

Luke's Portrayal of the Poor and the Ethics of Compassion and Care.

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Abstract

The Gospel of Luke presents a distinctive theological vision that situates the poor and marginalized at the center of divine concern and ethical responsibility. While many scholars have examined Luke's emphasis on compassion and social justice, debate continues over whether his portrayal of the poor primarily serves as a theological motif or as a concrete social ethic. This study addresses that tension by exploring how Luke's theology of compassion shapes an ethic of care that critiques social hierarchy and economic inequality. Employing a literary-theological and socio-rhetorical methodology, the research analyzes key Lucan texts the Magnificat (Luke 1:46–55), the Sermon on the Plain (6:20–26), and the parables of the Good Samaritan (10:25–37) and the Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19–31) to uncover how narrative and theology intersect to form a coherent moral vision. The analysis demonstrates that Luke presents compassion not merely as a private sentiment but as an active ethical imperative grounded in divine solidarity with the poor. This ethic redefines righteousness as relational and communal, urging a radical reorientation of values toward justice, mercy, and inclusion. The study concludes that Luke's ethic of compassion functions as both a theological proclamation and an ethical paradigm, offering a transformative vision for contemporary Christian praxis. By grounding moral responsibility in divine compassion, Luke's Gospel continues to call faith communities toward economic justice, hospitality, and social restoration as essential expressions of discipleship.

Keywords: The Poor, Compassion, Ethics of Care, Social Justice, Biblical Theology

Introduction

Background of the Study

The Gospel of Luke stands out in the New Testament for its profound focus on compassion, social justice, and the empowerment of the marginalized. It presents a transformative vision of God's Kingdom, where the poor, the sick, societal outcasts, and sinners

are integral to God's redemptive plan (King, 2019; Marshall, 1978). This vision is most clearly articulated in passages such as the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55), where Mary rejoices in God's reversal of fortunes for the poor, and the Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6:20-26), which blesses the poor while condemning the rich (Brewer, 2009). Luke's focus on economic justice and the care of the vulnerable aligns with a compassion-centered theology, calling for a radical reevaluation of societal norms and the ethical obligations of Christian communities. Throughout the Gospel, Luke challenges entrenched social hierarchies, urging a shift from self-interest to relational righteousness, where wealth and power are reconceptualized in terms of God's justice and mercy (Hays, 2010). This recurring theme of poverty, compassion, and inclusion transcends theological discourse, serving as a moral imperative for action. While scholars have extensively explored the theological dimensions of these teachings, their practical implications for contemporary Christian practice have received less emphasis.

Statement of the Problem

While the Gospel of Luke offers a distinct ethical framework for engaging with the poor and marginalized, the practical application of these teachings within contemporary Christian communities remains an ongoing challenge. Scholars continue to debate whether Luke's message on poverty and compassion is fundamentally theological or whether it explicitly calls for direct social action in addressing modern issues such as economic inequality and social injustice (King, 2019). This study seeks to explore this tension by critically analyzing Luke's depiction of the poor and examining the ethical obligations of Christians in confronting social disparities. The disconnect between theological interpretation and the real-world application of Luke's teachings on compassion presents a significant challenge for Christian praxis in the 21st century (Cornelius, 2013; Brewer, 2009). By investigating how Luke's ethical vision can inform contemporary Christian responses to pressing social issues, this study aims to bridge the gap between faith and practice in today's socio-economic landscape.

Objectives of the Study

This study aims to:

1. Examine Luke's theological vision of compassion and its ethical implications for the poor, focusing on how these teachings challenge social and economic inequalities;
2. Analyze key passages in Luke's Gospel (e.g., the *Magnificat*, the *Sermon on the Plain*, and the *parables of the Good Samaritan* and the *Rich Man and Lazarus*) to explore Luke's ethical stance on wealth and poverty;
3. Investigate the relationship between Luke's theology and Christian praxis, particularly the practical applications of his teachings on compassion and social justice in contemporary Christian communities;
4. Contribute to the ongoing scholarly discourse on biblical social ethics by exploring how Luke's teachings can address modern-day issues of economic inequality and social marginalization.

Methodology

This study employs a literary-theological and socio-rhetorical methodology to examine Luke's Gospel and its depiction of the poor and marginalized. The literary-theological approach centers on interpreting key passages within Luke's narrative, focusing on their theological implications regarding compassion, justice, and social ethics. This method considers how Luke's narrative structure, character development, and thematic exploration of wealth, poverty, and social hierarchy contribute to his broader ethical vision.

The socio-rhetorical approach, on the other hand, analyzes the socio-political and economic context of first-century Palestine, seeking to understand how the social realities of the time influenced Luke's ethical teachings. By examining the socio-economic conditions of the period, this study aims to assess the practical implications of Luke's call for compassion, particularly in relation to economic disparities and social exclusion. Key texts for analysis will include the Magnificat (Luke 1:46–55), the Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6:20–26), and pivotal parables such as the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37) and the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31). Secondary sources, including biblical commentaries and contemporary scholarship on Luke's social ethics, will be integrated to enrich and deepen the analysis of these texts.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Review

These concepts provide the theoretical basis for analyzing Luke's portrayal of the poor and his ethical teachings on compassion and care. Understanding these terms is essential for interpreting the texts and theological themes in Luke's Gospel and connecting them to contemporary Christian praxis.

2.1.1 Poverty in Luke's Gospel

Poverty, according to Luke's Gospel, is both a material and spiritual situation that represents one's reliance on God. Luke portrays the poor not just as economically disadvantaged, but also as characters of theological significance, bestowed with God's special favour. According to Brewer (2009), Luke's description of poverty is inextricably linked to the Kingdom of God, in which the destitute are promised blessings and a change in their social rank (Luke 6:20-26). This concept is fundamental to Luke's larger vision of economic justice and social transformation, emphasizing the radical nature of God's Kingdom, in which societal hierarchies are overturned and the impoverished are lifted up. This theological interpretation of poverty emphasizes the ethical imperatives in Luke's Gospel.

Luke utilizes a variety of Greek terminology for the impoverished, including "ptochos" and "penichros," which refer to the oppressed and downtrodden (King, 2019). Poverty, for Luke, is more than just a lack of wealth; it is also about being marginalized and excluded from the social and ecclesiastical elite. Poverty, in theological terms, represents an openness to God's mercy, with the poor being more responsive to God's involvement and charity.

2.1.2 Compassion in Luke's Gospel

In Luke's Gospel, compassion is more than a feeling of pity; it is an active moral reaction to the suffering of others. The Greek phrase "splagchnizomai," which means to be stirred in one's inner being or heart, emphasizes the importance of empathy and moral responsibility while responding to the needs of others. Compassion in Luke entails both individual concern for the suffering and a societal ethic of justice that necessitates a reorganization of social relations (Scheffler, 2017).

Luke's depiction of compassion extends beyond humanitarian deeds to include a radical dedication to justice and care for the poor, sick, and disenfranchised. This idea of compassion is seen in Jesus' story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), where he defines neighborly compassion as overcoming socioeconomic, ethnic, and religious boundaries to act in mercy and solidarity with others (Cornelius, 2013). In Luke's ethical framework, compassion acts as a moral imperative, requiring individuals and communities to respond to societal injustices, particularly those that affect the weak.

2.1.3 Social Justice in Luke's Gospel

Luke's depiction of compassion extends beyond charitable deeds to include a strong dedication to justice and providing for the underprivileged, ill, and disenfranchised. Jesus characterizes neighborly compassion as overcoming socioeconomic, ethnic, and religious barriers to act in charity and solidarity with others in the Good Samaritan tale (Luke 10:25-37) (Cornelius, 2013). According to Luke's ethical theory, compassion is a moral need that calls on people and groups to address social injustices, especially those that impact the weak.

In this perspective, social justice involves both a theological vision of a reversed social order in which the rich are called to repentance and the poor are glorified, in addition to addressing individual acts of kindness. The parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31), in which wealth is presented as a moral hazard and the rich man's failure to provide for Lazarus has eternal repercussions, serves as an example of this viewpoint (King, 2019). Luke believes that social justice means opposing the structures that permit injustice and standing in solidarity with those who are marginalized.

2.1.4 Theology of Salvation in Luke's Gospel

Luke's ethical teachings regarding poverty, compassion, and social justice are closely linked to his vision of salvation. According to Luke's Gospel, salvation is a comprehensive process that encompasses social restoration, spiritual development, and economic justice. The Kingdom of God includes and values the oppressed and impoverished, therefore salvation is more than just a personal or spiritual reality (Luke 4:18-19, 6:20-26).

Although Luke's theology of salvation is eschatological, that is, it foresees a future reversal of social structures, it nevertheless has implications for the present. According to Luke, salvation entails making the right connections within communities, especially between the rich and the poor. Luke elaborates on this idea in his parables and fables, as Speckman (2023) notes that God's redemptive action is seen as a liberating force that attacks both the human soul and the social order.

2.1.5 Christian Discipleship and Poverty

The final concept covered in this analysis is Christian discipleship and its relationship to poverty and compassion. In Luke's Gospel, discipleship is more than just personal piety; it is also a dramatic reorientation of values toward justice and caring for the downtrodden. In Luke, discipleship is defined as a public and collective commitment to acting in ways consistent with God's justice, as seen in Jesus' ministry to the poor and outcasts (Luke 9:23, 14:13-14).

As Luke's emphasis on economic redistribution in tales like Zacchaeus' repentance (Luke 19:1–10) shows, true discipleship requires a reevaluation of how resources are used and a commitment to justice for the underprivileged (Marshall, 1978). This approach to discipleship challenges Christians to live out the values of God's Kingdom both spiritually and in practical, socially transformative ways.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical basis of this study is biblical theology, Christian ethics, and social justice theory. By applying both disciplines, this framework seeks to clarify how Luke's portrayal of the poor and his moral teachings on compassion relate to theological concepts and practical social ethics. Thanks to the theoretical lens, the study examines the moral remedies and theological prerequisites for the issues of poverty and inequality as presented in Luke's Gospel.

2.2.1 Liberation Theology and Social Justice

Liberation theology, especially the writings of Gustavo Gutiérrez and James Cone, which highlight God's preference for the underprivileged, is one of the major theoretical stances that guides this investigation. According to liberation theology, God's Kingdom aligns with justice, as demonstrated by actively helping the underprivileged, oppressed, and disenfranchised. This theological tradition finds resonance in Luke's Gospel, particularly in its persistent focus on social inversion and economic fairness. A fundamental idea of liberation theology, the Magnificat (Luke 1:46–55) and the Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6:20–26) depict an eschatological reversal of fortunes in which the downtrodden and lowly are raised in the Kingdom of God (Brewer, 2009; Gutiérrez, 1973).

In this study, liberation theology provides a lens to interpret Luke's social ethics as both a critique of existing social structures and a call to radical discipleship. Through this framework, Luke's ethical vision is understood as a direct challenge to the economic inequalities of both the ancient world and contemporary society. Luke's vision, therefore, is not just theological but actively calls for social transformation, a transformation that must be mirrored in the lives of modern-day Christians.

2.2.2 The Ethics of Care and Relational Responsibility

Another important theoretical approach in this study is the ethics of care, as developed by scholars like Carol Gilligan and Virginia Held. The ethics of care emphasizes the importance of relational responsibility, particularly in contexts of vulnerability and dependency. In Luke's

Gospel, compassion is not merely an individual emotional response but an ethical responsibility to care for others, particularly the poor and marginalized. The parable of the *Good Samaritan* (Luke 10:25–37) embodies this relational ethic, challenging the listener to transcend social, cultural, and religious boundaries to act with compassionate concern toward those in need (Scheffler, 2017).

This ethical framework of care supports the notion that Christian discipleship involves taking responsibility for the well-being of others, particularly those who are socially excluded or economically deprived. Through this framework, the ethics of care in Luke's Gospel is not just a call to personal piety but to a communal ethic that fosters justice and social equity.

2.2.3 Theological Ethics and Divine Solidarity with the Poor

Theological ethics, with a particular emphasis on divine sympathy with the impoverished, is an important theoretical approach in this research. According to Luke's Gospel, God actively identifies with the downtrodden, the impoverished, and the sinners, demonstrating a strong sense of compassion for their situation. The Magnificat, in which Mary declares that God has favoured the lowly, and the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31), in which the contrast between the rich man's luxury and Lazarus' poverty is framed within an eternal context of divine judgment, both make this idea abundantly evident. Luke's moral exhortation is based on the theological idea of divine solidarity.

Scholars such as Cornelius (2013) argue that Luke's compassionate ethics stem from God's personal identification with the downtrodden. Christians are challenged by God's preferential compassion for the impoverished to empathize with them on an ethical and theological level. In keeping with God's justice, this solidarity requires Christians to advocate for institutional reform as well as to show human compassion.

2.2.4 Eschatology and Reversal of Fortunes

The eschatological framework in Luke's Gospel is a key component of understanding his theology of poverty and compassion. Eschatology refers to the study of the “end times” or the ultimate fulfillment of God's Kingdom. In Luke, Jesus' ministry is seen as the inbreaking of the Kingdom of God, marked by a reversal of fortunes. The *Sermon on the Plain* (Luke 6:20–26) and the *Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus* (Luke 16:19–31) illustrate this concept, where the poor are blessed and the rich are warned. This eschatological reversal indicates that social and economic disparities do not reflect God's will and will be corrected in the coming Kingdom. This framework allows the study to view Luke's ethical teachings as both present and future, challenging believers to live in a way that anticipates God's final judgment, where the oppressed are exalted and the wealthy face accountability. Scholars like King (2019) suggest that Luke's eschatology calls for present-day action to align with the values of the Kingdom, particularly through the radical redistribution of wealth and resources.

2.3 Empirical Review

2.3.1 Compassion and Social Responsibility in Contemporary Christian Communities

Luke's ethical teachings on compassion are widely accepted in Christian societies, especially when it comes to helping the underprivileged and disenfranchised, according to empirical research. In *Option for the Poor and Compassion for the Vulnerable*, for instance, Speckman (2023) emphasizes that although many Christian communities understand Luke's message as a call to charity, they also acknowledge that this compassion extends into more general structural questions of justice. Luke's teachings encourage faith-based organizations to participate in social activism, emphasizing community empowerment and advocacy for oppressed people, according to Speckman's research of South African churches. However, Speckman points out that the propensity to concentrate on individual deeds of kindness occasionally restricts the possibility of revolutionary change at the societal level.

In the same vein, Kgatle (2019) investigates the missiological implications of Luke 4:16-19 in relation to South African homelessness. His research demonstrates how the extreme compassion Luke promotes, as seen by Jesus' declaration in Nazareth, provides a theological basis for Christian activism targeted at resolving social justice issues. According to the empirical results, Luke's message urges Christians to confront the structural causes of inequality, particularly in the context of the urban poor, even as it promotes individual and group compassion.

2.3.2 The Radical Economic Message of Luke and Contemporary Economic Systems

A theological critique of riches that is both radical and problematic for modern economic systems can be found in Luke's Gospel. In *Reclaiming the Radical Economic Message of Luke*, King (2019) makes the case that the neoliberal capitalist paradigm, which encourages individual wealth accumulation at the expense of the poor, is in conflict with Luke's teachings on poverty and riches. Christian communities that interact with Luke's economic ethics frequently exhibit a strong dedication to economic justice, wealth redistribution, and poverty relief, according to empirical studies like those conducted by Scheffler (2017). Scheffler points out that these Christian communities often encounter economic and political obstacles when attempting to implement Luke's criticism of wealth in practical settings.

Luke's economic teachings, especially his criticism of wealth accumulation and his emphasis on redistribution (Luke 12:33, 16:19–31), offer a model for Christian engagement with global injustice, according to Scheffler's analysis of faith-based organizations devoted to economic justice. The empirical results show that although these teachings encourage individual acts of kindness, they are less often associated with systemic reform or policy advocacy, leaving the larger issue of inequality in economic institutions largely unaddressed (Scheffler, 2017).

2.3.3 Luke's Compassion as a Psychological and Social Imperative

In addition to discussing material poverty, Luke's Gospel highlights the social and psychological aspects of suffering. Luke frequently presents the idea of compassion as a psychological and relational reaction to human suffering. In his research on the psychological aspects of compassion, Scheffler (2014) examines how Christian counseling and social care methods have been impacted by Luke's depiction of Jesus as a merciful healer. According to the study, Christian care ministries, especially those that concentrate on mental health, emotional support, and psychological healing for underprivileged people, have included Luke's compassionate engagement with the impoverished and suffering.

Luke's Gospel promotes a holistic understanding of compassion that includes both material and psychological support, as Scheffler's research on compassionate care illustrates. These findings imply that Luke's compassion provides a thorough strategy for addressing the needs of the disadvantaged, encompassing not just medical attention but also social and psychological rehabilitation. This is crucial when impoverished people's emotional and mental suffering is made worse by financial stress.

2.3.4 Theological Ethics of Luke and Its Application to Social Justice Movements

The application of Luke's theology of justice in social justice movements, especially in post-colonial and post-apartheid contexts, has also been examined empirically. In their analysis of Luke 19:1–10 (the narrative of Zacchaeus), Motuku and van Eck (2024) investigate the applicability of Luke's moral lessons in South Africa following apartheid. They contend that Zacchaeus' deed of restitution serves as an example of justice and reconciliation, inspiring Christians to carry out acts of reconciliation and reparations in societies sharply split along racial and economic lines. The study shows that Luke's teachings on social responsibility and wealth redistribution provide important direction for post-apartheid South Africa's reconciliation efforts and the healing of social and economic divides.

In his study of Buddhist-Christian dialogues, Simmer-Brown (1996) examines how Luke's compassionate ethics are consistent with Buddhist social care principles, especially when it comes to easing suffering and advancing social justice. According to his research, Luke's Gospel's teachings on compassion and helping the underprivileged have interfaith significance and provide a platform for many religious communities to work together to confront global social concerns like poverty and economic inequality.

3. Analysis of Texts

3.1 The Magnificat (Luke 1:46–55)

A deep theological analysis of God's justice and compassion can be found in The Magnificat. Mary's song, which is frequently considered a prophetic hymn, commemorates God's reversal of fortune, in which the rich are brought down and the poor are raised. Luke's Gospel begins with this text, which emphasizes the preferential option for the poor and contains a strong social justice message. From a theological perspective, it is consistent with Luke's criticism of wealth and his recognition of the impoverished as key players in God's redemptive purpose (Cornelius, 2013; King, 2019).

The Magnificat shows the importance of economic justice in Luke's story from a literary-theological perspective. According to Speckman (2023), the remainder of Luke's Gospel, in which God's intervention in the world results in drastic social reversals, is preceded by this hymn. From a sociorhetorical standpoint, the Magnificat is a critique of the Roman imperial system, which oppressed the poor while supporting the affluent elite. Mary's song draws attention to God's work in upending social systems and emphasizes hope for the oppressed (King, 2019).

3.2 The Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6:20–26)

A fundamental critique of social structures that support the wealthy and powerful at the expense of the underprivileged and disadvantaged is presented in the Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6:20–26). Jesus establishes a moral framework in which economic inequality is not consistent with God's justice by benefiting the poor and cursing the rich (Hays, 2010; Scheffler, 2017). From a literary-theological perspective, Luke's Gospel uses this text as a model for teaching that the Kingdom of God is a place of reversal (King, 2019).

This passage directly criticizes the socioeconomic systems of Jesus' day from a socio-rhetorical standpoint. While the impoverished are promised heavenly favor and blessing, the wealthy, who live in luxury and disregard the suffering of the poor, are warned of the eternal consequences of their behavior. Marshall (1978) and Hays (2010) note that although this reversal is eschatological, it has immediate consequences for Christian discipleship and calls for a reorganization of values in the direction of justice, mercy, and inclusivity. Luke's Sermon questions contemporary economic structures that disproportionately benefit the wealthy and powerful.

3.3 The Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37)

The Good Samaritan tale extends the concept of neighbourly love to encompass persons who are not members of one's immediate group, in this case, the Samaritans, who were considered enemies and outsiders by the Jewish people. The story highlights that genuine compassion entails acting to assist those in need, regardless of race, religion, or social standing, in addition to feeling sympathy. Luke's ethical conception of compassion as a moral obligation to act on behalf of others is based on this story (Cornelius, 2013).

The parable emphasizes Jesus' radical inclusion of the underprivileged from a literary-theological standpoint, demonstrating that the Kingdom of God is marked by unending compassion and solidarity with the outcasts (Scheffler, 2017). According to Speckman (2023), the parable challenges Christians to go above racial, cultural, and religious barriers, making neighborly caring a universal value for everyone. The socio-rhetorical perspective emphasizes how this fable challenges the social boundaries of the era in a highly stratified society, calling for a reinterpretation of the neighbor as anybody in need, regardless of socioeconomic setting.

3.4 The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31)

The parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31) discusses accumulating wealth and its everlasting effects. Lazarus, who suffers in life, finds solace in the afterlife, while the rich man, who lives in luxury and overlooks the beggar, faces eternal torment. This striking difference highlights the moral ramifications of disregarding the needs of the impoverished as well as the spiritual perils of prosperity (Hays, 2010). From a literary-theological standpoint, the fable portrays wealth as a moral barrier that results in spiritual blindness, criticizing the materialism and apathy of the wealthy. According to Scheffler (2017), the fable emphasizes the wealthy's moral obligation to help the underprivileged and implies that failing to do so will lead to divine retribution. From a theological perspective, this story highlights the eschatological reversal in which the rich are summoned to repentance for their neglect and the impoverished are justified (Speckman, 2023). From a socio-rhetorical standpoint, the story calls for a radical redistribution of wealth and a dedication to economic justice, challenging the social exclusion and economic inequality of the era. It offers Christians today a timeless moral lesson about

spiritual responsibility and sympathy for the afflicted while acting as a prophetic critique of the societal institutions that uphold inequity.

Luke's Gospel offers a theologically based ethic of compassion that demands proactive care for the underprivileged and disenfranchised, according to an examination of these important verses. His teachings criticize social and economic structures that uphold inequality, in addition to challenging personal attitudes toward wealth. Luke offers a revolutionary picture of the Kingdom of God through the Magnificat, the Sermon on the Plain, the Good Samaritan, and the Rich Man and Lazarus. In this kingdom, social solidarity, divine justice, and mercy redefine human values.

Luke's Gospel provides a prophetic critique of modern economic institutions and a vision of hope for the impoverished by integrating these moral precepts into Jesus' mission and his relationships with the underprivileged. These writings urge current Christians to adopt a fundamental reorientation of values toward inclusivity, mercy, and social justice. They also continue to speak to the present Christian ethics of care and justice.

4. Discussion and Application

According to an assessment of key texts from Luke's gospel, his theological approach emphasizes social justice and compassion as critical components of Christian discipleship. The Good Samaritan, the Magnificat, the Sermon on the Plain, and the Rich Man and Lazarus all demonstrate Luke's unwavering opposition to economic injustice, as well as his call to radical discipleship marked by compassion for the disadvantaged and downtrodden. These writings provide a theological foundation for Christian activity, encouraging believers to challenge social structures that perpetuate injustice while also participating in acts of human compassion. This section will discuss Luke's ethical teachings and their relevance to contemporary Christian communities, particularly in light of social exclusion and economic disparity.

4.1 Theological and Ethical Vision in Luke's Gospel

Luke's picture of the impoverished and disenfranchised is based on a profound theology of compassion that advocates for active, collective duty. The Magnificat establishes the tone for Luke's understanding of divine justice, in which the poor are elevated and the wealthy are urged to repent. This topic is expanded upon in the Sermon in the Plain, where the blessings and woes show a clear ethical reversal of worldly values. Luke's eschatological vision depicts the Kingdom of God as marked by justice, kindness, and the inclusion of the downtrodden. According to Speckman (2023), Luke's ethics are about society transformation rather than individual charity a transformation that entails structural change in the distribution of income and resources.

This notion of divine reversal, the exaltation of the destitute and the humility of the rich, is a challenge to action for the present rather than just an eschatological promise. As King (2019) points out, Luke's teachings continue to appeal to contemporary capitalism mechanisms that uphold social inequity while also challenging the political and economic systems of antiquity. As a manifestation of God's Kingdom on earth, Christians are obligated to campaign for justice and resource redistribution in addition to engaging in personal charity.

4.2 Compassion and the Ethics of Care in Christian Praxis

The parables of the Good Samaritan and the Rich Man and Lazarus show that compassion is a moral need that necessitates action rather than merely a personal emotion or an isolated act of kindness. The ethics of care, in which compassion results in concrete acts that uphold justice and restore dignity, is best illustrated by the Samaritan's treatment of the injured man in the parable (Luke 10:25–37). Scheffler (2017) supports this by pointing out that Luke's compassionate ethic demands a relational approach to social responsibility, where Christians must actively and transformatively address the suffering of others.

The socio-rhetorical approach to the Good Samaritan parable emphasizes the boundary-crossing nature of Luke's message. Jesus' call to love one's neighbor is not confined to one's own ethnic or social group but extends to those who are seen as outsiders. This teaching has significant implications for contemporary Christian praxis, especially in a world marked by racial, ethnic, and economic divisions. Christian communities are called to embody inclusivity, breaking down barriers that exclude and oppress. The ethics of care in Luke's Gospel extends beyond individual acts to include social justice that promotes systemic change.

4.3 Addressing Economic Inequality and Social Exclusion Today

Luke's theological critique of wealth and economic inequality has significant implications for contemporary Christian communities. The Sermon on the Plain and the Rich Man and Lazarus parable highlight the moral danger of wealth, warning the rich of the consequences of ignoring the needs of the poor. This critique is just as relevant today, where global economic disparities continue to widen and social exclusion remains rampant. Hays (2010) notes that while the early church took Luke's teachings on wealth seriously, modern Christianity often falls short of applying this ethic of economic justice in tangible ways.

Practically speaking, this means that Christians today are expected to confront the underlying causes of poverty and social inequality through campaigning for legislative changes, corporate responsibility, and resource redistribution in addition to charity giving. Christians should participate in global justice movements that oppose neoliberal economic policies that uphold economic inequality, according to Scheffler (2017). This would entail promoting economic systems that put human dignity ahead of profit as well as equitable pay and living conditions.

For example, Christian communities might collaborate with local governments and groups to address housing instability, food insecurity, and educational access in the framework of poverty alleviation initiatives. Luke's inclusive ethic exhorts Christians to actively participate in social restoration, whether by structural change or direct service.

4.4 Christian Praxis and Modern Social Justice Movements

Luke's teachings must be applied in contemporary social justice initiatives. Luke's emphasis on economic justice and the preference for the poor is a major source of inspiration for liberation theology, especially in Latin America (Brewer, 2009). Liberation theologians contend that Luke's Gospel offers a potent criticism of oppressive regimes and is fundamentally anti-imperial. King (2019) highlights that Luke's extreme vision of the Kingdom of God as one of economic and social equality must influence contemporary Christian social movements, such as anti-racism, immigration reform, and environmental justice. In addition to addressing pressing humanitarian needs, Christian involvement in these organizations seeks to alter the systems that

uphold economic injustice and social marginalization. For instance, given Luke's depiction of Jesus' interaction with the disadvantaged, Christian participation in the Black Lives Matter movement or refugee advocacy might be viewed as an extension of the biblical call to care for the oppressed (Speckman, 2023).

4.5 Luke's Ethics and Christian Discipleship Today

Christian discipleship that extends beyond spiritual practice to include social responsibility is based on Luke's vision of compassion and social justice. Luke's message urges Christian communities to be radical inclusive spaces where the underprivileged, disenfranchised, and oppressed find support and solidarity, as Scheffler (2014) says. According to Luke, becoming a disciple involves more than just being holy on a personal level; it also entails taking action to change social circumstances. This discipleship entails actively addressing the problems of injustice, poverty, and inequality that still impact millions of people globally. As a result, Christian communities are expected to be change agents, actively working to establish a just society that upholds the values of God's Kingdom.

This section's discussion of Luke's Gospel emphasizes how biblical principles on poverty, compassion, and social justice are still applicable to modern Christian practice. Luke challenges contemporary economic institutions with his ethical teachings, urging Christians to promote social justice and systemic reform in addition to charitable giving. Luke's Gospel provides a model for transformative discipleship that is still very applicable in tackling social exclusion and economic inequality today through radical inclusivity, support for the underprivileged, and resource redistribution.

5. Conclusion

The theological vision of compassion and social justice in Luke's Gospel has been examined in this study, with a focus on how his depiction of the underprivileged and disenfranchised subverts societal hierarchies and economic disparities. The study has shown that Luke's ethical teachings are not only theological ideals but also requirements for Christian discipleship by closely examining several important passages, including the Magnificat (Luke 1:46–55), the Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6:20–26), the parables of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37), and the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31).

Luke's Gospel urges a fundamental reorientation of values in which economic justice is viewed as a primary priority of God's Kingdom and compassion is demonstrated via deeds. The prevalent economic institutions and social conventions of both ancient Palestine and contemporary society are challenged by recurring themes such as the preference for the poor, the criticism of wealth growth, and the reversal of social fortunes. Additionally, Luke's focus on compassion as active care and the moral obligation of the wealthy to meet the needs of the poor provides a biblical framework for addressing current problems of social exclusion and economic inequality.

This study has also demonstrated how Luke's Gospel offers a theological critique of social systems that sustain economic inequality as well as individual behaviours, using a socio-rhetorical and literary-theological method. Luke's teachings still exhort Christians to actively participate in social justice movements, push for structural change, and redistribute resources in ways that honour God's kindness and fairness. Luke's Gospel is still a powerful call to Christian discipleship that emphasizes justice, compassion, and solidarity with the underprivileged.

Luke provides a theological framework for resolving the injustices of our day by emphasizing social change and economic equality. Christian communities can become effective social change agents by adopting these principles and putting them into practice. This will guarantee that the values of the Kingdom of God, justice, kindness, and inclusion, are fulfilled in both individual lives and societal structures.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Application of Luke's Teachings in Christian Communities

1. **Promote Active Compassion and Social Responsibility:** Christian communities should move beyond traditional models of charity and adopt more systemic approaches to social justice. This includes advocating for policies that address the root causes of poverty, such as housing inequality, unemployment, and lack of access to education. Luke's ethical teachings call for compassionate action, and communities can implement these teachings by establishing community-based initiatives focused on empowerment rather than merely relieving symptoms of poverty.
2. **Encourage a Kingdom-Centered Vision of Wealth:** Christian leaders should teach the importance of generosity and economic justice as part of discipleship. Drawing from Luke's ethical critique of wealth, congregations can be encouraged to redistribute wealth and focus on sustainable giving that addresses systemic issues rather than one-time donations. Church members should also be urged to engage in responsible stewardship, recognizing that wealth is a gift to be used for social good.

6.2 Further Research on Luke's Ethics of Poverty and Justice

3. **Explore Luke's Social Ethics in Light of Modern Economic Systems:** Future research should investigate the continuing relevance of Luke's economic teachings in the context of neoliberal capitalism and global economic inequality. Scholars can examine how Luke's critique of wealth accumulation and call for wealth redistribution can inform modern economic policies and corporate responsibility in tackling global poverty and economic injustice.
4. **Examine the Role of the Church in Addressing Systemic Poverty:** Further empirical studies could focus on the role of the Church in addressing systemic poverty and marginalization through social justice movements. Research can analyze how churches around the world implement Luke's teachings through advocacy, education, and social services, and how these efforts contribute to social transformation.

6.3 Engage in Interfaith Dialogue on Social Justice

5. **Promote Interfaith Engagement on Compassionate Action:** Given that compassion and social justice are themes shared across many world religions, it is recommended that interfaith dialogue be encouraged, especially between Christianity and other religious traditions like Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism. These dialogues can foster collaboration in addressing global issues like poverty, refugee crises, and economic inequality, where the

principles of compassion and care for the marginalized can provide common ground for joint action.

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