

**THE PARABLE OF THE POUNDS IN THE LUKAN  
JOURNEY NARRATIVE AND THE RHETORIC  
OF KERYGMA: A PARADIGMATIC ANALYSIS  
OF LK 19:11-28**

**Stan-William O. EDE**

Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, Rome

stanwilly@yhoo.com

**Abstract**

*This article focuses on the Parable of the Pounds as it is found in the Gospel of Luke (19:11-28), which constitutes the conclusion of the Lukan 'Journey Narrative' (JN). It provides a literary-critical exegesis of the parable in order to understand and explain its significance within the context of the Lukan 'Journey Narrative' in particular and the Gospel of Luke in general. The study holds that the nobleman who goes on a long journey and returns a king is not Archelaus as many exegetes and commentators tend to claim, but Jesus Christ himself, who goes to his heavenly abode, entrusting the missiological endeavour to his followers. The parable of the pounds is, therefore, an allegorical reference to the mission entrusted by Jesus to the apostles and their successors. It accentuates the selfless, committed and relentless service required of Christ's disciples, especially those who have received the vocation to partake of the ministerial mandate of the Church. At the end of his earthly ministry, Jesus goes on the journey of his return to the Father, and he leaves behind on earth, servants (disciples and believers) of various degrees of merit, and enemies as well. Each of these servants and enemies will be rewarded or punished according to his*

*deeds; and the rewards are larger opportunities of service. Highly significant is the lesson that there is not to be, as the disciples fancied, immediate triumph and joy for all; but, first a long time of probation, and then at last, triumph and joy for those only who have earned them, and in exact proportion to their merits. The paper therefore recommends commitment to a life of obedience and service for all followers of Jesus, albeit the trials and sacrifices that accompany the task of true discipleship.*

**Keywords:** Journey, Travel, Pounds, Talents, Service, Kerygma, Reward.

### **Introduction**

A careful study of the Gospel of Luke reveals a purposeful collection and strategic incorporation of parables within the corpus. Majority of these parables are clustered in the central section of the Gospel which is generally referred to as the Journey Narrative (cf. 9:51-19:44). One of these parables which catches our attention is the 'Parable of the Pounds' (cf. 19:11-28).<sup>1</sup>

The Parable of the Ten Pounds (19:11-27) constitutes a core part of the concluding section of the Lukan Journey Narrative (19:1-44) which begins in 9:51. Its pivotal role within the narrative is cast in a shining light not only by the fact that it is placed within an *inclusio* formed by two "journey notices" (19:11 and 19:28), but also by the

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<sup>1</sup>The number of parables is counted differently depending on how one defines the parable. However, the bulk of parables in Luke's Gospel are concentrated within this section of the Journey Narrative, and at least fourteen of the parables are unique to Luke. The Parable of the Pounds which is our focus in this paper has its parallel in Matthew in the Parable of the Talent (Matt 25:14-30). Though it is not unique to Luke, but it is carefully arranged and inserted within Journey Narrative material as we shall be discussing in this paper.

fact that it brings together several themes contained in that narrative.<sup>2</sup>

This study which will be taken from a redaction-critical point of view, serves to show that this Parable of the Pounds was carefully incorporated by the author into the journey narrative material, weaving up a literary and rhetorical connection between it and other key sections of the narrative, especially the beginning part (9:51-62) in rendering its pertinent message which is itself characterized by various key themes. Among these themes however, the two-fold motif of Mission and Discipleship is explicit, and shall be the focus of this paper.

By way of procedure, we shall begin by presenting some of the unique textual features that distinguish this journey section of Luke's Gospel from its Matthean and Markan parallels. This will be followed by textual criticism and delimitation of the text. We shall then proceed in the third section to consider the 'synoptic parallels', and in the fourth by an analysis of the 'literary and narrative context of the parable of the pounds' in the fourth section. After this, we shall, in the fifth section carry out a verse-by-verse 'analysis of the text', though the latter bulk of the parable will be analyzed in one group. Taking all these into consideration, we shall proceed in the sixth section to discuss the 'function of the Parable of the Pounds within the journey narrative and its message'. This will be followed by the conclusion.

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<sup>2</sup>Luke is fond of employing the literary device of *inclusio* to create prominence around issues which he intends to invest with special meaning and emphasis. A clear example in the significance of faith in God, which is shown in the persistence in prayer, illustrated with the *inclusio* created with the Lord's Prayer towards with beginning of the Journey Narrative (Lk 11:1-13) and the story of the Unjust Judge towards the end of the Journey Narrative (Lk 18:1-8). Cf. Marianus Pale HERA, "The Lucan Lord's Prayer: The Prayer of the Disciples", *Journal of the Nanzan Academic Society – Humanities and Natural Sciences* 17 (2019) 82. It is worthy of mention that despite the inner delimitation within the Gospel of Luke which is the focus of this paper, the Lucan 'Journey Narrative' has a structure that allows for tracing it along a thread that extends from the onset of Jesus' ministry and culminates with Paul's missionary journey to the capital of the Roman Empire. Cf. Eddie GERMIQUET, "Luke's Journey Narrative: A Literary Gateway of the Missionary Church in Acts", *Scriptura* 103 (2010) 16.

**Preliminary Observations: Distinctive Features of the Text**

The Parable of the Pounds (Lk 19:11-27) evinces a unique set of literary and rhetorical features and it behooves us to highlight some of them here to guide our approach to this paper. Of note is the observation that Lk 18:15-19:40 follows the order of Mk 10:13-11:10, a sort of return by Luke to the Markan order or material after departing from about the point where the JN begins. The Markan order of events is again interrupted by the insertion of the Zacchaeus incident and of the Parable of the Pounds. One can understand the presence of the Zacchaeus narrative based on geographical considerations, since Mark also tells that Jesus travelled through Jericho where the incident that Luke narrated took place. But why did Luke include the Parable of the Pounds at this point? The question is even more pertinent when we consider the fact that Matthew has a similar parable, that of the Talents (25:14-30) which reveals a number of differences from that of Luke, showing Luke to entertain a significant number of peculiarities in the Parable of the Pounds.

As we shall observe when we present the synoptic parallels in comparing the Lukan Parable of the Pounds with the Matthean Parable of the Talent, Luke uses *μνᾶ* (mina) while Matthew uses *τάλαντον* (talent). The terminological choice is hypothetically not arbitrary, but ordered towards specific rhetorical ends. Likewise is the intentionality of the plot. As has been identified by many scholars, the plot of this Parable of the Pounds bears a very close parallel with the true historical situation of the tyrannical Judean Ethnarch, Archelaus who on his journey to Rome to seek confirmation as king in 4 BC, had a delegation sent after him to protest his appointment. Nevertheless, he was confirmed as king, and when he returned with royal power, he exacted judgment on his enemies.<sup>3</sup> Considering that the parable also has a Christological dimension to it, a keen reader would wonder why a Christian redactor should choose a ruthless and murderous Judean Ethnarch as a type of the Messiah. From a cursory

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<sup>3</sup>BriansSCHULTZ, “Jesus as Archelaus in the Parable of the Pounds (Lk. 19:11-27)”, *Novum Testamentum* 47 (2007) 105.

consideration, one could say that the connection of the Parable of the Pounds with Archelaus is problematic. Yet from a closer look, the true rhetorical underpinning of the parabolic representation is evident. In essence, the real master of the parable is a “God” figure – the Messiah who bestows generous gifts and expects a just accounting of their service.

### **Textual Criticism and Delimitation of the Text**

It must be here acknowledged that the various Greek texts and witnesses to this Lukan Parable of the Pounds present a number of variant readings within some of the verses of the pericope. Because of the huge number of verses involved in this pericope and the amount of space it will require to analyze the textual issues, we shall leave out this section concerning the textual analysis, especially due to the fact that we consider most of the variant readings as word/morphological adjustments which do not make much significant impact on the interpretation of the text in the final analysis.<sup>4</sup>

On the delimitation of the text, Lk 19:1-10 narrates the arrival of Jesus in Jericho and the story of his encounter with Zacchaeus. And then 19:29-44 whose beginning is marked by a change of location (near Bethphage and Bethany, and no longer in Jericho) narrates a series of activities and conversations that culminated in the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem (19:45-46). In between, we have 19:11-28 which tells of the Parable of the Pounds.

Scholars have often debated whether the Lukan Parable of the Pounds is one parable or two parables woven into one by Luke. This is because the Matthean version of the parable (of the talents) does not contain the issue of the 'throne claimant', the story of the nobleman who went to receive a βασιλεία (kingdom) amid

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<sup>4</sup>It would be fair **not** to categorically maintain that the textual issues involved in the pericope do not make any real impact in the strict sense of the word. However, based on the scope of this paper and the trajectory of our analysis, we wish to assume the minimalization of such impact and rely fully on the text we have taken as the basis of this paper. Our textual basis therefore for this paper is: Eberhard and Erwin NESTLE and Barbara and Kurt ALAND et al. (eds.), *Novum Testamentum Graece. 28th edition* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012).

opposition, as contained in Luke. While some argue that this strand is a Lukan addition to the material in Q,<sup>5</sup> some argue that it was already combined in the version which Luke inherited,<sup>6</sup> and some others argue that two of Jesus' parables have been combined into one parable by Luke.<sup>7</sup> The circumstances regarding its construction notwithstanding,<sup>8</sup> Lk 19:11-28 presents a number of features in its form and structure that impels the reader to approach it as a single narrative unit.

The unit begins in 19:11 which intimates the reader that Jesus goes on to tell a παραβολή (parable) – **one parable and not two** – and the story flows until v.27 and then in v.28, the narrator informs the reader what Jesus does after he had said these things. Further, we also note that 19:28 appears to function not only as a transitional verse that concludes the preceding parable, καὶ εἰπὼν ταῦτα (“and having said these things”), but also initiates a new section of the narrative in which Jesus' activities in and around Jerusalem will be recounted. At the same time, 19:29 marks the beginning of a new narrative situation that will unfold in three discreet phases: entry into the temple (19:29-44), cleansing of the Temple (19:45-46), and teaching in the Temple precincts (19:47-21:38).<sup>9</sup> This point that 19:29 marks the beginning of a new narrative unit is also corroborated by the introductory function by which the account of Jesus' entry into the Temple (19:29:46) shifts the perspective of the narrative to what is about to occur in the story.<sup>10</sup>

Given the foregoing considerations, Lk 19:11-28 can be delimited as a narrative unit.

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<sup>5</sup>Joseph A. FITZMYER, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX* (AncB 28; Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1981) 63-97; Luke Timothy JOHNSON, *The Gospel of Luke* (Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier, 1991) 6.

<sup>6</sup>Jan LAMBRECHT, “The Parable of the Throne Claimant (Luke 19:11-27)”, in Veronica KOPERSKI (ed.), *Understanding What One Reads: New Testament Essays* (Leuven: Peeters, 2003) 113.

<sup>7</sup>Joachim JEREMIAS, *The Parables of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1972) 59.

<sup>8</sup>Nolland presents a beautiful summary of the debate: cf. John NOLLAND, *Luke 18:35-24:53* (Dallas, TX: Word Books Publishers 2002) 910-911.

<sup>9</sup>Cf. Dean BÉCHARD, “The Journey Narrative: Preliminary Considerations” (Unpublished Lecture Notes I on the Gospel of Luke at the Pontifical Biblical Institute, Rome 2013) 7.

<sup>10</sup>Cf. BÉCHARD, “The Journey Narrative”, 7-8.

### Synoptic Parallels & Comparison

A tabular representation of the synoptic comparison would be helpful here:<sup>11</sup>

Matt 25:14-30	Mk 13:34	Lk 19:11-28
<p><sup>14</sup>“For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property.</p> <p><sup>15</sup> To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability.</p> <p>Then he went away.</p> <p><sup>16</sup>He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with</p>	<p><sup>34</sup>It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home</p> <p>and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake.</p>	<p><sup>11</sup>As they heard these things, he proceeded to tell a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately.</p> <p><sup>12</sup> He said therefore, “A nobleman went into a far country to receive a kingdom and then return.</p> <p><sup>13</sup> Calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten pounds, and said to them, ‘Trade with these till I come.’</p> <p><sup>14</sup> But his citizens hated him and sent</p>

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<sup>11</sup>Our comparison in this section is made much easier with the Greek and English edition of the well-tabulated synopsis done by the American Bible Society on the four Gospels. Cf. Kurt ALAND (ed.), *Synopsis of the Four Gospels* (New York: American Bible Society 1982). The English translation presented here are from the Revised Standard Version (RSV) and the English Standard Version (ESV). This however applies only to this tabular presentation of the synoptic parallels, while we shall continue to use our own personal translation all through the paper.

<p>them, and he made five talents more.</p> <p><sup>17</sup> So also he who had the two talents made two talents more.</p> <p><sup>18</sup> But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money.</p> <p><sup>19</sup> Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them.</p> <p><sup>20</sup> And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.'</p> <p><sup>21</sup> His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'</p>		<p>an embassy after him, saying, 'We do not want this man to reign over us.'</p> <p><sup>15</sup> When he returned, having received the kingdom, he commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by trading.</p> <p><sup>16</sup> The first came before him, saying, 'Lord, your pound has made ten pounds more.'</p> <p><sup>17</sup> And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you</p>
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<p><sup>22</sup> And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me two talents; here I have made two talents more.'</p> <p><sup>23</sup> His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'</p> <p><sup>24</sup> He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed,</p> <p><sup>25</sup> so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.'</p> <p><sup>26</sup> But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and</p>		<p>shall have authority over ten cities.'</p> <p><sup>18</sup> And the second came, saying, 'Lord, your pound has made five pounds.'</p> <p><sup>19</sup> And he said to him, 'And you are to be over five cities.'</p> <p><sup>20</sup> Then another came, saying, 'Lord, here is your pound, which I kept laid away in a napkin;</p> <p><sup>21</sup> for I was afraid of you, because you are a severe man; you take up what you did not lay down, and reap what you did not sow.'</p> <p><sup>22</sup> He said to him, 'I will condemn you out of your own mouth, you wicked servant! You knew that I was a severe man, taking up what I did not lay down and reaping what I</p>
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<p>gather where I scattered no seed?</p> <p><sup>27</sup> Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest.</p> <p><sup>28</sup> So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents.</p> <p><sup>29</sup> For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.</p> <p><sup>30</sup> And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'</p>		<p>did not sow?</p> <p><sup>23</sup> Why then did you not put my money into the bank, and at my coming I should have collected it with interest?'</p> <p><sup>24</sup> And he said to those who stood by, 'Take the pound from him, and give it to him who has the ten pounds.'</p> <p><sup>25</sup> (And they said to him, 'Lord, he has ten pounds!')</p> <p><sup>26</sup> I tell you, that to everyone who has will more be given; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away.</p> <p><sup>27</sup> But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slay them before me.'"</p> <p><sup>28</sup> And when he had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.</p>
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Though Mark does not have any version of the parable, but in the context of making comparison with the kingdom of heaven as Matthew does, Mark engenders the “journey motif”, and that becomes a common feature in the three synoptic Gospels. But on the parable itself, we shall deal with the comparison between Matthew and Luke. What is the relation of the parables in Matthew and Luke? Can the earliest version be determined? Comparing both versions from all possible perspectives, there are opinions that if the two versions of the parable derive from the same original source, then the traditions on which Matthew and Luke depend must have diverged very early.<sup>12</sup> We need to analyze the features of the parable to be able to ascertain or refute such a position.

A close reading of each of the two versions given in Matthew and Luke reveals some obvious parallelisms making up the bulk of the two versions which make many scholars in modern critical scholarship regard the two versions as derived from the same source, or one derived from the other. At the same time, it reveals a number of divergent details which are also very significant. On the parallel details, we could compare:



Lk 19:12, 13, 15b-23, 24b-26

Matt 25:14, 15, 19-27, 28, 29

Also there are a number of common phrases such as: “good ... faithful servant” (Lk 19:17; cf. Matt 25:21); “I was afraid” (Lk 19:21; cf. Matt 25:25); “because you are a hard man” (Lk 19:21; cf. Matt 25:24); “you reap what you did not sow”, (Lk 19:21; cf. Matt 25:24); “wicked servant” (Lk 19:22; cf. Matt 25:26); “deposit my money with the bankers” (Lk 19:23; cf. Matt 25:27); “with interest on my return” (Lk 19:23; cf. Matt 25:27); “Take the pound from him” (Lk 19:24; cf. Matt 25:28); “give it to him who has the ten pounds” (Lk 19:24; cf. Matt 25:27); “everyone who has will be given more” (Lk 19:26; cf.

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<sup>12</sup>Klyne R. SNODGRASS, *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishers, 2008) 525.

Matt 25:29); “from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away” (Lk 19:26; cf. Matt 25:29).

Beyond the wording and in terms of the content of the parable, common also to both Matthew and Luke is that the responsibility assigned the servants gives them an obligation, and there is the device of dialogue between a master who entrusts the obligation and a subordinate in the wrong. In both parables, the master is addressed with κύριε, the vocative case of the term κύριος (master). Besides the fact that κύριος is the right word to use for a human master, it is also used with reference to God or later in the Church, the exalted Christ. Hence, the flexibility of the word has also attracted much attention. Whereas no other word is suitable for a servant in both versions of the parable to use for master, in Matt 25:37, 44, the Son of Man as Judge is addressed as κύριε, and in Lk 19:33-34, οἰκύριοι is used for the owners of the colt Jesus will ride and ὀκύριος is used for Jesus himself, the colt's true master. In both parables, the 'money' of the third servant who did not invest is taken from him and given to the servant with the most money. Both parables also contain the saying, “To all those who have, more will be given; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away” (Matt 15:29; Lk 19:26).<sup>13</sup>

There is however a catalogue of significant differences between the two versions. We can picture the 'delay motif' in the Matthean story whereby the master returns after a long time. While this 'delay motif' and the settling of accounts when the master returns (Matt 25:19) has been interpreted to support a reading which sees the

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<sup>13</sup>In both parables, a man entrusts an obligation ('money' as it were, following the more general interpretation rendered to Matthew's *τάλαντον* and Luke's *μνᾶ*) to his servants before he goes away. On his return, the servants give an account of what they have done with the money. Two servants have increased their money while a third returns only what he was given. The master rewards the first two servants but criticizes the third for not investing the money so that the master could receive back his money with interest. Cf. Elizabeth V. DOWLING, *Taking Away the Pound: Women, Theology and the Parable of the Pounds in the Gospel of Luke* (London: T & T Clark, 2007) 72; Cf. SNODGRASS, *Stories with Intent*, 526.

parable as being about the last judgment,<sup>14</sup> the Lukan story does not indicate any such delay in return.

In the Matthean story, the number of servants the master called is not exactly specified, as we find in Matt 25:14, ἐκάλεσεν τοὺς ἰδίους δούλους (“he called his very servants”); but according to the distribution of the amount and their returns, there are three servants (Matt 25:15-18), and the master in the Matthean story gives different amount of the τάλαντον to each servant. In the Lukan story, there are ten servants (cf. Lk 19:13): καλέσας δὲ δέκα δούλους ἑαυτοῦ (“having called ten servants of his own”); and they all received equal amount, ἀμνᾶ each, but like Matthew, only three of them are treated at the time of delivering the returns. The first two servants in the Matthean version each doubled their money in the master's absence (Matt 25:20,22) while the first two servants in the Lukan story respectively made 1000% and 500% profits (Lk 19:16, 18). The third servant in the Matthean parable dug the ground and hid the money of his master (Matt. 25:18), while the third servant in the Lukan version (Lk 19:20) wraps his money ἐν σουδαρίῳ (“in a piece of cloth”). Where the first two slaves in Matthew are praised and told that they will be put in positions of authority, the first two slaves in Luke are given authority over cities in the present rather than at some future time (Lk 19:17,19).<sup>15</sup>

In the Lukan version, the master repeats the description of himself as a harsh man. Matthew's version does not have such a qualification.

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<sup>14</sup>Daniel J. HARRINGTON, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991) 352.

<sup>15</sup>The Matthean case of the reward presents a future dimension, and in the context of the injunction to 'enter into the joy of your master', the eschatological element in the reading of Matthew's version stands out. This is further corroborated by the order in the Matthean story that the third slave be thrown 'into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth' (Mt. 25:30; cf. 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51). The 'outer darkness' which suggests condemnation at the last judgment contrasts with entering 'into the joy of the master' which alludes to a positive at the judgment. No corresponding punishment is given to the third slave in the Lukan version. Cf. HARRINGTON, *Matthew*, 352-353; DOWLING, *Taking Away the Pound*, 74.

**1 τάλαντον vs. μνᾶ**

As we mentioned earlier, one of the very prominent distinctive features in the two versions of the parable is the monetary unit employed. Matthew uses the word τάλαντον (“talent”) for the object of the business while Luke uses the word μνᾶ, which many English translations render as *‘pound’*.

A μνᾶ is a monetary unit equivalent to hundred drachmas or denarii.<sup>16</sup> The word is a Semitic loanword from the Akkadian word *manû*, and it made its appearance in Greek as early as the period of the Attic Greek.<sup>17</sup> It is a considerable, though not an enormous, sum of money. In the New Testament, it is used only by Luke and appears only in the Parable of the Pounds (Lk 19:13, 16, 18, 20, 24, 25).<sup>18</sup> We shall consider its OT usage later in our verse-by-verse analysis of the text.

τάλαντον was originally a measure of weight varying in size from about 26 to 36 kg, and then became a unit of coinage whose value differed considerably in various times and places, but was always comparatively high. It varied also with the metal involved which might be gold, silver, or copper. In the NT, the word is found only in Matt 18:24; 25:15 (2x), 20, 22, 24 (2x), 28.<sup>19</sup> While there is a variety of understanding of the precise value of the τάλαντον, it is considerably more valuable than the μνᾶ, that is, of much larger

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<sup>16</sup>Cf. James Hope MOULTON and George MILLIGAN, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament: Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-Literary Sources* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1930), 414. The drachma itself can be considered the same value as the denarius, the usual daily wage for a labourer.

<sup>17</sup>Frederick William DANKER and Walter BAUER, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Christian Literature* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2000) 654.

<sup>18</sup>Alfred SCHMOLLER, *Handkonkordanz zum Griechischen Neuen Testament* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Biblegesellschaft, 1989) 339; DANKER and BAUER, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 654.

<sup>19</sup>DANKER and BAUER, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 988; SCHMOLLER, *Handkonkordanz* 479.

denomination with each talent equalling sixty minas.<sup>20</sup>

From the above analysis, it is clear that each Evangelist uses a term peculiar to him as the monetary unit of the task, and significant is the fact that Matthew's word applies somewhere else outside the Parable of the Talents in his Gospel (cf. 18:24).

## **2      *The Matthean story and the Lukan story: Source Primacy Considered***

The pressing questions: Whose version of the parable is older? Did Matthew copy from Luke or did Luke copy from Matthew? And which of them adapted certain features of an existing tradition and reworked them to suit his purpose?

The typical scholarly approach to these parables as presented by Matthew and by Luke amounts to the following three points:<sup>21</sup>

- i.) that the two versions are divergent accounts of a single original, though it is difficult to trace the similarities in both accounts to *Quelle* (i.e. the Q source);
- ii.) That Matthew's account is closer to the original, but Matthew shaped the parable allegorically to reflect a concern for eschatology and the delay of the parousia by placing it in his eschatological discourse, by several additions some of which may be due to the tradition, and by the change from *minas* to *talents*; and,
- iii.) that Luke has somewhat ineffectively joined two parables, that of the minas and that of the throne claimant.<sup>22</sup>

On the basis of an overall critical analysis, we are caught between tradition and redaction, and also in the web of the arguments

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<sup>20</sup>It is pertinent to note that the value of the talent also varies considerably, depending on times and places. Some scholars evaluate a talent as equivalent to sixty minas, while some others understand the talent to be one hundred times more valuable than the pound. Cf. Eduard SCHWEIZER, *The Good News According to Matthew* (transl. David E. GREEN) (London: S.P.C.K., 1975) 470; JOHNSON, *The Gospel of Luke*, 289-290.

<sup>21</sup>Cf. SNODGRASS, *Stories with Intent*, 529-530.

<sup>22</sup>Scholars also believe that Luke has also shaped the result of the parable eschatologically by placing it just before the entry to Jerusalem, by his introduction in v.11, and by the direct order to "do business in v.13). But our focus in the paper is the orientation of the parable to the two-fold theme of Mission and Discipleship, owing to the fact of 'calling' and 'entrusting a task' which is expected to yield due fruits with the passage of time. This mission-disciple theme is also evident in the form and 'shape' of the parable.

between single tradition and double tradition.<sup>23</sup> Both past and contemporary critical scholarship is divided between a single original source tradition adapted independently by Matthew and Luke, and the view that one depended on the other. Many scholars agree that the bulk of similarities between the two accounts is due to the fact that they emerged from a single teaching occasion of Jesus<sup>24</sup> or from different occasions of teaching in which Jesus repeated the parable.<sup>25</sup> Two main explanations are given as to how the dissimilarities crept into the accounts: (1.) That the original parable is preserved *independently* in the Matthean tradition (M) and in the Lukan tradition (L), and that it is these traditions which are responsible for the discrepancies between the two accounts. (2.) That the parable was preserved in a source common to both evangelists, such as Q, and that the evangelists themselves or various editors before them are responsible for the differences.<sup>26</sup> Either of these two positions however raises a further question: which of the two evangelists preserves the most original form of the parable? The vast majority of commentators opine that whatever the 'original' teaching looked like, it would have been more similar to Matthew's version

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<sup>23</sup>Cf. Richard L. ROHRBAUGH, "A Peasant Reading of the Parable of the Talents/Pounds: A Text of Terror?" *Biblical Theological Bulletin* 23 (1993) 32-39; R. Q. FORD, *The Parables of Jesus*. Recovering the Art of Listening (Minneapolis 1997). 32-46; SNODGRASS, *Stories with Intent*, 530-531. The scope of this work does not avail us of the opportunity to analyse as many scholarly divides and arguments as possible in this regard. But we shall limit ourselves to a few details that have bearing on the trajectory of this paper.

<sup>24</sup>Cf. Adelbert DENAUX, "The Parable of the Talents/Pounds (Q 19,12-27) – A Reconstruction of the Q Text", in Andreas LINDEMANN (ed.), *The Saying Source Q and the Historical Jesus* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2001) 430.

<sup>25</sup>Cf. Alfred PLUMMER, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Luke* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1922) 437

<sup>26</sup>This debate has really received considerable attention in Critical Scholarship. Cf. Arland J. HULTGREN, *The Parables of Jesus: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000) 278-279; William D. DAVIES – Dale C. ALLISON, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew, Vol III* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark International 1997) 376; EdgarHENNECKE, *New Testament Apocrypha* (ed. & transl. Wilhelm SCHNEEMELCHER and R. McLWILSON et al.) (London: Lutterworth Press, 1965) 149 ff.

than to Luke's.<sup>27</sup> A counter position is held by just a few, one of whom is Marie-Joseph Lagrange who argues that it is Luke who preserves the most original form, and that Matthew (or his source) is the one guilty of the most redactional work.<sup>28</sup>

More appealing to me is the view that each of the two evangelists based their versions of the parable on the teaching of Jesus, either a single teaching which experienced variation in form as passed from one period to another, or various occasions of teaching where the same story had to be told with different nuances, contextualized according the peculiarities of the audience or kerygmatic purpose, in terms of the intended message of each occasion. Alfred Plummer suggests that it is more likely that both of them reflect two separate, albeit similar, teachings of Jesus, given on different occasions, rather than stipulating that the gospel writers confused the details of the teachings as well as its context.<sup>29</sup> It is like someone telling the same story twice on different occasions, each time adapting not only the presentation but also the details of the story in order to better fit the audience before us. A very tenable view in our consideration that gives credence to the possibility of Plummer's suggestion is given by N. T. Wright: "It is highly likely that Jesus used such stories on

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<sup>27</sup>They mostly base their argument upon the supposition that there is no adequate not tentative reason why Matthew or his source would have removed certain elements from the parable which are preserved in Luke, all the more so since these elements were particularly fitting for Mathew's context. Cf. Joseph A. FITZMYER, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXVI* (AncB 28A; Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1985) 1230. On this point, we find it difficult to agree with these scholars that Matthew would find everything preserved in the L tradition useful for his context. Matthew's eschatological context is enough reason why adaptations could be set in, if he were to really have the L or Q source to rework. The view that Lukan version was expanded from the original which is said to have been preserved by Matthew may not be outrightly tenable, in our view.

<sup>28</sup>Marie-JosephLAGRANGE, *Évangile selon Saint Luc* (Paris : J. Gabalda 1921& 1948) 490-492.I also find it a sort of over-assumption the claim that Matthew did the redactional work on the original which Luke preserves. Rather, I believe that both of them independently retold an existing story which has its source in the historical Jesus, and then applied vocabulary and context that would be more comprehensible to their respective audience.

<sup>29</sup>PLUMMER, *Gospel According to Luke*, 437.

numerous occasions (not just 'twice', as cautious conservative exegetes used to suggest). There is no reason to suggest that either Matthew or Luke's version was derived from the other, or both from a single original.<sup>30</sup>

Klyne Snodgrass observes that at least three parables beside these two deal with the same themes of entrusted possessions, a master's absence, and a later reckoning: the Faithful or Unfaithful Servant (Matt 24:45-51), the Man going on a Journey (Mk 13:34-36), and the Wicked Tenants (Matt 21:33-45; Mk 12:1-12; Lk 20:9-18). Given that such stories were told often and given the lack of common language between Matthew and Luke, he argues that Matthew's Parable of the Talents and Luke's Parable of the Pounds do not render the same parable or have any genetic relation.<sup>31</sup>

Lending support to these latter views also impels us to acknowledge that it is not impossible, and in fact it must have been that case, that each of the two evangelists, without necessarily depending on each other, in adapting the parable whose source is the teaching of Jesus, included their own redactional input to the story in order to render more apt the overriding message as it connects and flows with its overall context. There is a very strong indication of Luke's ingenuity in this parable to prove this point. Let us consider the parables in Luke's gospel that are completely Lukan, that is, found only in Luke. On an interesting note, G. Sellin divides the introductory formulas of the Lukan parables into a three-fold categorization such as ἄνθρωπός-τις (*anthrōpos-tis*), τίς-ἐξ-ὑμῶν (*tis-*

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<sup>30</sup>Nicholas T. WRIGHT, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996) 632-633.

<sup>31</sup>With all the efforts made by scholars to determine the original source(s) of the parable(s) as contained in Matthew and Luke, Klyne Snodgrass comes to the conclusion that the significant differences between the two accounts make three options possible: (i.) We have two independent parables developing the same plot with the throne claimant being original to Luke's parable; (ii.) We have two independent parables, but Luke (or his tradition) added the throne claimant elements; (iii.) We have a common original which developed in two directions and which Luke (or his tradition) altered by merging the throne claimant elements. According to him, one of the first two options is more likely. Cf. SNODGRASS, *Stories with Intent*, 531.

*ex-hymōn*) and ὁμοιοσ(*homoios*) parables. By examining the introductory formulas of the parables, he states the important fact that Luke has a preponderance of τίς-ἐξ-ύμῶν and ἄνθρωπος-τις parables, while Mark and material peculiar to Matthew's Gospel contain exclusively ὁμοιοσ parables. On the basis of this, he attempts to establish the contention that they come entirely from the hand of Luke and not from the Jesus tradition.<sup>32</sup> Following such an observation, we can see the uniqueness of the Parable of the Pound, in the sense that while also having enough other characteristics to qualify it as a parable of the Jesus tradition which both Luke and Matthew share, the Lukan introductory formula (cf. 19:13) and many other unique Lukan characteristics that it possesses, shows it to be a piece of ingeniously arranged material by Luke and strategically fitted into its context in the Gospel to convey some pertinent message.

#### **Literary and Narrative Context of the Parable**

The context preceding the parable deals with Jesus' activities near Jericho and inside Jericho while still on his way to Jerusalem (18:35-43; 19:1-10). The narrator tells us that as *he draws near Jericho* (18:35) he encounters a blind man and restores his sight. And then *he enters Jericho* (19:1) and eats with Zacchaeus (a story unique to Luke).

The Parable of the Pounds is given immediately after the Zacchaeus incident and immediately before Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. Since 9:51, Jesus has been on a journey to Jerusalem, such that through the intervening ten chapters the reader has been anticipating his arrival. As a matter of fact therefore, the parable is placed at a crucial stage within the journey narrative, a sort of climax in a series of activities and conversations during the final lap of that journey to Jerusalem. While on the journey and prior to the telling of the parable, Jesus converses with a rich ruler and invites him to

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<sup>32</sup>G. Sellin's analysis is found in the PhD Dissertation of C. I. BLOMBERG, "Tradition History of the Parables Peculiar to Luke's Central Section" (University of Aberdeen, 1982), 248-258.

distribute his wealth to the poor, but he would not yield, and Jesus declares how difficult it is for the wealthy to enter εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ (“into the kingdom of God” – 18:18-25). Then Jesus makes the third prediction of his passion and states clearly that Jerusalem, to which he is going, is the place where he would be killed (18:31-33). Drawing near Jericho, Jesus cures a blind beggar who then follows him (18:35-43). And then in Jericho, Jesus encounters the tax collector, Zacchaeus who welcomes him into his house (19:1-10). Significant in this latter encounter is that, in contrast to the rich ruler mentioned in 18:18-25, Zacchaeus voluntarily decides to give half his possessions to the poor, and becomes intent on not defrauding anyone (19:8); and then Jesus pronounces salvation upon Zacchaeus and his household (19:9).<sup>33</sup>

In the analysis of many scholars, the introductory clause of 19:11, Ἀκούοντων δὲ αὐτῶν ταῦτα προσθεὶς εἶπεν παραβολὴν (“As they were hearing these things, he proceeded to tell a parable”), somewhat indicates the linking of the following story the Parable of the Pounds with the Zacchaeus narrative, and they conclude from it that it is the same audience which hears Jesus' pronouncement in 19:9-10 that will hear the parable Jesus tells. After this particular introductory clause, verse 11 gives two narrative reasons for the parable being here. As the narrator indicates, Jesus tells the parable because 'he was near Jerusalem' and because “they” thought the βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ would appear immediately (19:11). In this, we see that placing the parable after the Zacchaeus story and before the triumphal entry deserves close attention. The statement to Zacchaeus I 19:9,

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<sup>33</sup>In this whole narrative context up to the followership and resolve of Zacchaeus, the discipleship-mission motif and its connection with the journey Jesus makes to Jerusalem where he would die, is already brought out clearly, setting the stage for deepening of the message *via* an allegorical rendering in the Parable of the Pounds that follow immediately after. In obeying the command to come down from the tree, Zacchaeus answers the *call* to discipleship. He then *invites* Jesus to dine with him and his closer encounter with Jesus leads him to *μετάνοια*. The final result is that Zacchaeus gains salvation (cf. Lk 19:1-10), the reward that awaits every true disciple.

**σήμερον** σωτηρία τῶ οἴκου τούτου ἐγένετο (“today salvation has come to this house”) provides the reason within the narrative why “they”<sup>34</sup> thought the kingdom was immediately to appear, whereas the situation makes evident their lack of understanding that Jerusalem would be the place of death for Jesus.

Jesus goes on to tell the parable. After the parable, the narrator tells us that Jesus continues his journey to Jerusalem (19:28).<sup>35</sup> Significant to note also is that several features of Luke's narrative of the last days in Jerusalem connect the features of the parable. In the account of the triumphant entry which follows, Jesus is acclaimed as “king” (19:38), a nuance which is found in only Luke's account of the triumphant entry, a reminder that the βασιλεία is present.<sup>36</sup>

Within its larger narrative context, there are also some other significant features which scholars have identified both inside the parable and in its seams as stylistic techniques employed by Luke to highlight the message of the parable. Amongst these is the feature of opposition and destruction as identified by Guy. He links the opposition of the citizens in 19:14 with the opposition by the Pharisees in 19:39, and also links the slaughter of the citizens in 19:27 with the slaughter of 19:44. Guy describes these connections as 'a textual web of interrelationship' between the parable and the following pericope.<sup>37</sup> The connection I would prefer to make in this regard of connecting the parable with the pericope that comes after is

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<sup>34</sup>The identity of this “they” who are expecting the kingdom of God raises further questions. Who exactly does the “they” refer to? Some think it is the crowd who complains in 19:7 – cf. James M. DAWSEY, *The Lukan Voice: Confusion and Irony in the Gospel of Luke* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press 1986) 95; others point to the disciples – cf. Sharon H. RINGE, *Luke* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox 1995) 234. According to Dowling, since it is unlikely that opponents of Jesus would be expecting the kingdom of God to appear once Jesus arrives in Jerusalem, it is more likely that “they” refers to supporters, including the disciples – cf. DOWLING, *Taking Away the Pound*, 76.

<sup>35</sup>SNODGRASS, *Stories with Intent*, 527.

<sup>36</sup>DOWLING, *Taking Away the Pound*, 77.

<sup>37</sup>DOWLING, *Taking Away the Pound*, 77.

that, as the fate of the opposing citizens (cf. 19:14) seems to be an allegorical allusion to the fate that awaits the opposing Pharisees, so does reward as bequeathed upon the faithful servants awaits the “multitude of disciples” who welcomed him, rejoicing and praising God (cf. 19:37-38), a strong enough reason to make the stones themselves protest if the disciples were to be deterred (cf. 19:39-40) from trailing the path marked for them by the master.

### **Closer Analysis of the Text**

#### ***19:11***

The introduction (v.11) leading into the parable holds a lot of information and draws a lot of questions as well. What is the meaning of this verse? Did Jesus tell this parable to prevent eschatological excitement among his followers or to announce the reality of the Kingdom for which preparations must be made? Most commentators agree that it is a Lukan creation,<sup>38</sup> and the effect of Ἀκούοντων δὲ αὐτῶν ταῦταις to tie the parable closely to the preceding scene (cf. ἀκούω – 16:14; 20:45) with its audience as the followers of Jesus (5:27-39). This is further corroborated by the use of προσθεῖς εἶπεν παραβολήν (“he proceeded to tell a parable), which implies an addition to what they have been hearing. Luke distinctively uses προστιθημι (cf. 3:20; 12:25, 31; 17:5; 20:11-12; Acts 2:41, 47; 5:14; 11:24; 12:3; 13:36).

The main organizing device of the central portion of Luke's Gospel is the journey of Jesus to Jerusalem with numerous travel notices rubbing through the narrative (9:31, 51, 53; 13:22, 33-34; 17:11; 18:31). Now, it is nearing its climax as he gets closer to Jerusalem.<sup>39</sup> The causal clause in 19:11 is significant: διὰ τὸ ἐγγυσεῖν αὐτὸν Ἱερουσαλήμα (‘‘because he was near to Jerusalem’’). With these words, the narrator notifies us that he added this parable because he was getting close to Jerusalem? What then is the connection between this parable and his journey to Jerusalem?

<sup>38</sup>JEREMIAS, *Parables*, 99 n40 gives a list of Lukan and Pre-Lukan characteristics.

<sup>39</sup>JOHNSON, *Luke*, 289.

Many commentators would like to find the answer in the second reason given for the parable, "... and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately" (19:11). The natural antecedent for the implied subject ("they") is the accompanying crowd made up of followers, opponents, and the "rest". The verb *δοκέω* is sometimes used to express false opinion, but in fact, Luke uses it neutrally (1:3; 10:36; 22:24; Acts 15:22, 25, 28, 34; 25:27; 26:9) as often as to designate erroneous perceptions (8:18; 12:40, 51; 13:2-4; Acts 12:9; 17:18). Yet the verb itself does not tell us whether we are to take the parable as a correction or confirmation of their opinion.<sup>40</sup>

The two points that I would like to emphasize in this verse however, for the purpose of our paper are:(i.) the journey notice, and (ii.) the presence of the disciples amongst those who make up the audience. We shall discuss them further in the section that treats the function of the text in the Lukan JN.

### **19:12**

This verse like the preceding one, contains numerous indications of Lukan compositional activity such that one can say that whatever may have been his original source for the story, it involves a Lukan revision inserted into this Lukan context for a particular purpose. As with this verse in which the Jesus' story really begins, evidence of Lukan characteristic within this parable would also be seen all over the text. The adverb, *οὖν* ("therefore") is used here in a responsive sense, being that their expectation has generated this response, which is the parable. The closest parallels to this usage are in Lk 3:7, 18; 7:31. The term, *εὐγενής* is an adjective which literarily means "noble birth" (cf. Acts 17:11; 1 Cor 1:26). The word *ἐπορεύθη* ("he journeyed") is part of Luke's journey vocabulary and would recall for the hearer Jesus' journey to his destiny in Jerusalem. It is used again in Luke's travel notice at 19:28. And earlier in 9:51, as part of Luke's journey vocabulary, *το ὑπορεύεσθαι* signals Jesus' movement toward

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<sup>40</sup>Johnson, *Luke*, 289.

his goal of death and resurrection.<sup>41</sup> Another catch-word in this verse is ὑποστρέψαι (“to return”), for the entire parable is dependent on the return of the king, who will require his servants to give an account.

The allegorical meaning of these details is that Jesus is the “man of noble birth” and that the χώραν μακρὰν (“distant country”) refers to his being in heaven awaiting his return. His servants are to do his work until he comes back.<sup>42</sup>

### **19:13**

The δέκα μνᾶς (“ten minas”) are central to this verse. a “mina” was an OT measure of weight consisting of fifty shekels (Ezek 45:12), used for gold and silver (1 Ki 10:17; Ezra 2:69; Neh 7:71–72). It was “a sixtieth of a talent or about one hundred drachmas, i.e., about three months' wages”. Even though a mina is a much smaller sum than the five talents in Mt 25:15 (which represent a sizable fortune), three months' wages is still a considerable sum of money. The nobleman makes his expectation concerning the money clear with the use of πραγματεύεσθε the imperative of πραγματεύομαι, meaning “to engage in business.

The phrase, ἐν ᾧ ἔρχομαι presents a sense of construction that is somewhat ambiguous. Most translators simply render it as “until I come”, while some others would see it as “while I go”. This latter nuance which could also mean “while I am travelling” captures the context of the journey information that keeps being highlighted by the author.

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<sup>41</sup>J. Fitzmyer calls this Luke's “pregnant use of the verb πορεύεσθαι . . . [where] the context is one of opposition and hostility, and the implication is that his destiny is to be reached despite such opposition. Further noteworthy instances of it are to be found in the travel account in particular (9:51, 52, 53, 56, 57; 10:38; 13:33; 17:11; 19:12) though its use is not confined to this section”, Cf. FITZMYER, *Luke I-IX*, 164-171; A. ARTHUR, *Luke 9:51-24:53* (ConCom; St. Louis 1998) 426; JOHNSON, *Luke*, 289.

<sup>42</sup>M. C. BLACK, *Luke* (Joplin, MO 1996).

<sup>43</sup>DANKER and BAUER, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*.

**19:14-27**

Luke continues the thread of the parable. We would just highlight a few of the various Lukan characteristics to buttress our point that this Parable is a purposeful Lukan insertion into the journey narrative for a significant purpose.

In 19:14, τοῦτο is a derogatory reference with the nuances of “this guy” or “this fellow” and βασιλεῦσαι is an ingressive aorist, “to become king.”<sup>43</sup> The bidding of some of the nobleman's fellow citizens who sought to upset his confirmation as king was clearly unsuccessful and he returns with full royal authority. Here the opposition to Jesus, perhaps especially that which culminates in his death, is in view. In the larger Lukan perspective, the journey is a journey through death and to God (see Acts 2:33–36), and the return is the anticipated coming of the Son of Man (see Luke 21:27–28). The case in point is that as he journeys (to God), Jesus would entrust the task for the continuation of his mission to his followers, as envisioned in the parable where the noble man entrusts talents to his servants.

The term, γνοῦν 19:15 is also an ingressive aorist, “come to know.” Probably a large part of the reason they did not want him to be king is that they did not want to be held accountable – to him or to anyone.<sup>44</sup> The success achieved by the first two servants may seem extraordinary to us, but in the ancient world huge risks went with huge returns. They have done well in their trial and are given an important share in the rule of their monarch (cf. 22:29–30). The expression, ὅτι ἐν ἐλαχίστῳ πιστὸς ἐγένου (“because you have been faithful in very little”) in 19:17 re-echoes 16:10 which is the parable of the unrighteous steward.<sup>45</sup> The third servant, however (note that Luke seems to lose sight of the rest of the ten who were entrusted with money), returns the money, carefully preserved, but has made absolutely no use of it. The man explains his action as provoked by fear, based on his understanding of the exacting nature of his master:

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<sup>44</sup>A. ARTHUR, *Luke 9:51-24:53* (St. Louis: 1998) 725 ff.

<sup>45</sup>Cf. ARTHUR, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 291; Also, Howard I. MARSHAL, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978) 707.

this man withdraws from the bank what he has not deposited and claims the harvest that represents the effort of somebody else's sowing.<sup>46</sup>

In marked contrast to the other two, the third servant loses his stake in his master's affairs precisely when his master has become the undisputed ruler of the realm. Here too the proverb in 19:26, παντι τῷ ἔχοντι δοθήσεται, ἀπὸ δὲ τοῦ μὴ ἔχοντος καὶ ἀρθησεται (“to every one who has will more be given; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away”) proves true that winners win yet more and losers lose all that they have. But this slave is not the only loser in our story. His loss suddenly appears modest when it can be compared to that of the fellow citizens who opposed the coming to power of this ruler. They are guilty of treason, and they will pay the ultimate penalty.<sup>47</sup> But who made the statement is not exactly clear whether it is the king in the story, or an interjection by Jesus into the parable. This pronouncement is found also in Matt 25:29; 13:12; Mk 4:25.

### **19:28**

This verse is a Lukan link with the preceding section. The phrase, εἰπὼν ταῦτα (“having said these things”) is meant to emphasize that Jesus has removed any basis for misunderstanding of the present incident. This verse which comes soon after the parable, doubles as the conclusion of the parable of the pounds and the conclusion of the journey narrative, and it goes on to give the final travel notice: ἐπορεύετο ἔμπροσθεν ἀναβαίνων εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα (“he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem”). Indeed, ἔμπροσθεν means that Jesus went in front of his followers (cf. Mk 10:32 for the motif). While ἀναβαίνων εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα recalls Lk 2:42, invoking Jesus' pilgrimage to Jerusalem at the age of twelve in the company of his parents, it also recalls Lk 18:31 which signals his final earthly destination where

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<sup>46</sup>NOLLAND, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, 917-918

<sup>47</sup>NOLLAND, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, 918; J. B. GREEN, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI 1997) 679ff.

everything that is written about the Son of Man will be accomplished. In a similar vein, εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμαῖς drawn from Mk 11:1 with an eye to the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem to begin his ultimate journey to the cross. It puts Jesus' journey to Jerusalem at the center stage. The hearer is alerted 'one more time' to pay attention to what is about to transpire in the holy city of Jesus' destiny. The hearer's response to the events that take place there will be significant for his eternal salvation.

The 'journey notice' in this final verse of the pericope combines with the preceding one in v.11 for a specific function. These last two 'journey notices' (v.11 and v.28) in the Lukan Journey narrative fit the Parable of the Pounds within an *inclusio*, and renders it a lot significant in the broader context of the journey narrative that begins from Lk 9:51.

### **The Function of the Parable in the Journey Narrative and its Message**

Obviously, as we said in the introduction, the Parable of the Pound was carefully incorporated by Luke into the journey narrative material to weave up a literary and rhetorical connection of all the themes present in the discourses and actions of Jesus throughout the entire journey narrative. The parable brings the ideational purpose to bear on the overarching message of the JN as it approaches its end.<sup>48</sup> The linguistic choices and pragmatic undertones of the parable convey the writer's perspective on, and experience of, 'what is happening' in the ministry of Jesus. Whenever we talk about events, we represent them in a certain way. Luke uses the Parable of the Pounds to represent what the departure of Jesus after his earthly ministry implies for his followers to whom he is entrusting the continuation of the ministry on earth.

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<sup>48</sup>In presenting a number of arguments that have been advanced in support of the theory that Lk 19:28 should mark the end of the JN, Dean Bécharde points out that amongst other elements, there is first some indication that Luke intends the Parable of the Pound (19:11-27) as an "interpretive pause" that not only comments on the preceding Zacchaeus episode (19:1-10), but also offers a recapitulation of the major themes of the entire JN. Cf. BÉCHARDE, "The Journey Narrative", 7.

In v.11, Luke provides his audience with an interpretive frame by which to make sense of the parable laying emphasis on their 'erroneous' thinking concerning the imminence of the parousia: "he proceeded to tell a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately" (19:11), although the presence of σήμερον ("today") in vv.5, 9 raises the question of the eschatological timetable.<sup>49</sup> Going on to tell the parable gives enough clarification on the issue, providing that, rather than set eyes on the "when" of the appearance on the kingdom, attention should focus on how we use our time and given resources to prepare ourselves and others for admittance into the kingdom (cf. Acts 1:6-11).<sup>50</sup>

Therefore, of the various themes it engenders, and the various possible functions that the Parable of the Pound play in the entire context of the journey narrative – Christological, theological, ecclesiological, missiological, etc. – our focus on this paper is to take on the missiological function, that is, the motifs of "discipleship" and "mission". David Gill's apt description very well captures our purpose: "The parable of the pound, coming as it does at the close of the Travel Narrative, has special significance; and it is comforting for our interpretation of the whole that it contains the two themes of

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<sup>49</sup>Scholars have interpreted this view in a variety of ways. While Conzelman emphasized Luke's concern with "readiness", Maddox thinks that Luke's primary concern is not when the kingdom will come but with who will qualify to be admitted to it. Cf. Hans CONZELMAN, *The Theology of Luke* (transl. Geoffrey BUSWELL) (London: Faber, 1960) 113; Robert MADDOX, *The Purpose of Luke-Acts* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982) 49-50; 105-106. This latter view challenges us to search for other dimensions intentions in the message, which brings us to the question of true discipleship as an 'ingredient' that can truly qualify one for admittance into the kingdom.

<sup>50</sup>Cf. This is actually a strong statement and reminder of the seriousness of the call to discipleship and mission. Everything has its own time. The journey of Jesus which culminates with his entry into Jerusalem leads to the fulfillment of his earthly destiny, to suffer and to die in Jerusalem, and to rise again. But his death and the end of his earthly ministry does not mark the end of his mission, and until the time of the eschatological fulfillment which is certainly **not** so imminent (cf. Lk 19:11), the disciples are to 'engage in business', the business of making God's salvation reach the ends of the earth.

proper discipleship and mission. One might almost say that it identifies them, i.e., missionary activity is the work of the good disciple.”<sup>51</sup>

Looking at this two-fold theme (mission and discipleship) again from the context of the entire journey narrative, we would come to see that it constitutes the framing structures of the narrative (cf. 9:51-62; Lk. 19:11-28, 29ff), in which verbs of “sending” and “entrusting” some tasks are significantly employed.<sup>52</sup> Some important elements connecting the beginning of the Lukan Journey Narrative with the end part, specifically the Parable of the Pounds can therefore be briefly be highlighted. First it must be noted that like the case with 19:11-28, a number of themes and motifs extend through the narrative of 9:51-62, and most prominently the 'journey notices' and the theme of discipleship.<sup>53</sup> Following the element of necessity seen in Jesus' journey and his determination in taking it (19:51), he 'sends' messengers ahead of him, to make 'ready' for him (9:52). The 'sending' of the disciples surfaces also in the Parable of the Pounds where the nobleman charges his servants with the task of 'engaging in business' (*service*) until he comes (cf. 19:13). Also present is the 'motif' of rejection – the Samaritans would not receive him (9:53) just as the citizens of the nobleman sent an embassy after him to accentuate their rejection of him (19:15), but despite the rejection however, the mission is not abandoned and in each case the determination takes them on (9:56; 19:12, 15a). The theme of discipleship is then clearly taken up and expanded in 9:57-62, and the final statement of Jesus in v.62 fits well into comparison with the rendering of accounts situation of 19:15-27 given that the nobleman's servants, by answering the call and accepting the task entrusted to them, they thereby put their hands on the plough and the one who

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<sup>51</sup>David GILL, “Observations on the Lukan Travel Narrative and Some Related Passages”, *Harvard Theological Review* 63 (1970) 212.

<sup>52</sup>With a collection of such verbs, we can say therefore, that Lk 19:11-28, 29-44 forms an *inclusio* with Lk 9:51-62, and upon this basis, we can develop out theme of discipleship which is found in the Parable of the Pounds.

<sup>53</sup>Cf. Dean BÉCHARD, “Exegesis of the Travel Narrative” (Unpublished Lecture Notes II on Luke's Gospel at the Pontifical Biblical Institute, Rome 2013) 2

looks back (cf. the third servant – 19:20-26) is not fit for the master's reward (kingdom of God – cf. 19:62).

We can, in fact, notice from the foregoing that the 'journey notices' on the outer frames of the parable – v.11 (being near to Jerusalem) and v.28 (going up to Jerusalem) together set the parable within an *inclusio* characterized by the 'journey motif'. This is in effect, a significant standpoint in the overall connection of the parable with its predominant theme. The narrator's introduction and conclusion to the parable therefore, reinforce the focus on Jerusalem (the place where Jesus would die to rise again after three days – 18:31-33). It is a sort of κήρυγμα (*kerygma*, i.e. “proclamation”), an important and significant rhetorical device applied to this parable which has the 'journey motif', used by the author to teach his audience and readers the right way to respond to the task charged by the 'master', whose going away *after being rejected* (cf. 19:14) by the elders and scribes, does not end there, but will receive his exaltation and return in glory to demand the rendering of accounts by all the servants he left behind (cf. 19:15-27 *vis-à-vis* the totality of the Gospel message).

Luke's editing and use of the parable therefore offers a lot of significance. The point in the parable is that Jerusalem in vv.11 and 28 is not about the establishment of the βασιλεία and the Parousia, rather it is a place for the passion and resurrection of Jesus. It is a key place but not the place for the end.<sup>54</sup> Luke has therefore used the Parable of the Pound to correct a false notion of discipleship. The fact that Jesus has gone to take his βασιλεία does not mean that the disciples can relax and simply wait around until he returns. The author points out that the time while he is away is a time for “trading” (19:15), i.e. for the hard work of the Christian life.<sup>55</sup> That this work includes missionary activity and relentless service is shown by the parallel passage in Acts 1:10-11 – “And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said,

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<sup>54</sup>GILL, “Observations”, 211; Darrell L. BOCK, *Luke* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994).

<sup>55</sup>GILL, “Lukan Journey Narrative” 212.

'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven'. This very scene points back more or less to the conversation between Jesus and his disciples in Acts 1:6-8 and the mandate Jesus gives to them just before he ascended into heaven.<sup>56</sup>

To give the μνᾶς and entrust them with a duty to accomplish, is tantamount to the details of the call to discipleship. With the giving of the 'minas', the final parable of the Jerusalem journey highlights the disciple's stewardship in the interim between Jesus' death and return. It continues the theme of his preparation of the disciples for life after his departure. His servants must recognize that the consummation of the kingdom is yet in the future and they are accountable for their service in the meantime. Those who would not serve and those who reject Jesus' kingship face judgment, whether they reject that kingship directly or view the King as harsh rather than gracious (cf. Lk 19:24-27).

It is pertinent to note also that Patristic exegesis is fraught with emphasis on the 'discipleship' and 'mission' motifs with regard to this parable of the minas. One clear example is Cyril of Alexandria who states that, "we should see in the Parable of the Pounds an allegorical reference to the mission given to the Apostles and their successors."<sup>57</sup>

Therefore, in our final analysis, the nobleman who goes on a long journey and returns a king is not Archelaus as many exegetes and commentators tend to claim, but Jesus Christ himself. At the end of his earthly ministry, Jesus goes on the journey of his return to the Father and he leaves behind Him servants (disciples and believers) of various degrees of merit, and enemies as well. Each of these servants and enemies will be rewarded or punished according to his deeds; and the rewards are larger opportunities of service. It is clear therefore

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<sup>56</sup>Before then the disciples had asked if Jesus were going to restore the βασιλείατο Israel now. He answers that it is not for them to know the time (Acts 1:7-8); he promises them the Holy Spirit and predicts, "you will be my witnesses ... to the ends of the earth. Cf. GILL, "Lukan Journey Narrative" 212.

<sup>57</sup>Arthur A. JUST, *Luke* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity 2003) 294.

that the main lesson of the Parable of the Pounds is the long period of Christ's absence, during which there will be abundant time for both service and rebellion, time to fulfill the mission and call to service and be rewarded at last, or to neglect the given opportunity and face the judgment (cf. Lk 19:13-27). Therefore, there is not to be, as the disciples fancied, *immediate* triumph and joy for *all*; but, first a long time of probation, and triumph and joy at last for those only who have earned them, and in exact proportion to their merits.<sup>58</sup>

### **Conclusion**

We have examined the Parable of the Pounds as a kerygmatic rhetoric employed by Luke to establish the climactic standpoint of the journey narrative (JN), which is to recall and make emphatic all the themes and motifs that constitute the entire JN itself. Our particular emphasis has been on the preponderant two-fold theme of discipleship and mission. The Parable of the Pounds (Lk 19:11-28) analysed through the prism of its allegorical referent accentuates Luke's ingenuity, the rhetoric of kerygma with which he is able to reach far with his message.

The kingdom will not appear immediately (19:11). Disciples therefore are called to be trustworthy and proceed diligently with the mission entrusted to them while they wait for the second coming of Christ the king. This in effect invites hearers and readers not just merely to stand near the beginning of the narrative but to stand with courage and joyful hope at the end of the narrative, at that crucial and pivotal point when the account of stewardship is rendered to the master.

Following our analysis and discussion, this paper proposes a three-fold set of recommendations: (i.) that all followers of Jesus, indeed all Christians, should engage in “purposeful action” of putting their God-given  $\mu\nu\alpha\varsigma$  to good use so as to yield good fruits – beatitudes; (ii.) that modern disciples should follow Jesus dutifully

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<sup>58</sup>Included also in this overarching message is the point that *to neglect opportunities is to lose them; and to make the most of opportunities is to gain in felicitous strides*. Cf. PLUMMER, *Gospel According to Luke*, 443.

on the journey to bring about the reign of the βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, viz by a life of selfless service to the needs of others and wholehearted commitment to the promotion of brotherhood, justice and peace in the society; and (iii.) that those entrusted with ministerial and missionary vocations should relate themselves appropriately to the spiritual significance of the “journey towards Jerusalem”, viz. the sacrificial import and self-giving dimension of their calling.