



CATHOLIC SCRIPTURE STUDY

Catholic Scripture Study Notes written by Sister Marie Therese, are provided for the personal use of students during their active participation and must not be loaned or given to others.

SERIES I

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE AND ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Lesson 17 Commentary Luke 22:1 - 65

Lesson 18 Questions Luke 22:66 – 23:56

PASSION OF THE LORD Luke 22:1-65

I. INTRODUCTION

With the beginning of Chapter 22 we enter directly into the section of Luke's gospel known as the Passion of the Lord, which is finished in Chapter 23. In the earlier sections of the Gospel we saw the emergence of a certain pattern: in Nazareth there was the condensed account of enthusiastic welcome followed by brief teaching, ending in the crowd's intention of throwing Jesus from a precipice, whereupon He disappeared from their midst. The Galilean ministry begins with the fact that "he taught in their synagogues and everyone glorified him," but at its end we find the second prophecy of the passion.

These events have in some way been prototypes of the Jerusalem ministry, which begins with Jesus' triumphant entry into the holy city, His taking possession of His Temple. It climaxes with His being driven out, not only of the city, but also of the very Temple of His body, that moment of ultimate defeat and absolute victory.

Now it is not just "the people" who grew up with Him who reject Him, nor is it those who represent vested interests, such as the Scribes and

Pharisees. It is His own disciples who will betray, deny, and desert Him. In some way the cosmic end-time is already present as the darkened sun becomes a sign and the powers of heaven are shaken (Matthew 27:45). The power and the glory of the final coming of the Son of Man are already foreshadowed as His love triumphs over the hatred that surrounds Him, as He dies praying for His enemies, welcoming the sinner we know as the "Good Thief," and handing Himself over in total confidence to the Father (Luke 23:39-46). In the section that we are approaching now, Luke bears marked similarities to John, who points up the crucifixion itself as Jesus' hour of glory.

II. THE PASSION ACCORDING TO THE SYNOPTICS: LUKE, MATTHEW AND MARK

A. Differences in Luke's Gospel. To see what Luke is doing as he draws his unique portrait of Jesus it is helpful to notice the changes he makes in the source he receives through Mark. It is clear that he has other sources to draw upon, perhaps one that he shares with John. Three of the "seven last words" are found only in Luke, who at the same time does not record the one found in

Matthew and Mark. As we go along we will suggest other differences too numerous and too complex to explore fully.

One significant difference in the synoptics (Matthew, Mark and Luke) is the placement of the story of the woman who breaks her alabaster jar of precious ointment to pour its contents over Jesus' feet. Matthew and Mark place it here, as preparation for His burial. "She has done a beautiful thing for me," says Jesus, and "wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her." In what way can you do a beautiful thing for God?

Luke narrates the same or a similar incident in chapter 7:36-50, but there we are told that the woman is a sinner, that the Pharisees reject Jesus because He lets her touch Him, and that "her many sins are forgiven because she loved much." Luke will carry that theme on through his Gospel, letting the sinners of the world lay hands on Jesus, even to destroy Him; only to find that their sins are forgiven because He loves much.

B. Judas (Luke 22:3-6). Only Luke tells us (Luke 21:37-38) that during this period Jesus spent His nights on the mount called Olivet, which explains why Judas so easily found Him in the absence of the admiring crowds who "came to him in the temple to hear him." The combat of the temptations presented immediately after Jesus' baptism climaxes here. The power, the glory, the domination that Satan offers come in conflict with Jesus' refusal of that echo of the temptations offered our first parents: "You shall be as gods." He chooses instead God's own decision to make man in His image, the image of a God who loves to the very end, who frees rather than possessing, who invites rather than forcing. The powers of hatred that will surround Him will not overcome Him by forcing Him to join them in hate. They will pierce His heart only to release the power of love that will bring life to all. But that is getting ahead of the story. Here we are told only that when Satan

enters into Judas he sought an opportunity to betray Jesus in the absence of the multitude.

C. Passover Supper Preparation (Luke 22:7-13). Only Luke tells us that it is Peter and John who are sent ahead to prepare the Passover meal, and that it is Jesus who initiates the subject of the Paschal Supper. The narrative is clear and concise. Jesus gives them a sign, they find all as He had told them, and they prepare the Passover.

Whereas Matthew and Mark say simply that "when it was evening" the supper took place; Luke used the Johannine term "when the hour came." While the other Synoptics place at the beginning of the supper the incident that identifies the betrayer, Luke puts it later in the story, thus avoiding the span of time between the unmasking of the traitor and his departure. In this version Judas is present for the Eucharist itself, a fact which is neither affirmed nor denied by the other Synoptics and remains uncertain in John. Only Luke lets us hear Jesus speak of his "longing to eat this Passover" with his disciples before He suffers. This seems to say that Jesus longed to offer His first Eucharist for all of us.

D. The Holy Eucharist (Luke 22:14-18).

1. Verses 16-18 are eschatological (end-times) in meaning; Luke places them before the institution of the Eucharist.

A footnote in the Jerusalem Bible points out that "the first stage of fulfillment is the Eucharist itself, the center of spiritual life in the kingdom founded by Jesus; the final stage will be at the end of time when the Passover is to be fulfilled perfectly and in a fashion no longer veiled."

2. The Institution (Luke 22:19-20). The language of the ritual is liturgical, very close to the text from 1 Corinthians 11:23-25 that is so familiar to us. Both texts have a common source, the scholars say: the liturgical language actually in use in the communities served by Luke and Paul.

Even at that early date, the language of the heart of the Eucharistic celebration is already fixed, as is its meaning:

“This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me. And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood which will be shed for you” (Luke 22:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:25).

The passage from Corinthians adds to the words, “Do this... as a memorial of me.” Though in Luke verse 19 is parallel to verses 15-18, it contains something entirely new; the bread of verse 19 is no longer, like the Passover lamb of verses 15ff, ordinary food; but the Body of Christ; the cup of verse 20 is not filled with the wine of the Passover meal, but with the Blood of Christ.

3. The Eucharist and the Sinai Covenant. Jesus announces His approaching death and presents it as a sacrifice, like that of the victims whose blood sealed the Sinai covenant. Jesus had in mind the Servant of Yahweh whose life had been poured out and who had borne the sins of many. Jesus lets it be understood that His imminent death is going to replace the sacrifices of the Old Law and deliver humanity, not from temporal captivity, but from the bondage of sin; He is about to inaugurate the new covenant that Jeremiah had foretold (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

4. The Reality of the Eucharist. The disciples are to repeat what He had done and said, His actions and His words. It is not, however, a mere commemoration but the renewal of a rite by means of which the sacrifice of the living Christ is made present in bread and wine: their action will be as real and efficacious as that of Jesus (because He will act in and through them). The gestures, the words, will be repeated, but the reality will persist unchanged: the sacrificial offering of the Body and Blood of Christ made once for all. Thus the Lord, “in an abiding and substantial presence, will be with his own to the end of time” (Harrington). As Kodell points out, the command

to do what Jesus has done refers both to the ritual action and to the self-gift it sacramentalizes.

5. The Apostles’ Reaction (Luke 22:21-38). At this point Luke’s arrangement of the materials emphasizes the harsh contrast between the covenant action of Jesus and the action of the betrayer at the same table. It also points up the callousness of the whole group of the Twelve as their argument about which of them could be guilty of betrayal evolves into a dispute about their greatness. Jesus implies that the kind of greatness they seek belongs to Satan’s reign; they are indeed to receive a kingdom, but it will be His kingdom, in which service and self-giving are the measure of a disciple’s greatness, of our greatness.

Again the name of Satan is brought forth. Not only has he entered into Judas; he has “demanded to have” Simon and the others (the Greek word used here for “you” is plural). Interestingly, Jesus addresses the chief of His disciples as Simon, the Hebrew name he bore before Jesus had claimed him by giving him a new name. But He calls him Peter in the following sentence, the very one that prophesies his denial. Peter’s self-assurance (“though all should deny you...”) will soon be shaken. He will be called to exercise authority, but he must get over thinking that his special role among the Twelve is earned by his own strength.

The “Testing time” passage is peculiar to Luke; the sayings have been influenced by the experience of the Christian community (Luke 22.31-37). The exhilarating period of the Galilean ministry is over; the Master is going to His death, and His followers will find all men’s hands against them. The hostility they will have to face is depicted in symbolic terms: a purse in order to buy food (no longer given freely), a sword to win it by force.

In verse 37, Jesus quotes Isaiah 53:12, a passage that concerns the “Suffering Servant of Yahweh,” identifying Himself with that role and calling His disciples to share it. The disciples take

literally what was intended figuratively and produce two swords. LaGrange thinks that the word “Enough,” putting an end to the conversation, was probably spoken “with an indulgent smile tinged with sadness.”

III. THE MOUNT OF OLIVES (Luke 22:39-46)

Luke 22:39 moves the scene to the Mount of Olives. Luke does not mention that three disciples were singled out, nor does he give the details of three separated times of prayer interrupted by returns to the Apostles. He does record, however, here as well as later, the Lord’s urgent call to “pray that you may not enter into temptation,” and the presence of a ministering angel as Jesus’ agony intensifies. The Father answers the prayer of His Chosen One not by taking away the suffering, but by sending strength from heaven. The extreme spiritual anguish of Jesus reacted on His body, a striking example of the reality of Jesus’ humanity. Luke, in his sensitivity to the Apostles, records that they were sleeping “for sorrow” rather than simply because “their eyes were heavy” as Matthew and Mark indicate. Only Luke records the sweat of blood. Only he records that Jesus admonished the disciples to pray both at the beginning and the end of his own anguished prayer. We, too, need Jesus’ advice: “Pray that you may not undergo the test” (Luke 22:40-46).

Luke 22:47-53. As the arresting party approaches, Luke cannot bring himself to say that Judas kissed his Master; he also omits reference to the desertion of the disciples, but does show their bringing forth of those two famous swords! (Only Luke records that Jesus healed the injury Peter gave the high priest’s servant. See John 18:26.)

Like John, Luke speaks of this hour as belonging to “the Power of Darkness.” Though clearly in command of the situation (it is Jesus who interrogates the arresting forces), Jesus enters into that darkness so that the light of new life for us and all the saved may emerge from its very depth.

IV. THE NIGHT OF THE ARREST (Luke 22:54-65)

A. Peter’s Denial (Luke 22:54-62). The three denials are highlighted by being shown without distraction by other incidents. In each case Peter shows by his presence that he means to be loyal to the Lord, though he shows by his words that he is incapable of sustaining that loyalty. He addresses his third questioner as “my friend” even as he denies his friendship with his Master. But Jesus’ prayer for him has not been ineffective; one glance from him and a broken-hearted Peter leaves the courtyard. Because his sorrow takes the form of contrition rather than remorse, his trusting love will bring him back, humbled and contrite, to the Lord he loves, a more fitting leader than the rather arrogant Peter who claimed that he would be faithful though all the others might fail. Have we learned this trusting love after sin? Have we learned not to believe that we won’t fail?

B. Jesus Under Guard (Luke 22:63-65). The remaining verses of the section treated today again focus our attention on Jesus. We are told that in Nazi concentration camps the first task of the guards was to de-humanize the prisoners. They were to be dirtied, mocked, stripped as far as possible of every trace of identity with those who tormented them, lest their shared humanity arouse some trace of sympathy on the part of the tormentors. It is in that perspective, perhaps, that we are to see the treatment of Jesus during the night after his arrest.

Brutalized by their profession, the soldiers “amused themselves at his expense.” Before, He had inspired a certain awe. Now they feel that His power has deserted Him, and they celebrate their victory with sadistic pleasure. When daybreak comes He will be reduced to a state that put the chief priests and scribes at their ease in condemning Him. Read Matthew 27:57-66 about that night.

COMMENTARY

The section dealing with the Jerusalem ministry begins with Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem and ends with the prophecy of His final coming to judge the world. The passion narrative indicates how the final victory is to be achieved. The enthusiasm of the crowds at His entry into the city will melt into antagonism of crowds as He is cast out of the city to die. What is happening here reflects a summary of Israel's history, as echoed in the Nazareth ministry and the ministry in Galilee; the Jerusalem ministry recapitulates a movement that the early Church is experiencing in its own ministry, incorporating the mystery of suffering and rejection into the larger mystery of resurrection.

The parables of the unjust steward, the wicked vine dressers, the great banquet all lead to this. In all of them there was a rejection of the master, the owner, the king. Here only the Good Thief can

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dare to ask to be remembered when Jesus will come in His "kingly power."

Throughout His ministry people had tried to dictate His role: give us a sign; give us always this bread. They wanted to take Him by force and make Him king. In the courtyard of the High Priest they taunt Him with His kingship and deny His authority. Jesus, called the Chosen One at His Baptism, pays the cost of His mission as the Suffering Servant. As we see the power of Jesus' love, even for His enemies, let us examine our following of Jesus. Do we return love to our enemies? Do we take refuge in God and in prayer as we face rejection and injustice? Are we able to "take and eat" (Matthew 26:26) or do we live in a way that prevents us from Holy Communion?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 18
Luke 22:66-23:56

Day 1 Read the lecture notes. In which moment of this part of Jesus' life do you feel closest to Him? Write some reflection on it: a word you want to say to Him, or some situation of your own life that makes you feel close to Him.

Day-2 Read Luke 22:66 - 23:12 and Matthew 26:63-65.

a. For what charge did the Sanhedrin condemn Jesus?

b. What three political charges did they make to Pilate?

c. Which one had Luke clearly refuted already? Cite (quote) the text.

Day 3

a. In Jesus' answers so far what role does He state of Himself? Is this a threat to earth's politics and rulers?

b. Read Luke 23:13-25 and Matthew 27:15-26. What pressures made Pilate condemn Jesus?

- c. Give examples of this kind of pressure today and how we can resist it.

Day 4

- a. Who was responsible, in your opinion, for Jesus' conviction? (Luke 23:24; Acts 3:17-18).

Day 5 Read Luke 23:26-43; Mark 15:16-32; John 19:17-24.

- a. Compare Luke 23:33-43 with Psalm 22.

- b. List the onlookers that Luke mentions with their actions and words.

Day 6 Read Luke 23:44-49.

- a. What do the darkness and the tearing of the temple veil symbolize?

- b. Read Luke 23:50-56. What risk did Joseph of Arimathea take in burying Jesus?

- c. What similar risks could you take in your life?