One." 36 The soldiers also mocked Him, coming up to Him, offering Him sour wine, 37 and saying, "If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself!" 38 Now there was also an inscription above Him, "THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS." 39 One of the criminals who were hanged [there] was hurling abuse at Him, saying, "Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!"

In the midst of the rejection we see how the Lord turns to His Father and asks Him to forgive His murderers because they don't know what they are doing. Isn't that an incomprehensible grace? No word of revenge comes over His lips, but a word out of which His love for this people radiates. The first crossword is one of forgiveness. He addresses Himself in this prayer to His Father.

On the basis of this intercession, Peter delivers his speech to the Jews after the Holy Spirit has been poured out (Acts 3:17). The conversion of Saul, the hater and persecutor of the Christians, also takes place on the basis of this prayer (1Tim 1:13). Would we have said that they did not know what they were doing? The Lord says it and therefore it is so. They did not know it in depth, otherwise they would not have crucified the Lord of glory (1Cor 2:8).

While the Lord prays, the soldiers make a game of dividing up His garments. It was all He left. The people are looking on and watch all. Even

at the cross His enemies do not leave Him alone. With pleasure the rulers look at the result of their efforts. They managed to get rid of Him. They continue to sneer at Him and challenge Him to save Himself. After all, He also saved others, didn't He? Their remark that He has saved others is true. With this remark they testify of His work of grace among them, but it has done nothing in their heart.

They mock the fact that He is the Christ of God. Let Him prove it by saving Himself. They say things of which they do not in any way suspect the truth. He is the Chosen One, although everything there speaks against it when He hangs on the cross as the Miserable and is an example of contempt and weakness.

It seems that God does not want to have anything to do with Him and it seems that the religious leaders are right that He is a deceiver. But it is precisely in these moments that He is pre-eminently the Chosen One of God, the Man Who completely answers everything God asks of a man. Because He wants to save others, He cannot save Himself.

The soldiers join in mocking Him. They are approaching and offer him sour wine. Possibly we should think of them bringing the sour wine close to His lips, without Him actually being able to touch it. This is a tantalus torment for one who is tortured by thirst. We read in the book of Psalms that the Lord was tormented by thirst (Psa 22:15). Luke does not mention how the Lord responds to this. To him it is about the portrayal of man who, led by satan, turns against the Christ of God in the most horrible way.

While the rulers challenge the Lord to save Himself and thereby show that He is the Christ, the soldiers challenge Him to save Himself and thereby show that He is the King of the Jews. The inscription placed above Him as a mockery is: "This is the King of the Jews." And so He is. In His shame His glory becomes manifested, despite man's will to humiliate Him into the deepest depths. Soon He will reveal Himself as King.

For the third time, the mocking challenge of saving Himself is heard. This time it comes from one of the hanged criminals who calls upon Him as the Christ to do it and then at the same time save them. This criminal is only thinking of a salvation for the moment. It is not a question of a sincere heart, but a blasphemy. This man too, so close to the gate of death, joins the

blasphemers of the Lord. The hatred of wicked man is so great, that even in his death agony he blasphemes the Lord.

Lk 23:40-43 | Conversion of the Criminal

40 But the other answered, and rebuking him said, "Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? 41 And we indeed [are suffering] justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." 42 And he was saying, "Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!" 43 And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise."

Then comes the reaction of the other crucified. He first also blasphemed the Lord Jesus with his colleague (Mt 27:44). But during the hours on the cross something has changed in him through what he saw in Christ and also heard of Him in His words "Father, forgive them" (verse 34). The grace of God has opened his eyes and worked in his conscience. He rebukes his fellow criminal and speaks of the fear of God. The judgment which they receive in the crucifixion is the same as the judgment which the Lord receives; only they have deserved it, He didn't.

The first expression of his conversion is that he becomes a preacher of righteousness. It is proof that he is in God's presence. He acknowledges the righteousness of the judgment, for he and the other evildoer have deserved it. He therefore does not ask the Lord for a miracle to free him from the consequences of his sins. From His mouth is heard the fifth testimony of the Lord's innocence in this chapter. He declares that the Lord has done nothing wrong. It is as if he knows Him for a long time. He defends the Lord's complete sinlessness against a mocker. Do we do the same when we hear that He is being blasphemed?

After his testimony to the other criminal, he turns to the Lord and asks to think of him when He enters His kingdom. He thinks of nothing but the Lord and his soul. He forgets his pain and the people around the cross. In all the agony of the cross and believing that the Lord Jesus is the Messiah, he does not seek relief from his bodily grief through Him, but asks Him to think of him when He comes in His kingdom. Although in this life he cannot be delivered from the consequences of his crimes, he does seize the

opportunity to be delivered from God's wrath and eternal punishment on sin.

His question expresses his faith in the resurrection of Christ. That is a greater faith than that of the disciples who did not believe it despite the times He said it. The criminal believes in the future glory of Christ as King. He sees more than the disciples saw at that time. He sees that the Lord Jesus will die, will rise up, will go to heaven, and that He will come back to establish His kingdom.

This is nothing but the work of the Holy Spirit, as it happens in every person who comes to conversion. A criminal who asks a crucified King to remember him, shows confidence in the grace of that King because He is more than a King. He is the Savior.

The Lord answers directly, without setting conditions, and gives him more than he asks for. He not only promises the criminal a place in the future realm, but also that he may already be with Him today. If the Savior has taken the place of the sinner, the sinner may by grace share the place of the Savior with Him. It is not a place in the kingdom, but in paradise (2Cor 12:4; Rev 2:7) to be with the Lord (Phil 1:23). Where He is, there is paradise, the paradise of God. This is a first indication that the spirits of the fallen asleep believers are in the blessed presence of the Savior.

This converted criminal is the first fruit of the Lord's love in His work on the cross. In this conversion we see that conversion is a work of God's grace, without any human achievement. He could do nothing but believe. This applies to any conversion. Everything that is needed and necessary to be saved has been accomplished by the Lord Jesus.

Lk 23:44-46 | The Death of the Lord Jesus

44 It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour, 45 because the sun was obscured; and the veil of the temple was torn in two. 46 And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, "Father, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT." Having said this, He breathed His last.

At the sixth hour, which is mid-day, when the sun is high in the sky, it becomes completely dark. This is not a natural phenomenon, but a supernatural event, caused by God. The darkness continues for three hours.

The cause of darkness is the stopping of the sun's shining. The sun withdraws its rays when Christ is made sin. Being made sin cannot go hand in hand with the sun's rays. The Sun of righteousness is led into darkness. This happens so that the Lord Jesus may lay the foundation for peace between God and men. He is in the Gospel according to Luke the true peace offering.

When the ninth hour has come, the veil of the temple house tears in two. The way to God is open. God, Who dwells in darkness, comes out to man to invite him to come to Him in the light. This can be done through the work of His Son.

After this glorious result, He can shout out the words with a loud voice: "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit" (Psa 31:5a). The work is finished. He can die and rest. The unshakable foundation of the kingdom of God has been laid.

Lk 23:47-49 | Reactions to the Lord's Death

47 Now when the centurion saw what had happened, he [began] praising God, saying, "Certainly this man was innocent." 48 And all the crowds who came together for this spectacle, when they observed what had happened, [began] to return, beating their breasts. 49 And all His acquaintances and the women who accompanied Him from Galilee were standing at a distance, seeing these things.

What happened makes a big impression on the centurion. He praises God, and from his mouth the sixth testimony of innocence of the Lord Jesus sounds. The centurion also speaks about "this man", according to the way in which He is presented by Luke.

To the crowd it has been a spectacle, a distraction in the drudgery of everyday life. They go back home after they have seen what happened while beating their breasts. It is the expression of only an emotional affection without a convinced conscience. It is the same as with the lamentation of the women in verse 28. Such emotions are for a moment. Back home, they

pick up the thread of everyday life. The impressions fade and disappear, without anything lastingly changing in their lives because of what they have seen.

This is how it went with the movie ‘The Passion of the Christ’, which was a big hit in 2004. In this movie, the Lord’s suffering has been turned into a spectacle, a disgusting show, through which many have been moved to tears and beaten their breasts. Furthermore, it was just an evening of entertainment and after that they went back to the order of the day.

There are also others who have observed everything. Among them are the women who followed Him from Galilee. These women are of a different kind than the women of verse 28. They are there out of love for the Lord. Yet they are at a distance. The Lord has been absolutely alone in suffering.

By the way, it is a characteristic of Luke that he regularly writes about women and their service. It is also remarkable that we do not read in any of the Gospels of women who have offended the Lord or participated in rebellion against Him.

Lk 23:50-56 | The Burial

50 And a man named Joseph, who was a member of the Council, a good and righteous man 51 (he had not consented to their plan and action), [a man] from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who was waiting for the kingdom of God; 52 this man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. 53 And he took it down and wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid Him in a tomb cut into the rock, where no one had ever lain. 54 It was the preparation day, and the Sabbath was about to begin. 55 Now the women who had come with Him out of Galilee followed, and saw the tomb and how His body was laid. 56 Then they returned and prepared spices and perfumes. And on the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

Now someone appears on the stage of whom we haven’t heard before. It is Joseph from the city of Arimathea. He is a member of the Council. Luke says of him that he is “a good and righteous man”. Luke also mentions that he did not participate in the hate campaign against the Lord. He may even have protested against their plans and its realization.

This man is a believer who, like the one criminal, looks forward to the kingdom of God. Joseph comes out of the hiddenness (Jn 19:38). He openly takes side for the dead Christ by going to Pilate and asking him for His body. It may take a long time before someone really choses for the Lord, but when there is real new life, the public confession comes.

Joseph takes the body of the Lord from the cross with the greatest caution. Then he wraps it in a piece of linen and places *Him* – not ‘it’, that is to say the body, but His Person – in a tomb “where no one had ever lain” (cf. Lk 19:30). When the Lord was born, He was wrapped in cloths. Now that He has died, He is wrapped in cloths again. The cloths consist of a piece of linen. This speaks of the perfectly righteous life of the Lord (cf. Rev 19:8).

Everything is ready before the Sabbath starts. While everyone is busy preparing everything for the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Lord is laid in the tomb. He will spend the Sabbath in the tomb. The day of rest thus becomes the symbol of the eternal rest that He has brought through His death to all who believe in Him.

Joseph also has spectators. They are the women who came with the Lord from Galilee. They stood by the cross and are now at the tomb. Their attachment to the Lord is great. They want to be where He is, whether He is on the cross or in the tomb. There is no trace of the disciples here.

In their love for Him, the women prepare spices and perfumes to bring them to Him as soon as possible after the Sabbath to care for His body. As faithful Jews, they first wait until the Sabbath is over, which they spend in rest according to the commandment.

Luke 24

Lk 24:1-8 | The Women At the Empty Tomb

1 But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. 2 And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 3 but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. 4 While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling clothing; 5 and as [the women] were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, [the men] said to them, "Why do you seek the living One among the dead? 6 He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, 7 saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again." 8 And they remembered His words.

The Sabbath is over and a whole week has passed. During that week events took place that will bring the history of the world and eternity to their fulfillment according to God's plan. The old is over, the new has come. Symbol of this is "the first day of the week" which is the day of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. With His resurrection a completely new order of things begins.

The women are not yet aware of this. They are still attached to the old order of things. Their love for Christ brought them to the tomb very early that day. They want to give the Savior their last honors by anointing His body with the spices which they have prepared. Despite their love, which is very praiseworthy, they are ignorant of the resurrection which was also prophesied by Him.

When they reach the tomb, they find the stone rolled away from the tomb. The tomb is open! As a result, much more opens in this chapter: the Scriptures are opened (verse 27), eyes are opened (verse 31), the mind is opened (verse 45) and heaven is opened (verse 51). The stone has not been rolled away to enable the Lord Jesus to go out. He has already risen before the stone was rolled away by the angels. He can also enter somewhere despite

closed doors (Jn 20:19). The stone is rolled away to let the women and us go inside to look into the tomb.

The women can enter the tomb in this way. That is what they do. There they discover that the body is not there. The tomb is empty. This is the first proof of the victory of God's grace. Now grace and mercy can go out to man. It is remarkable that the Holy Spirit speaks of "the Lord Jesus" the first time the Name of the Lord Jesus is mentioned after His resurrection. It is the distinctive Name by which Christians speak of their Lord. The women do not understand that the tomb is empty and are embarrassed about it. They have seen for themselves that His body was placed in it (Lk 23:55).

Then suddenly there are two men with them in dazzling clothing. The light of the day and the light of their clothes belong together. The resurrection of Christ is a radiant event, but it causes fear among the women. At the sight of these men, angels, they bow with their faces to the earth. Then the angels speak the beautiful, significant words that testify that He should not be sought among the dead. He is "the living One". The old has ended, a new era has begun.

It is unthinkable to find anything of the living One among the dead. What is connected with life is of a totally different order than what is connected with death. The first testimony of the resurrection of Christ comes from the mouth of an angel. Because He is raised, He is no longer in the tomb. God has fully accepted His work and has found His joy in raising Him from the dead. Said with respect, God could not have done anything else. His Son has accomplished the work commissioned to Him perfectly, so His resurrection is an act of God's righteousness. The angel does not say any of this, but we know it from the rest of the New Testament and especially from Paul's letters.

The angels also remind the women of what the Lord Himself has said. So they could have known better. The angels also quote the words He spoke to them when He was still in Galilee. Then the light breaks through in their thoughts.

The memory of His words gives them the conviction and boldness and strength to testify to it to others. There is no talk of works of power. Luke

always emphasizes *the words* of the Lord. As Christians, we have nothing but the Word of God. We are called to believe in it.

Lk 24:9-12 | Response of the Disciples

*9 and returned from the tomb and reported all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. 10 Now they were Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the [mother] of James; also the other women with them were telling these things to the apostles. 11 But these words appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them. 12 But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he *saw the linen wrappings only; and he went away to his home, marveling at what had happened.*

The women turn their backs on the tomb and go to the eleven disciples and all who are with them to tell them what they have experienced. The three women who were at the tomb are mentioned by name. They have seen the empty tomb and together they bear witness to the events before the apostles. But the apostles cannot be convinced. On the contrary, they call what the women say “nonsense”, foolishness, and they do not believe them. The disciples are believers, but they are not open to the Word. What they hear does not fit into their thinking.

Although they don't believe what the women say, one of the apostles, Peter, wants to take a look in the tomb. He runs to the tomb. When he stoops and looks in the tomb, he sees the linen wrappings only. What he sees in the tomb speaks of peace and order. That is all. With Peter it doesn't come further than marveling at what happened. He returns in his own circumstances, without the Word and what he has seen having any effect. In this way, the Word can also pass us by in a meeting without doing anything to us.

Lk 24:13-14 | On the Way From Jerusalem to Emmaus

13 And behold, two of them were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. 14 And they were talking with each other about all these things which had taken place.

What is needed to come to the conviction of the truth of God's Word is that the Lord Himself touches our hearts. We see that in the next history

that we only find in this Gospel written by Luke. "That very day", that is the day of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, two of His disciples are going from Jerusalem to Emmaus. Jerusalem has nothing more to offer them. Everything is over. They also leave the company of the believers. To them it no longer makes sense. Just like Peter, they go away, home.

Their thoughts are still full of all that has happened. It all made a deep impression. It is beautiful as followers of the Lord to share the things we have experienced. It is even more beautiful if the basis for this is Scripture and not just feelings.

Lk 24:15-18 | The Lord Jesus Joins Them

15 While they were talking and discussing, Jesus Himself approached and [began] traveling with them. 16 But their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him. 17 And He said to them, "What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?" And they stood still, looking sad. 18 One [of them], named Cleopas, answered and said to Him, "Are You the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here in these days?"

Because their hearts are busy with the good things, the most beautiful thing happens: the Lord Jesus approaches them and travels with them. He has a resurrection body that is of a different nature than the body of His humiliation. Yet He is the same Person. We too may be concerned with the Lord's things, but that in our thinking we are not on the right path. Then He wants to come to us to get our thinking back on the right path. In this case, He makes sure that the two disciples do not recognize Him. This is necessary so that they may pour out their whole heart before Him. He invites them to say what concerns them.

The disciples stand still, astonished and with sad faces. How can anyone be so ignorant about things that are so significant to them! They are so deeply involved in the events that they cannot imagine that there is anyone who knows nothing about it. They do not exchange the latest news in a neutral way. They are intensely grieved because of what has happened. It has touched them and keeps them occupied.

One of the two, of whom Luke gives the name, while keeping the name of the other hidden, does not understand why this Stranger asks about the events. Is He not aware of everything that has happened in Jerusalem in the last few days? Surely that cannot be true, can it? Everyone knows about it and talks about it.

Lk 24:19-24 | The Report of Events

19 And He said to them, "What things?" And they said to Him, "The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people, 20 and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to the sentence of death, and crucified Him. 21 But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened. 22 But also some women among us amazed us. When they were at the tomb early in the morning, 23 and did not find His body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said that He was alive. 24 Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just exactly as the women also had said; but Him they did not see."

With a friendly question "what things?" the Lord invites them to tell Him what may have happened. Immediately they talk to Him about "Jesus the Nazarene", the Man of Nazareth. Their hearts are still full of Him. They have been impressed by Him as a Prophet. What He has shown and told makes it clear that God has been present and working in Him for the benefit of His people. They have become convinced of that. Apparently, their faith did not go any further. They have not yet seen in Him the Son of God about Whom death has no power to hold Him. For them, therefore, His death means the end of His history and thus of their hope.

They tell what "the chief priests and our rulers" have done to Him and how that has shattered all their hopes for the redemption of Israel. They do not blame the Romans for His death, although they are certainly partly to blame. They didn't think this was possible. They do not understand how God could have allowed their leaders to assault Christ and kill Him. They have hoped, just like their leaders, for a glory without suffering; but unlike their leaders they have seen the Messiah in the Lord Jesus.

But their expectations that He went to Jerusalem to sit down there on the throne of His father David, have no ground in Scripture. Such unfounded expectations, which do not come true, have led several people to turn their backs on faith and return to the world. This can happen if Christian work does not deliver what we expected of it or if the preaching of the gospel does not deliver result, or if the community of believers disappoints us.

Christ meets all disappointment by presenting Himself to us. If we see Him as the center of God's counsel, we will be saved from putting something else at the center. The latter always leads to disappointment. They focus on Israel and their own importance. With us it can be something else.

And it's already the third day since it happened and still they can't understand that it ended like this. With all their questions about the course of events, which was so disappointing for them, they tell about another shocking event. Some women "among us" have caused this, women from among the disciples, in other words women they know and who also love the Lord. Those women were early at the tomb. When they came to the tomb, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

Something else happened, at least so they stated. They said that they had seen a vision of angels and those angels had said that He is alive. That was very special news. Also, some "of those who were with us" – these are Peter and John (Jn 20:3-8) – went to the tomb immediately after these words. And it was exactly as the women had said. But Him they did not see. So the mystery is not solved. A gap has really been made in their expectations. First by His rejection and then by the announcement that He would live anyway, but whereof there is no evidence to be found.

Lk 24:25-27 | Reproof and Teaching of the Lord

25 And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" 27 Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

After these expressions of their deep disappointment, the Lord takes the floor. From His words, we learn that disappointed expectations in our

perceptions of His actions arise from not reading or not reading well and believing what Scripture says. He reproves them for this with the words “foolish men and slow of heart to believe”.

A foolish person is one who does not use his mind and therefore does not grasp things he should understand. So Paul also speaks to the Galatians who, against their better judgment, wanted to reintroduce the law (Gal 3:1,3). However, it is not only a question of the mind, but also of the heart. Their heart is slow, almost unwilling, to believe. They have read in the prophets what they have all said, but it has not entered in their heart. That is because they read the prophets only in view of the glorious time for Israel. They read selectively, but only the passages that pleased them came through to them.

If they had believed “all” that the Scripture says, they would have known that the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus are the foundation of His future glory. He Himself has time and again clearly foretold that He first had to suffer and that He in that way will enter into His glory. Suffering must necessarily precede glory. The Lord puts it as a question to make it clear to their minds and hearts.

Then the two disciples receive the most brilliant teaching they have ever received on earth from the Scripture. The Lord Himself begins to explain to them what is written about Him in all the Scriptures. He does so in the order of Scripture itself. He begins with the books of Moses, then continues with all the prophets. With this, the Lord gives an example for all explanation of the Scriptures.

Explanation of the Scripture only deserves that name when it explains what is written about *Him* in the Scriptures. He is the center of the Scripture. Everything relates to Him or is in connection with Him. Let us also remember that the Lord has explained the *Old Testament*. It is a stimulus for us to also occupy with that part of God’s Word in order to discover the glory of the Lord Jesus there.

Lk 24:28-32 | The Lord Makes Himself Known

28 And they approached the village where they were going, and He acted as though He were going farther. 29 But they urged Him, saying, “Stay with

us, for it is [getting] toward evening, and the day is now nearly over.” So He went in to stay with them. 30 When He had reclined [at the table] with them, He took the bread and blessed [it], and breaking [it], He [began] giving [it] to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight. 32 They said to one another, “Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?”

Walking and speaking they approached the village where they are on their way to. Time will have flown by. The Lord is about to bid farewell. He does not insist, but tests whether there is a desire to invite Him. This appears to be the case with Cleopas and his companion. They urge Him to stay with them. They express their wish in those wonderful words that the Savior would also like to hear from us: “Stay with us”, and to which He likes to respond.

By the way, it is also getting toward evening, the day is nearly over. When there is a meeting with the Lord, the day is nearly over. The world around them becomes darker and darker as the light in their heart and home is enlightened by His presence. The Lord goes in with them. He does not seek shelter just for one night, but He seeks them. He wants to stay with them to never leave again. And they seek Him, for they would like to hear more of this Stranger about Him Who, despite His disappearance, has become more dear to them because by what He has told them.

As soon as the Lord has accepted the invitation and entered with them, He does not take the place of Guest, but of Host. What normally is done by him who invites, the Lord does of His own accord, without asking permission. *He* takes the bread for dinner, *He* blesses, *He* breaks it, and *He* distributes it to those who have invited Him and with whom He is a Guest.

This is not the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, because that happens when the church comes together, i.e. in church context. The Lord also says nothing about thinking of Him, doing in remembrance of Him. He simply breaks the bread for the meal. Yet it is not an ordinary act, but *His* act. *He* breaks the bread to make Himself known to His disciples, because His breaking of the bread here means He has surrendered Himself into death.

The moment He breaks the bread and gives it to them, the covering of their eyes is taken away, and they see Who He is. Their eyes are opened and they recognize Him. At the same time He vanishes from their sight. With this He indicates that their relationship with Him has now come on another basis. Namely, He has become the object of faith (2Cor 5:7). It is no longer a visible Messiah, but for faith He is as real as if He were physically, visibly, present. How real is our faith? Wouldn't it really make any difference in practice if He were physically present?

The two disciples are not surprised that the Lord is suddenly invisible. They now understand the situation because they have understood His teaching. He spoke to their heart that first was so slow. He has made it burning for Him. That's what they say to each other.

When he spoke to them on the road, he addressed their heart [literally: "our heart", singular], which is in the same mind, when He opened the Scriptures to them. This is more than just opening and reading the Bible. It is to explain the Scriptures and to give them their true meaning. The teaching of Scripture has the consequence that we understand Scripture. That will do a work in our heart. By listening together to the teaching from God's Word in which things are connected to the Lord Jesus, the hearts of all are melted together into one heart.

Lk 24:33-35 | Back to Jerusalem

33 And they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found gathered together the eleven and those who were with them, 34 saying, "The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon." 35 They [began] to relate their experiences on the road and how He was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread.

After this wonderful discovery and experience, their whole disappointment has turned into great joy. They have to share this with the other disciples. They no longer think of Him as the One of Whom they hoped He would redeem Israel. There is still a long way to go before the redemption of Israel has actually come. In that respect, nothing had changed.

However, they have seen the resurrected Lord and through the teaching of God's Word they have understood that the Lord's way to glory had to

go through suffering. As a result their faith and hope have become alive and sound and they go to tell the disciples about it. They want to share this. With us it is the same. Everything we have seen in the Word of the Lord Jesus will have an effect on our life. It will make us witnesses, this is inevitable.

When they have arrived in Jerusalem they find the eleven apostles gathered together with a number of others. Before the two from Emmaus can give their enthusiastic testimony, the others already call that the Lord has risen. For it is already known to them through Peter, for the Lord has appeared to him.

We see how quickly the testimonies of the Lord's resurrection multiply. We hear, as it were, a song from the one answered by others and vice versa on the theme of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus in which the personal encounters with Him are sung. How beautiful it would be if this aspect were to be discussed frequently in the Christian meetings. This may literally happen by singing songs; it may also happen in personal testimonies.

After the warm welcome, the two also tell of their meeting with the Lord and how He is recognized by them in that action that has spoken to their heart. He spoke to them in a different way and revealed Himself to them. With them it is the act that speaks of His death. They share that with the others.

Lk 24:36-43 | Appearance to the Disciples

*36 While they were telling these things, He Himself stood in their midst and *said to them, "Peace be to you." 37 But they were startled and frightened and thought that they were seeing a spirit. 38 And He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? 39 See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." 40 And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. 41 While they still could not believe [it] because of their joy and amazement, He said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" 42 They gave Him a piece of a broiled fish; 43 and He took it and ate [it] before them.*

When the hearts are full of the Lord Jesus and the experiences of encounters with Him are exchanged, it is inevitable that He Himself enters in the midst there. He shows Himself to them and speaks the comforting and encouraging words: "Peace be to you." The reaction of the disciples who see Him for the first time is not encouraging for the Lord. They become afraid of Him and think they see a spirit. They have heard the stories of the others, but haven't met Him yet. As in previous meetings, the Lord must first lower a barrier of unbelief. There is no spontaneous joy.

He asks them why they are troubled and why doubts do arise in their hearts. He asks these questions because He could have expected a different reaction. Haven't they already heard several testimonies of His resurrection? Why did they not believe it? But He helps them. He shows them His hands and His feet. In them the wounds of the cross are still visible and they will be visible forever. He will be known by it forever. It is the proof that it is He Himself. He does not send anyone else who tells about His wounds, but He shows them Himself.

He invites them to touch Him and to convince themselves that they do not see a spirit appearance, but a Man. He is still Man after His resurrection and true Man and that He will be forever. He has flesh and bones. He doesn't speak of blood because He shed it once for all.

The Lord makes His words follow by showing His hands and His feet. He emphasizes with this that He, Who stands before them here as the Living One, is the same as the One Who went doing good (with His hands) through the land (with His feet) (Acts 10:38), with the result that He was hanged on the cross and died there.

Then the disciples' fear turns into joy. It is a joy of their heart and not of their mind. A wave of joy goes through them, their hearts are overwhelmed, but their minds cannot yet grasp it. They hear and see their Lord, but it is still so unreal. The last thing they saw of Him was that He hung dead on the cross, tortured and completely exhausted. For days they have been walking around with this image in their thoughts and now He suddenly stands here as the Risen One in a glorified body in front of them. Certainly, it is He, yet it cannot be true.

The Lord meets them even further in their great amazement. He wants to give them the certainty that it is really He Himself and that He is real. He asks if they have anything to eat. They have. They have a piece of a broiled fish, which they give Him. The broiled fish speaks of the judgment He underwent. The Lord takes it and eats it before their eyes, to convince them that what they perceive is all true. They don't dream.

Lk 24:44-49 | The Great Commission

44 Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." 45 Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, 46 and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, 47 and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things. 49 And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

Then the Lord reminds them of the words He spoke to them while He was still with them. With this He points to the time when He travelled through the land together with them. He is with them now, but in a completely different relationship. He will no longer travel with them through the land. Everything that is written about Him in the law of Moses and in the Prophets and in the Psalms, that is, in the whole Old Testament, is fulfilled. In fact, everything that relates to the future has yet to become reality, but He has laid the foundation for it on the cross. It is only a matter of time that it is also seen and the circumstances are as described.

The Lord opens the minds of the disciples, and what they did not understand before, they understand now (1Jn 5:20). He is no longer with them in the same way, but the Word of God always remains with them. That will be the basis of their existence and actions. The Word of God grants Divine authority to all that has happened and to all that is yet to happen.

Then the Lord cites the core of what is written. The core is that He, the Christ of God, the Messiah, the Anointed, had to suffer and rise from the

dead on the third day. Through His suffering He has taken away everything that is not in harmony with God. By His resurrection on the third day He opened a new world in which everything is completely in accordance with God. In this world there is room for every person who wants to participate in it.

Those people must be invited, they must hear about it. Therefore He commissions His disciples to preach the gospel of God's grace. He grants them the authority of His Name. They do not come with a self-conceived message, but with the message of grace of the risen Son of Man. In the power of that Name and with the authority of that Name, they may preach repentance through which those who obey it will receive forgiveness of sins. The work for it has been accomplished by Him. This work extends to all nations and is not limited to Jerusalem and Israel.

He wants them to start their preaching in Jerusalem. That makes grace even greater. They must begin with the preaching of grace in the place where the most terrible sin makes forgiveness all the more necessary. Jerusalem is also a child of wrath (Eph 2:2) and stands on the same basis as the Gentiles. The Lord establishes the principle which Paul will later act upon: the Jew first and then the Gentiles (Rom 1:16).

He can precisely send those to whom He says this, for they can speak as eyewitnesses. No one will be able to tell them that it is different, for they have seen Him with their own eyes and heard Him with their own ears. In order to act as a witness, two things are needed, both of which are present here. They must be able to say, 'That's it, for we have seen it' and also, 'That's how it had to be, for that's how God said it in His Word.'

Before they can obey the commission, they need something else, and that is the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit. No strength is needed to take their place before God. Through the work of Christ they are in Him before God and God sees them in Christ (Eph 1:6). To take their place before men and to testify against them, strength indeed is needed. That strength is, and is given by, the Holy Spirit. The Lord promises them that He will send Him. He calls the Holy Spirit here "the promise of My Father". The Holy Spirit is promised by the Father. When the Lord Jesus is back with the Father, He will send upon them what the Father has promised.

Here it says “I am sending forth ... upon you” because the Holy Spirit is presented by the Lord as a robe that comes over them from above. The Holy Spirit certainly comes in them too, but with a view to their service He also comes *over* or *upon* them. He will clothe them with strength, so that they may testify fearlessly of the Savior. In themselves they have no strength, but He will give them the necessary strength.

Lk 24:50-51 | The Ascension

50 And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. 51 While He was blessing them, He parted from them and was carried up into heaven.

Forty days later, the Lord leads them outside Jerusalem. He blesses them not from Jerusalem, but from the place where He has always been together with those who love Him, that remnant that has attached itself to Him and that is dear to Him. In addition, Jerusalem has become a place to which testimony must be given.

Outside the city, there near Bethany, the beautiful end of this Gospel takes place. It is a beautiful end because it is not a real end. It is a farewell with a rich promise, a farewell with the view of an open heaven, a farewell to a Savior Who blesses them and continues to bless them even when they no longer see Him with their natural eyes.

As the Lord blesses them, there comes a distance between Him and them. He is received into heaven by the power of God. The Man Jesus Christ goes back to the place He never left as the eternal Son of God and that He has never taken as Man. Now He goes there as Man. While blessing them, He takes leave of them, without really leaving them.

Lk 24:52-53 | Worship and Praise

52 And they, after worshipping Him, returned to Jerusalem with great joy, 53 and were continually in the temple praising God.

The disciples have not lost the Lord. He has now only become the object of faith. The first thing they do, after He is carried up, is worship Him. That is the characteristic activity of the believer in this time of physical absence of the Lord.

After their worship of Him Who alone is worthy of being worshiped because He is God, they return to Jerusalem. There is no longer any fear or sorrow. They are overwhelmed with joy. Their Lord is the great Conqueror. They were not mistaken in Him. Completely convinced of the greatness and glory of His Person and attracted by His grace they go to the temple.

The final scene of this Gospel, as well as the opening scene, takes place in the temple (Lk 1:8-23). But the difference is great. There, in the beginning, it was a question of fulfilling the obligations of the law by a priest who was Godfearing, but who also showed unbelief and was punished with muteness. He did not believe and could not speak. Here, at the end, we find ourselves under an opened heaven, on the foundation of grace after a finished work to the glory of God. The mouths open to praise to God. These disciples form the core of a new generation of priests.

This Gospel brought us from the law to grace and from earth to heaven. It begins with a single man who cannot speak, it ends with a crowd who cannot remain silent.

What a brilliant ending to an overwhelming Gospel in which the riches of grace are presented in an unsurpassable way in the Person Who transcends everything and everyone.

“My beloved is dazzling and ruddy,
Outstanding among ten thousand” (Song 5:10).

“You are fairer than the sons of men;
Grace is poured upon Your lips” (Psa 45:2).

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