COMMENTARY

IV. THE JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM: LUKE 9:51—19:44

A. The Cost of Discipleship (9:51-62)

1. Rejection in a Samaritan Village (9:51-56)

BEHIND THE TEXT

Luke's central section is set in the narrative framework of a journey from Galilee to Jerusalem (9:51—19:44). The role of this journey is remarkably prominent compared with the treatment of Jesus' travels in the other three Gospels: Mark deals with Jesus' transition from Galilee to Jerusalem in fifty-two verses (10:1-52), and then only as an aside in vv 1, 32, and 46. The journey also occupies a relatively small amount of material in the overall structure of Matthew. It foretells the journey in Matt 16:21 (compare Mark 10:33). But Jesus does not leave Galilee until Matt 19:1 and arrives in Jerusalem in 21:1. The Gospel of John describes two journeys, but the narrative material is likewise minimal (2:13; 5:1; 7:10).

Luke's journey narrative, described as Luke's "big interpolation" into the Markan narrative scheme (Fitzmyer 1981, 824), is eleven chapters long. It has eighty-two distinct story units. These begin with the commencement of the journey at 9:51 and conclude with Jesus' entrance to the temple in 19:45. About 40 percent of this material appears in all three Synoptic Gospels; about 35 percent appears only in Matthew and Luke. And about 25 percent of it is uniquely Lukan material (see Fitzmyer 1981, 75-85; and the tables in Aland 1972, 347-51). Seventy-five percent of the material in this section is actually shared with the other Gospel writers. Thus, Luke's journey section is not so much an interpolation as Synoptic material recast in a journey motif, with a generous amount of special material added (see further Bock 1996, 2:959).

Despite the importance of Luke's journey motif, it does not have a clear structure (see Conzelmann 1982, 60-73). Temporal and geographical markers are found only at 10:1; 11:53; 14:1; 18:35; 19:1 (→ 17:11-19). Jesus and his disciples are on the way (9:57; 10:4) and they travel on their way (10:38; 13:31, 33; 17:11; 19:28). But none of this affects individual story units. In fact, while reading the central section of the Gospel, one almost forgets that Jesus is on a journey of destiny (see Fitzmyer 1981, 824-25, and more broadly on the motif 823-27). That is, he "travels but never makes any progress" (Schmidt, cited in Fitzmyer 1981, 825).

9:51-56

Why does Luke reorganize his shared material in this way? The reason he does so is not to provide a historical description of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem, since little of this kind of information is present (see Bock's [1996, 960-63] survey of options on the historicity of the journey). The journey is probably a literary device conveying aspects of Luke's view of salvation (Conzelmann 1982, 73).

First, there is a pronounced sense of geographic dynamism in the narrative that has already been noted in the first nine chapters. In Luke, Jesus proclaims the kingdom not from a single location but while in constant motion as he travels from town to town (→ 4:38-44; 8:1-3). There is frequent reference to *motion* and *place* throughout the narrative. All of the central characters are in motion (e.g., 1:26, 39, 56; 2:3, 15, 22, 39, 41, 51; 3:3; 4:1, 5, 9; 5:11, 28). In particular the Holy Spirit is presented as a dynamic force that is constantly in motion (1:15, 35, 41, 67; 2:25, 26; 3:16, 22; 4:1). In terms of the disciples, to "follow" Jesus always involves a change in physical location (5:11, 28; 9:23, 57, 59, 61; 14:27; 18:22, 28). This is a theological emphasis on people and forces that are on the move spreading the gospel, as opposed to the stasis of temple-based religion.

Second, the travel section is focused on one destination—Jerusalem. Luke follows Jesus' ministry from Galilee to *Jerusalem* in volume one of his work. In the second volume, Acts, he documents the spread of Jesus' mes-

sage *beyond Jerusalem and the land of Israel* to the rest of the Gentile world. Luke refers to Jerusalem thirty-one times in his Gospel narrative, three times more often than his fellow synoptists. His references include nineteen that are unique to his Gospel (5:17; 9:31, 51; 10:30; 13:4, 22, 33; 17:11; 19:11, 41; 21:20, 24; 23:7, 28; 24:13, 18, 33, 47, 52; → 9:28-36, Behind the Text).

To note but a few examples of this emphasis, we see that Jerusalem is the place where Moses and Elijah send Jesus (9:31), the place he proclaims he must die (13:33), and the place to which he now resolutely turns his face (9:51, 53). In Luke's overall message the good news of salvation travels *through the center of the Jewish world* on its way out to the nations.

Third, this journey motif also highlights the spreading of the gospel message within and beyond the Jewish community itself. Along his travels Jesus encounters numerous marginalized Jews and a smaller number of faithful Gentiles. All of these respond to his message, often in the context of the rejection of that message by the Pharisees and teachers of the Law (see Johnson 1991, 164-65). This motif is already well established in the narrative (1:79; 2:29-32; 7:1-10; 8:26-39) and will be expanded in the journey section (10:13-15, 29-37; 13:22-30; 17:11-19; see further the comment on 7:1-10). The culmination of this theme is Jesus' departure from Jerusalem on the road to Emmaus following the resurrection. As Jesus "opens the minds" of two disciples with whom he walks, they are given to understand that, radiating from the center of Jerusalem, his message will now be proclaimed to "all the nations" (24:13-49).

Fourth, the journey theme is closely related to Samaria, Israel's hated neighbor. In the larger structure of Luke and Acts, the Samaria theme shows that the gospel will have success outside of the Jerusalem-based mainstream of Judaism. Luke alone records the story of the Samaritan who rescues the injured man (10:33). Luke alone tells us that only the Samaritan leper returns to thank Jesus for his healing (17:16).

The implications of Luke's "Samaria policy" are fully articulated first in Acts 1:8: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." The geographical spread of the gospel in Samaria is actualized in the preaching of Philip (Acts 8:5-8) and their receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14-17), validated by Peter and John (Acts 8:25).

Clearly, Luke portrays the gospel as destined for success outside of its Jerusalem-centric environs. Salvation is first for the marginalized Jew within Israel. It then extends to those beyond Israel's boundaries, both geographic and ethnic. This theme moves to the fore of the narrative, beginning in Luke 9.

Finally, this section is introduced by three summons to "follow" Jesus in 9:57-62. Previously the disciples, Levi, and large crowds "follow" Jesus (5:11, 28; 7:9; 9:11; → 7:11-17, Behind the Text; see 14:27; 18:22). This new call to

itinerancy in 9:57-62 highlights the profound commitment to the kingdom discipleship requires. In these three brief stories the cost of discipleship is to "follow" Jesus to Jerusalem.

IN THE TEXT

■ **51** Here begins a new programmatic direction and tone for the narrative. **As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven** [*analēmpseōs*], **Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.** The journey to Jerusalem will now dominate the story. This journey is a matter of determined endeavor for Jesus. Luke has a prologue in 1:1-4 and a "second prologue" in 2:1-5, and perhaps one in the beginning of ch 3. This verse is another "prologue" that serves to introduce the next major section (as 18:31-34 introduces the final section).

The verse recapitulates several themes. The first theme is the sense of chronological fulfillment that is building as the narrative unfolds. This motif begins in 1:1 with the reference to "the things that have been fulfilled among us." Other references, especially those early in the Gospel, indicate that time is approaching a cosmic junction (e.g., 1:20, 45, 57; 2:20, 38, 52; 3:1-6). **As the time approached for him . . .** The linear motion of time drives the narrative. The ticking clock creates dramatic tension in the story. See Acts 2:1 where the same Greek phrase is used in reference to the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost (*en tō symplērousthai*, a characteristic phrase demonstrating the fulfillment of the divine will [Green 1997, 403]).

The ascension in Acts 1:1-12 is the intersection between Jesus' earthly ministry and the establishment of the church. Luke alludes to this event as Jesus sets out on the road to Jerusalem. As this junction draws near he is **to be taken up to heaven.** The noun *analēmpsis*, ***ascension,*** occurs only in Luke 9:51 in the NT. But we find the verbal form in Acts 1:2, 11, 22. The verb in these passages seems to refer to Jesus' transition from the earthly realm to the heavenly (Fitzmyer 1981, 828; only in *Pss. Sol.* 4:18 does the term refer to one's ***death***).

Other OT figures provide a possible background against which to understand the use of the term here. Of Enoch it is said God suddenly "took him away" (Gen 5:24). Likewise Elijah "went up to heaven in a whirlwind" (2 Kgs 2:11; compare 1 Macc 2:58 and Sir 48:9. Jude 9 implies the heavenly assumption of Moses in contrast to Deut 34:5).

Jesus **resolutely set out for Jerusalem** (*autos to prosōpon estērisen*, "set his face to go to Jerusalem" [NRSV]). The biblical phrase "set one's face" usually suggests opposition against a person or nation (see Lev 17:10; 20:3; 26:17). Here it expresses determination to remain faithful to the purpose of his journey. In Isa 50:4, 7 the Lord gave Isaiah "the tongue of a teacher . . . [and] set [his] face like flint" (NRSV).

There is also an apparent intertextual echo of Ezekiel's trip to Jerusalem (Ezek 8—11). The prophet refers to the son of man setting his face toward the "south" and "Jerusalem" (Ezek 20:46; 21:2). Luke repeatedly calls Jesus the Son of Man (→ Luke 5:20-26; 9:44, 57-58; 19:9-10). Ezekiel makes formulaic use of "son of man, set your face . . ." in his oracles against the nations (Ezek 25:2; 28:21; 29:2; 35:2; 38:2).

He goes to **Jerusalem.** This is first mentioned in Luke 9:31. Luke has an overriding concern with the city (→ 9:28-36). Jesus is said to continue the journey in 13:22. In 13:33-34, he reaffirms the connection between the Holy City and his "departure," indicating that a prophet cannot die elsewhere (see 17:11; 18:31; 19:11, 41; 21:20, 24; 23:7, 28; 24:13, 18, 33, 47, 52 for unique Lukan references to Jerusalem).

■ **52-53 And he sent messengers** [*angelloi*] **on ahead.** This suggests a travel plan. The **messengers** go to **get things ready for him** (v 52). *Angelloi* (elsewhere, ***angels***) is used only here and in 7:24 to refer to disciples. The *angelloi* serve as an advance team, suggesting a state of organization as an entourage. We noted the transition of the ministry from that of a single leader with a few followers to that of a movement that sends out the Twelve in 9:1 (and the seventy in 10:1). This heightened state of organization is a further step in the narrative along the path toward a movement.

In 9:10, the narrative locates Jesus in Bethsaida on the northeast shoulder of the Sea of Galilee. The transfiguration is on "a mountain" in 9:28. Traditionally, this is associated with Mount Tabor on the southern edge of lower Galilee, about seven miles (ten kilometers) north of Samaria, near Nazareth. Mount Tabor is such a striking feature of the lower Galilee plain that it is not surprising it has been associated with that event.

Curiously, the Gospel of Luke has Jesus on the northern edge of Samaria for at least eight chapters. He enters in 9:52; and in 17:11 he is still traveling "along the border between Samaria and Galilee." In 19:1 he suddenly enters Jericho with no geographical reference to the intervening miles from the northern border of Samaria to east central Judea.

Jesus **went into a Samaritan village.** This is the first mention of Samaria in Luke (also 10:25-37; 17:11-19). In the only other Synoptic reference to Samaria, Matt 10:5, Jesus instructs the Twelve as he sends them out: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans." By contrast, Samaria or Samaritans appear twelve times in Luke-Acts. All but one of these references are positive (see below). Interestingly, Luke has Jesus proceed to Jerusalem through Samaria (Luke 17:11), whereas Mark and Matthew have him travel to Jerusalem on the eastern side of the Jordan River, through Perea (Matt 19:1; Mark 10:1; Fitzmyer 1981, 824). Only John preserves the story of Jesus' meeting with the woman at the well in Samaria (John 4:1-30; see also John 8:25, 48).

Jesus' exit from the Galilee and entrance into Samaria in Luke has symbolic importance. Samaria is "the land that symbolizes opposition" (Fitzmyer 1981, 824). It demonstrates Luke's overarching theme of outreach to the marginalized. The scholarly reconstruction of Samaritan history is a field of study in itself (see Crown 1989). But here the term "Samaritan" functions as a religious category. Luke's use is not so much a matter of historical reference to that long-standing political and religious conflict, but a narrative device, similar to the "sinners" and the "Pharisees." The Samaritans fulfill a narrative function of those usually considered abhorrent to Jews (Matt 10:5; John 4:9). But in Luke's Gospel, significantly, they find a place in the new community of faith.

In spite of Jesus' irenic disposition toward the Samaritans, they **did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem** (v 53). Antipathy ran in both directions between Samaritans and Jews. This is one of numerous scenarios of civic rejection in Luke (→ 4:29 and 10:8-16, Behind the Text). But it is the only one in the Gospels describing the specific rejection of Jesus by a Samaritan village.

■ **54-56** This rejection gives rise to Jesus' rebuke of **James and John,** who want to destroy the town with **fire** as Elijah destroyed the troops of the king of Samaria for the king's faithlessness (see 2 Kgs 1:1-18).

This Lukan story signals to readers that Samaritans are the enemies of Jerusalem-bound Jews and thus beyond the pale of Israel. It also places Luke's later irenic tone in high relief. The faithfulness and compassion of the Samaritans in the stories of the Good Samaritan and the grateful Samaritan leper, or "foreigner" (17:18) fit them for his new community. Ironically, the outcast Samaritans first reject the One who comes to deliver them.

Samaria

Samaria is the tribal area Ephraim that was conquered and mostly destroyed by the Assyrians in 721 B.C. During the rehabilitation of the area, the Assyrians repopulated it with people from many areas of its kingdom. This engendered a syncretistic religion in the area. It had vestiges of the worship of Yahweh but also many practices of pagan worship (on the Samaritans see further Williamson 1992, 724-28). See 2 Kgs 17:29-41 for a description of the area from a Judean (i.e., southern) perspective.

There were also lingering animosities among the Judean Jews from the ancient Samaritan opposition to the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple following the return from Babylon (Ezra 4:2-24; Neh 2:19; 4:2-9). It was against this alternative Samaritan form of Judaism, complete with its own temple and Torah (destroyed by the Maccabean king John Hyrcanus in 128 B.C.), that a dislike of Samaria had developed among Jews of the Jerusalem-based faith. The feeling was mutual (see John 4:9). The negativity of Matthew and John and the silence of Mark about Samaria are indicative of the animosity that continued into the Roman period.

FROM THE TEXT

Of all the distinctive aspects of Luke, the most prominent is his particular appeal to sinners and those on the margins of society. The Samaritans are an important feature of Luke's special concern for the marginalized. We are too far removed in time and culture to understand the depth of sectarian division that likely existed between Jews and Samaritans.

Yet today's world provides many analogies to the lethal ethnic and religious animosities that can exist between tribal groups. The adage is true that those who are closest in religion and politics become the worst enemies. Both groups revered Abraham, Moses, and the Torah, yet their proprietary claims to the right path made them enemies. The gospel injunction to become openhearted to one's historic enemies, especially those in our own backyard, is one of the gospel's most important messages to the modern world. To fail in this is to fail in a central tenet of the faith that God loves *all* people. Jesus embraced not only his own people but also Romans, Samaritans, tax collectors, and sinners. A love so broad and all-encompassing is the call of Jesus to all his followers.

2. More on the Cost of Discipleship (9:57-62)

BEHIND THE TEXT

Dark edges have been forming around Jesus' mission throughout the Galilean portion of the ministry. This begins with the incident in Nazareth in 4:16-30 but is deepened in 5:17—6:11 by the inclusion of five conflict stories. Significant opposition to Jesus is building (→ Structure and Plot and Conflict in the Introduction). This serves as a counterpoint to the approbation of the many in the opening chapters of Luke's Gospel.

In ch 9 new indications of a dark future for Jesus enter the story world. Jesus predicts his own death (9:22). His followers could "lose their life for my sake" (9:24 NRSV) and the Son of Man will be "betrayed" (9:44). Community conflict increases as the disciples suffer rebuke for their faithlessness and bicker about their greatness (9:40, 46-48). Episodes of conflict in the itinerant life of the disciples occur during the mission of the Twelve (see 9:5) and soon in the mission of the seventy (10:3-12).

Against this backdrop, three sayings on the topic of attachment to home and family introduce the journey section (9:51—19:27). The first two (9:58-60) are Q material ("foxes have holes," "let me go and bury my father"; compare Matt 8:18-22). The third is unique to Luke: the request for an opportunity to say farewell to family before departing (Luke 9:61-62). More broadly, these sayings on the cost of discipleship occur between the mission of the Twelve (9:1-10) and the

mission of the seventy (10:1-20) and serve to alert the disciple/reader to the radical demands of following Jesus. Taken together with the new information about his identity presented in ch 9, these injunctions present readers with the sober realities of the price they will pay to take up the cross.

The lifestyle of itinerancy (see 9:1-8) involves alienation from family intimacy (8:19; also 12:53; 14:26; 18:28-30), detachment from a settled domicile and employment (5:11, 28; 9:57-62; 18:28-30), and reliance on charity as a means of support (8:3; 9:3; 10:4). Those themes are in the forefront of these three sayings.

IN THE TEXT

■ **57-58** Having left the Samaritan village, Jesus' entourage "went to another village" (v 56). The occasion of the first saying is the enthusiastic declaration of a man along the road, **I will follow you wherever you go** (v 57). The key word here and in all three sayings is **follow** (*akaloutheō*). In Luke, the crowds follow Jesus (7:9; 9:11); the innermost disciples forsake all to follow Jesus (5:11, 28; 18:28); and would-be disciples are challenged to follow Jesus, as here.

Jesus will later challenge the "rich young ruler" to follow him: "You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me" (Luke 18:22). The meaning of *akaloutheō* in these contexts is physically to leave home and join Jesus on the road from town to town. This means that disciples will have no place to sleep, little or no food, and alienation from normal relationships.

To the would-be disciple, Jesus responds, **Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head** (v 58). **Foxes** are not prominent in biblical imagery, but where we do find them they are light of foot and of little consequence. Sanballat uses the fox to mock the Jews who presume to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, "if even a fox climbed up on it" it would fall down (Neh 4:3; on Luke and foxes see Darr 1992, 139-46). Herod is, according to Luke's Jesus, merely a crafty "fox" in 13:32, not worth serious worry (see Song 2:15).

Here in Luke 9:58, lowly animals, such as the fox, have a domicile, but the disciples of the Son of Man have nowhere to sleep. Although a room at a commercial inn is just one step up from the cold ground (10:34), even this unseemly accommodation is unavailable to the unfortunate disciples (on the bad reputation of inns, see Oakman 2008, 175-77). Sirach 36:15 describes the unhappy state of such homeless wanderers: "So who will trust a man that has no nest, but lodges wherever night overtakes him" (NRSV; Bock 1996, 978-79). Such is the cost of discipleship.

■ **59-60** Jesus then beckons another man: **Follow me**. He replies, **Lord, first let me go and bury my father** (v 59). The man's request has several possible applications:

Perhaps he asks to wait until his father dies. The urgency of the request, however, suggests a recent death. Thus, the request would be for permission to fulfill familial responsibilities for a somewhat shorter period of time before joining the entourage on the road, perhaps weeks or months later. But it is unlikely that a man would be out in society during the initial seven-day period of uncleanness and mourning following a family death (Bock 1996, 980).

Another possibility is that he referred to the second burial, which occurred a year after a corpse had been laid to rest on a tomb shelf (Green 1997, 408). After the flesh had decayed, the bones were "gathered to their fathers," or collected and thrown among the pile of bones of previous residents of the tomb. On this interpretation, the man was asking permission to wait up to a year to follow Jesus.

Jesus replies, **Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.** Jesus' response is harsh and "stands in opposition to Jewish piety and morals" (Fitzmyer 1981, 834). The description of Abraham's burial of Sarah in Gen 23:3-20 is a poignant story about the responsibility to bury one's dead (Evans and Sanders 1993, 253; see also Tob 4:3-4; 12:12-14). And even though biblical law does not *mandate* the burial of a father by a son, the fifth commandment to honor father and mother would require it (Exod 20:12). There are no parallels to Jesus' saying in the literature of the period. Some suggest that its severity argues for its authenticity (Evans and Sanders 1993, 252; Fitzmyer 1981, 835).

The most commonly accepted interpretation of Jesus' reply considers the phrase to be a metaphor. The "dead" who are to bury the dead are those who have made a decision *not* to follow Jesus. They are the spiritually dead, who should be left behind to fulfill the obligation to bury the physically dead (Fitzmyer 1981, 836). The saying is not only metaphorical but also hyperbolic. It resembles 14:26, in which Jesus enjoins his disciples to "hate" their parents. In effect, Jesus' reply removes the "best excuse" a person could have from following Jesus immediately (Bock 1996, 981). This raises the cost of discipleship to the ultimate level (compare God's denial of Ezekiel's mourning the death of his wife in Ezek 24:15-24; see also Jer 16:1-9).

■ **61-62** In the third saying Jesus rebukes a would-be follower. This disciple wants to say good-bye to his family before joining the disciples on the road. Jesus replies, **No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God** (v 62). This story seems to echo the anointing of Elisha by Elijah in 1 Kgs 19:19-21.