Rereading the Parable of the Good Samaritan through Theological Literacy: A Hermeneutics of Image[1]

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Abstract

The Parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10 has often been interpreted through moral or ethical lenses. This study proposes an alternative reading grounded in the narrative structures and literary devices deliberately embedded by the evangelist Luke. Biblical texts, beyond the level of words, generate visual and spatial imagery within the reader's imagination through narrative atmosphere, structure, and literary composition, thereby guiding the direction of interpretation. Attending to this textual dynamic, the paper approaches the parable not merely as content to be decoded but as a carefully crafted theological narrative that must be read in light of its textual intent.

Building upon three prior studies that have identified chiastic structure, inter-narrative structure, and intertextual references (notably to Ezekiel 34), this research reads the parable through a six-scene image-based structure. Each scene generates symbolic and visual motifs that together form a redemptive progression. Special attention is given to ten hapax legomena—Greek words that appear only once in the New Testament—each of which serves as a linguistic marker of divine initiative, mercy, and once-for-all redemption. These rare terms are not incidental but strategically positioned to deepen the theological architecture of the narrative.

Rather than presenting the Samaritan as a model of moral action, this paper interprets him as a Christological figure who intervenes in the existential death of humanity with divine grace. By tracing the literary design that Luke constructs, the study reframes the parable as a theological narrative in which death-bound existence meets the approaching mercy of God. This reading offers a model of theological literacy—a mode of interpretation that attends to Scripture's structure, symbolism, narrative flow, and redemptive intent.

Keywords: Theological literacy, Good Samaritan, Literary Foreshadowing, Hapax Legomena

1. This article presents an English translation and expanded version of the Korean study, "*Re-reading the Parable of the Good Samaritan through Theological Literacy: A Hermeneutics of Image*", originally published in the Journal of Christian Philosophy 43 (2025). It has been revised for a global audience, with enhanced theological clarity and a more nuanced narrative-linguistic analysis. This article has been formally assigned a DOI: https://doi.org/10.23291/jcp.2025..43.315. Please note that the DOI link has been registered but is still pending activation in the international DOI system. It will become fully functional shortly.

Image, Image-based Reading, Go and Do Likewise, Luke's Gospel.

I. Introduction

When reading a sentence like "My heart is a lake," the reader goes beyond merely interpreting its literal meaning. Instead, one envisions a scene—a sunbeam glistening on still waters, a gentle ripple, or the subtle trace of wind passing by. Though such images may vary depending on the reader's experience, emotions, and context, they are fundamentally guided by the structure and implicit cues embedded within the text. Literary texts allow for multiple interpretations, but those interpretations are not arbitrary. As Jung Yoon-hee demonstrates through examples such as emblematic poetry, allegorical painting, and illustrative imagery, the visual image evoked by a text is not merely an emotional reaction but a product of interpretation formed within a structured context.[2] Sentences, then, operate beyond word combinations; they construct scenes and atmospheres within the reader's mind. This image formation is an essential mode of textual reception. Biblical narratives are no exception. The reader not only "reads" the Word but also "visualizes" and responds to the emotional resonance and symbolic imagery evoked by the text.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan in the Gospel of Luke has long been interpreted as a moral teaching text. Yet, beneath this surface lies a deeper narrative structure of symbolic imagery and theological design. This study begins with the premise that the parable must be reexamined through the literary structure and dynamics of reader response.

It first observes that the parable is embedded within a paragraph-level chiastic structure spanning Luke 9:51–11:13, in which questions and responses are symmetrically arranged around the theological center of "eternal life."[3] Furthermore, the parable is situated within an inter-narrative structure that connects it to the story of the widow's son in Nain (Luke 7:11–17) and Jesus' royal entry into Bethany (Luke 19:28–40).[4] In this literary positioning, Luke reveals

2. Yoon-Hee Joung, "Wechselbeziehung von Text und Bild- mit Bezug auf die mediale Überlagerung und Transformation vom Zeichen der Schrift," *The Association Of Comparative Study Of World Literature* 22 (2008): 179–186.

3. Young-Chool Oh, "The Contextual Chiastic Structure and the Theological Meaning of Eternal Life: A Study on Luke 9:51–11:13," *Journal of Christian Philosophy* 42 (2025): 265-267. This paper analyzes the structure of Luke 9:51–11:13, in which six narratives are placed in close sequence to reveal that "eternal life" belongs to heaven. Within the paragraph-level chiastic structure, the lawyer's question, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" is answered by the revelatory narrative, through which Luke shows that eternal life is granted not by human action, but to those who have received God's revelation. The mission of the seventy carries the redemptive-historical meaning of "having one's name written in heaven," while the story of Martha and Mary conveys that welcoming Jesus and listening to His word marks the beginning of eternal life. In this way, Luke, through the arrangement of the overall context, makes it clear that eternal life is not merely an ethical teaching but a redemptive-historical event. For this reason, the parable of the Good Samaritan should not be approached merely as an ethical exhortation, but rather as a revelatory narrative within Luke's redemptive-historical framework.

4. Young-Chool Oh, "A Literary Approach to the Parable of the Good Samaritan in the Gospel of Luke," *Journal of Christian Philosophy* 39 (2024): 204-206. Luke employs a literary device that links the lawyer's question about eternal life to the raising of the widow's son at Nain (Luke 7:11–17) and the royal enthronement at Bethany

the Good Samaritan's actions as a pivotal moment in the redemptive narrative centered on Jesus Christ. Additionally, the parable demonstrates intertextual resonance with Ezekiel 34, aligning the Samaritan with the prophetic image of the shepherd and highlighting the theological thread of divine compassion.[5]

These literary strategies are not mere narrative background but function as theological foreshadowing—guiding the reader's imagination and shaping the interpretive trajectory through structured imagery and symbolic movement. From this perspective, the present study re-reads the parable not as a sequence of moral discourse, but as a series of scenes, and not merely as theological propositions, but as evocative images. Such an approach assumes that this interpretive process is part of what constitutes theological literacy—a synthesis of theological sensitivity and structural insight.

"Literacy" now extends beyond basic reading and writing skills; it involves the critical interpretation of an entire discursive framework. In this light, theological literacy refers to the ability to interpret Scripture not merely as information or moral instruction, but in terms of its structure, symbolism, narrative depth, and redemptive flow. This interpretive awareness is situated within what Esther L. Meek calls "acts of knowing"—a reception of Scripture that goes beyond data acquisition and submits itself to the pattern of reality.[6]

Building upon three prior studies that identified literary foreshadowing, paragraph-level chiasmus, inter-narrative structure, and intertextual symbolism, this paper divides the parable into six scene-image units and reinterprets each scene by tracing its symbolic meaning and visual flow. A scene-image structure refers to an interpretive framework that analyzes each narrative segment as a literary scene composed of spatial imagery and symbolic gestures within a structural whole. Through this framework, the study examines how the theological theme of "eternal life" is both visualized and structurally articulated within the Lukan narrative and ultimately proposes the Parable of the Good Samaritan as a working model for theological literacy.

(Luke 19:28–40). This narrative connection, which should rightly be designated as an inter-narrative structure, demonstrates that the central figure of the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37) is Jesus Christ. Accordingly, if readers take seriously Luke's literary techniques, they will recognize that the parable is not merely a moral instruction but functions as an intertextual key connecting to Ezekiel 34. This inter-narrative structure underscores the Christological essence of the parable and prevents its reduction to moralism, particularly for readers unfamiliar with Lukan literary strategies.

5. Young-Chool Oh, "The Parable of the Good Samaritan: An Intertextual Approach to Ezekiel 34," *Journal of Christian Philosophy* 41 (2024): 325-326. This paper, drawing on the narrative images formed through the inter-narrative structure technique, analyzes how the Parable of the Good Samaritan employs the words καταδέω ("to bind up") and τραῦμα ("wound") as a linking motif to establish an intertextual relationship with the "Shepherd–God" image in Ezekiel 34. Through this connection, the Samaritan functions as the embodiment of divine compassion. This intertextual link clarifies that the Samaritan must be read theologically as the embodiment of God's mercy, rather than reduced to a mere moral exemplar.
6. Esther L. Meek, "Longing to Know and the Complexities of Knowing God," *Tradition and Discovery* 31, no. 3 (2005): 29–44.

II. The Image-Evoking Function of Language and the Hermeneutics of Scripture

A sentence does more than convey meaning—it evokes images and scenes within the reader's inner world and calls forth an active reception. This is made possible through the imaginative and interpretive filling-in of textual "gaps" by the reader.[7] Furthermore, every message consists of two heterogeneous components—image and text—which are semantically related but functionally independent.[8] Readers do not merely analyze lexical meanings; rather, they read by "imagining" the images evoked by the words—visual and emotional forms that arise through the text. This reception mechanism operates not only in literature but equally in biblical narrative.

Scripture is not a collection of theological propositions or moral instructions. As Kevin Vanhoozer notes, the Bible is poetic and participatory speech that stimulates the imagination and moves our emotions, will, and actions.[9] In this sense, Scripture invites readers into God's drama and transforms them into interpretive participants within the Word.

Biblical texts work beyond words alone. Their structure and atmosphere give rise to visual and spatial imagery in the reader's imagination, guiding interpretive direction in a natural yet intentional way. Although the images formed may vary depending on personal experience, emotional disposition, and literary context, they are primarily led by the textual structure and foreshadowing embedded in the narrative. This is especially true in biblical stories, where paragraph structure, character arrangement, narrative transitions, and foreshadowing questions are carefully designed to trigger particular images in the reader's imagination.[10]

The lawyer's question, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" is not merely a thematic opener. It functions as a literary foreshadowing that frames the entire Parable of the Good Samaritan within the structural image of "eternal life," directing the reader's attention and interpretive trajectory. Here, "literary foreshadowing" refers not to mere suggestion, but to a textual cue that leads the reader to receive the parable through the lens of a theological theme (eternal life) and its symbolic structure. Luke constructs the parable with sophisticated narrative devices—such as paragraph-level chiasmus, inter-narrative structure, and intertextuality—so that the lawyer's question becomes not just a narrative introduction, but a theological key that opens the redemptive arc of the story.

This is not simply a literary device but a central mechanism of theological literacy, which enables readers to receive Scripture in terms of structure and symbolic meaning. In other words, Luke uses a single question to structure and visualize the entire redemptive theme, thereby

7. Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 107–159.
8. Hyuk Ahn, "Analysis of Image and Narrative Relation for Literacy," *Language and Linguistics* No.63 (2014): 118.
9. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 20–25
10. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (Basic Books, 1981), 13–30; Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Indiana University Press, 1985), 43–55.

awakening theological imagination within the reader. Such rhetorical arrangement goes beyond plot suggestion, offering an image-based hermeneutic path that leads readers to follow the parable scene by scene. This, in turn, illustrates how theological literacy actually functions.

This hermeneutical mode is closely related to Paul Ricoeur's concept of "metaphorical truth" as developed in The Rule of Metaphor. For Ricoeur, metaphor is not merely a rhetorical ornament but a cognitive act that stimulates the imagination and leads to a new contact with reality.[11] From this perspective, imagination is not superficial aesthetic response but an act of epistemic participation through which the reader co-constructs meaning in interaction with the text. As the images formed in the reader take shape within the structure of the narrative, biblical interpretation progresses beyond literal understanding toward ontological reception and theological insight.

III. A Scene–Image Structure Analysis of the Parable of the Good Samaritan

This parable functions not merely as a moral lesson but as a powerful narrative device that evokes vivid mental imagery and emotional response within the reader. This section analyzes the parable not by sentence units but by semantic units called "scenes," with a focus on how each scene generates an image-based symbolic network. Paul W. Barnett divides the parable into seven scenes, identifying the narrative progression as follows: appearance – neglect 1 – neglect 2 – help – movement – care – entrustment and promise of return.[12]

Barnett's focus is primarily on the progression of action and emergency aid—especially the sequence involving intervention and movement. However, his analysis does not explore how each scene engages the reader's visual imagination or evokes symbolic theological meaning.

This study adopts Barnett's scene-based structure in part, but reconstructs the narrative into six scenes that emphasize the visual and theological dimensions of each moment. The aim is to reveal how the parable gives form to the message of eternal life through an image-centered narrative structure.

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11. Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: The Creation of Meaning in Language*, trans. Robert Czerny (London: Routledge, 2003), 292–302.

12. Scene 1:A man was travelling down from Jerusalem to Jericho a notoriously dangerous road – and fell victim to robbers who stripped him, beat him and left him half-dead.
Scene 2: A priest passing by saw the man but passed by on the other side (touching the dead was forbidden).
Scene 3: A Levite also passed by on the other side (touching the dead was forbidden).
Scene 4: A third traveller, a Samaritan, had compassion, and provided first aid for the wounded traveller, despite the risk from the robbers.
Scene 5: The Samaritan transported the man to an inn.
Scene 6: The Samaritan cared for him at the inn.
Scene 7: The next day the Samaritan left money for his care, promising to pay any shortfall on his return.
Paul W. Barnett, *Following Jesus to Jerusalem: Luke 9-19* (Authentic Media, 2012), 85–86, ProQuest Ebook Central.

1. The Visual Imagery Evoked by Each Scene

1) Scene 1: An Existence Awaiting Death

Luke 10:30 *A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead.* (NIV)

This scene is not only the starting point of the parable of the Good Samaritan, but also a narrative turning point that delivers a striking visual and emotional jolt to the reader. The juxtaposition of multiple robbers and a solitary traveler forms a sharp symbolic contrast between the "many who kill" and the "one who is dying." More than a simple narrative report, this scene confronts the reader with the existential isolation and defenseless vulnerability of human life. John Nolland highlights that the narrator does not mention what the robbers actually stole, indicating that the focus is not on material loss but on the man's desperate and exposed condition.[13]

The four verbs—stripped, beaten, left half dead, and abandoned—together depict a comprehensive experience of suffering. The man is portrayed as one who literally awaits death, severed from the source of life. This scene also serves as the opening of the parable that Jesus tells in response to the lawyer's question, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Before addressing the follow-up question, "Who is my neighbor?", the scene first exposes the existential condition of humanity.

The road from Jerusalem to Jericho was a commonly used route in antiquity, but it was also notorious for being steep, winding, and frequented by robbers.[14] Bernard Scott notes that "people at the time traveled together for safety," and emphasizes that what is unique about this parable is that all the characters are traveling alone.[15] In other words, this is not a depiction of an extraordinary event, but rather an everyday crisis that could befall anyone—illustrating that death constantly lurks at the margins of life.

Situated within the literary devices that shape the parable—including paragraph-level chiasmus, inter-narrative structure, and intertextuality—this scene becomes a central narrative pivot, not just thematically but structurally. It also anticipates and illuminates the parable's central theological message of eternal life, operating as a form of literary foreshadowing. Therefore, it must be read not simply as a description of violence, but as a symbolic image of existential collapse and ontological helplessness.

The man who fell into the hands of robbers is left naked and abandoned, utterly powerless to

13. John Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34, vol. 35B of Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 2005), 593

14. David E. Garland, *Luke: Exegetical Commentary for Preaching* (EPub ed., Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), Luke 10:30, 41% position, ISBN 978-0-310-49286-3.

15. Bernard Brandon Scott, *Re-imagine the World: An Introduction to the Parables of Jesus* (Santa Rosa: Polebridge Press, 2001), 58.

save himself—a striking image that underscores the nature of human existence: one that cannot be restored apart from divine mercy. This evokes the promise in Ezekiel 34, where God declares that He Himself will seek out the forsaken sheep and bind up their wounds. Furthermore, the scene resonates with the imagery of naked existence in Job 1:21, where human life is depicted as entering and departing the world with nothing: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked shall I return there."(NKJV)

Ultimately, this is not merely an account of violence on a dangerous road. It is a dramatic metaphor for the human condition estranged from eternal life. It reframes the lawyer's question—not as a simple ethical inquiry, but as a profound existential cry for redemption. Through this opening scene, the reader is confronted with the fundamental theological question: "What is the condition of humanity when eternal life is absent?"

2) Scene 1.5: The Absence of a True Companion

Luke 10:31-32 *A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.* (NIV)

This scene reveals the existential isolation of the human condition—a state from which no rescue can be expected—through the reactions of the first two characters who encounter a man on the brink of death. The priest and the Levite are figures who served in the temple and participated in worship in Jerusalem, and they would have been a familiar and recognizable group to the original audience, as many of them actually resided in the Jericho area.[16] Their appearance is not surprising; rather, it functions as a narrative arrangement designed to arouse hope for intervention. Pan-im Kim points out that Jesus' inclusion of these characters was not merely to criticize religious leaders, but to serve as a literary device that deliberately juxtaposes the audience's expectations with disappointment.[17] In this way, these figures create narrative tension by first stirring the hope of compassion and then sharply overturning it.

The repeated use of the expression "they saw him and passed by" for both characters emphasizes that they consciously recognized the victim's condition yet deliberately chose to avoid it. This is not a case of simple indifference but a willful turning away from the suffering of others. Such avoidance stands in sharp contrast to what may be described as Luke's theology of compassion and stopping—a recurring motif throughout the Gospel, where acts of mercy are always accompanied by the act of stopping.[18]

16. Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1960), 314.

17. Panim Kim, "A study on the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-35)," *Korean New Testament Studies* Vol.14 No.4 (2007): 1035.

18. These gestures of mercy and pause serve as visual embodiments of the Gospel's redemptive message. For this

As Heo Hyuk points out, their behavior is better described not as an act of "indifference" (Korean, *mugwan-sim*), but rather as "nonchalance" (Korean, *musim*) or emotional detachment.[19] While indifference implies a lack of concern toward a specific object or situation, nonchalance suggests a deeper absence of emotional engagement—an ability to pass by as if nothing has happened, with neither thought nor affect. The priest and the Levite, in this sense, exhibit not merely inattentiveness, but a kind of deliberate, emotionless withdrawal that exposes the human tendency to remain unmoved even in the face of another's suffering.

This scene communicates a silent but piercing message to the reader: "There is no true companion for one awaiting death." In the face of a despair where no rescue is expected, a silence where no one mourns with you, and a religious system that does not reach out, the human condition is rendered even more profoundly isolated. This scene evokes an existential recognition: "One who stands at the edge of death is utterly alone." It invites a deep theological reflection on the human condition—cut off from compassion and community, and still awaiting the breakthrough of divine mercy.

3) Scene 2: The Companion Who Draws Near to One Facing Death

Luke 10:33-34a *But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him…* (NIV)

In Scene 1.5, both the priest and the Levite, upon seeing the man who fell into the hands of robbers, passed by and left him behind. Scene 2, however, marks a radical reversal of that trajectory. Here, someone approaches and stops beside the one isolated from life. The narrative introduces this figure as "a certain Samaritan." Given the ethnic and religious boundaries of Jewish society, this was a figure no audience would have expected to become the agent of rescue. Grace, however, often arrives from beyond the limits of human expectation, and this Samaritan functions as a symbol of such transcendent mercy.

By contrast, the man who fell into the hands of robbers is presented anonymously—without name, title, or identity. This anonymity serves to universalize his condition, making it easier for readers to project themselves into his plight. He becomes a symbol of the universal human condition, a representation of every soul that lies helpless and near death.[20] Particularly noteworthy is the Greek verb "ὁδεύω"(hodeuō), translated here as "was traveling," which appears only once in the entire New Testament. It does not merely indicate movement, but suggests a purposeful journey. This implies that the Samaritan is not a passerby by chance, but one who arrives at the place of rescue by design—a narrative gesture that invites the reader to

reason, this study refers to this pattern as the "theology of compassion and stopping."

19. Hyuk Heo, *The Bible and Theology* (Seoul: Seonggwang Munhwasa, 1981), 21.
20. Charles W. Hedrick, *Parables as Poetic Fictions: The Creative Voice of Jesus* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 103.

interpret his arrival as an instance of divine intervention.

The phrase "he took pity on him" uses the verb "σπλαγχνίζομαι"(splagchnizomai), which shares its root with "σπλάγχνα ἐλέους"(splanchna eleous), "the tender mercy of God," as found in Luke 1:78. This connection reveals that the Samaritan's compassion is not mere emotional sympathy but a manifestation of God's redemptive mercy. He does not simply pause—he steps into the threshold between death and life, becoming a channel of redemption.

This scene offers a direct response to the lawyer's question, "Who is my neighbor?" It serves as a narrative and theological turning point, portraying in vivid imagery how the grace of redemption approaches human existence. Moreover, the man who fell into the hands of robbers comes to symbolize not merely a generic victim, but the lawyer himself—one who is yearning for eternal life. The Samaritan, in turn, embodies God's mercy, manifested not through legal obligation but through visceral compassion (splagchnizomai, σπλαγχνίζομαι), a term often used to describe divine pity in the Gospels.

Ultimately, this is not a story of moral instruction, but of existential despair being met by divine grace. The narrative centers on two visual movements—approaching and stopping—and it confronts the reader with the ontological question: "Can I encounter a companion at the threshold of death?"

4) Scene 3: The Healer Who Revives Life

Luke 10:34b *He poured oil and wine on his wounds and bandaged them.* (NIV)

The Samaritan's actions go beyond mere acts of charity; they represent a holistic intervention aimed at restoring life. Without hesitation, he takes oil and wine from his own baggage, pours them onto the wounds of the man who had fallen into the hands of robbers, and bandages them. This scene is not simply an instance of first aid, but an act of total commitment and redemptive intent—a deliberate effort to restore a wounded existence.

Of particular significance is Jesus' intentional use of the Greek word "τραῦμα"(trauma) to describe the man's wounds, rather than the more commonly used term "πληγή"(plēgē). This choice highlights not merely a physical injury, but an existential rupture that symbolizes the human condition of separation from God—Adam being the archetypal figure of such separation from eternal life. The act of pouring oil and wine over the wounds transcends mere charity or pity; it becomes a symbolic prescription for redemption and restoration. It evokes Ezekiel 34, where God promises to "bind up the injured sheep," thus linking this healing act to the broader redemptive narrative.

Even more striking is the use of the Greek verb "καταδέω"(katadeō), "to bind up," which Jesus employs to describe the Samaritan's action. This verb is the Septuagint (LXX) translation of the Hebrew "חבש"(ḥābash), meaning "to bind" or "to heal," as found in Ezekiel 34:16. This linguistic and theological connection suggests that the healing hands of the Samaritan are not merely

performing a humanitarian act, but manifesting the shepherding work of God Himself.

This scene thus becomes a decisive redemptive turning point: the symbolic elements of oil and wine—intertextual echoes of anointing and Eucharist—are applied directly to existential wounds. Here, the one awaiting death is placed on a path toward life. It is where the wound of human existence meets the mercy of God.

5) Scene 4: The Transition Toward the Place of Life

Luke 10:34c *Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.* (NIV)

The Samaritan does not stop at treating the man's wounds. He does not leave the dying man behind but places him on his own animal, takes him to an inn, and continues to care for him. This scene marks not only a physical relocation but the beginning of a redemptive transition from death to life.

The Greek verb used by Jesus here—"ἐπιβιβάζω"(epibibazō), "to place upon" or "to mount"—appears only in Luke and Acts, and is distinctive to Luke's narrative style. It implies a passive reception of transport, highlighting the man's total incapacity to move himself. In this way, the act visually underscores that redemption is not achieved by human effort, but is entirely dependent upon divine mercy and intervention.

Luke strategically uses this verb throughout his writings to reinforce a narrative motif: the journey from death toward life is initiated and sustained by God's compassion. For example, in Luke 19:35, the disciples place Jesus on a colt as he enters Jerusalem, symbolically inaugurating the redemptive journey. Similarly, in Acts 23:24, Paul, under threat of assassination, is placed on a mount and taken to safety—again using "ἐπιβιβάζω" to describe an act of divine deliverance.

Howard Marshall notes that "ἐπιβιβάζω" is a favored literary term for Luke, indicating a linguistic continuity between the Gospel and Acts.[21] While Marshall does not explicitly attribute theological symbolism to the term, this study contends that Luke deliberately uses it to signal the redemptive movement from death to life—a divine act of rescue rather than human initiative.

Thus, Scene 4 depicts the existential transition from the place of helplessness to the place of healing. The verb "ἐπιβιβάζω" becomes a theological symbol in Luke's Gospel, portraying redemption not as a journey accomplished by human strength, but as a divine act of mercy. Humanity is not self-propelled toward life; it is carried—by grace—from death to life.

21. I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), 449.

6) Scene 5: The Image of the Shepherd Who Loves Without Limit

Luke 10:35 *The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. "Look after him", he said, "and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have."* (NIV)

This scene marks the culmination of redemptive love in the parable of the Good Samaritan. The Samaritan does not stop at first aid or a night of care—he stays with the dying man through the night, tending to him personally. The phrase "the next day" signifies more than a temporal marker; it gestures toward the depth of redemptive companionship. In light of 2 Peter 3:8 and Psalm 90:4, where "a day is like a thousand years," this single night can be understood as a metaphor for Christ's entire incarnational life. The Samaritan becomes an image of the Immanuel God who abides through the darkness with the dying, refusing to abandon him.

Moreover, the promise, "When I return, I will repay you," is not merely a delayed payment—it echoes the eschatological promise of Christ's return and the completion of healing and restoration. Especially noteworthy is the Greek verb "προσδαπανάω"(prosdapanaō), which appears only here in the entire New Testament. It conveys the Samaritan's resolve to cover any additional cost, symbolizing complete, sacrificial devotion. This expression naturally evokes Christ's declaration from the cross: "It is finished" (John 19:30). This final scene visually embodies the divine Shepherd who cares for the dying to the very end.

Structurally, it represents the emotional and theological climax of the parable, where Immanuel's presence, limitless care, and the promise of return converge into a unified redemptive image. Thus, the Good Samaritan is revealed not as a mere moral exemplar, but as the image of God—the one who never gives up on his people. Through this, the reader is brought back to the lawyer's original question: "What must I do to inherit eternal life?"

This final scene does not frame the answer merely as a call to ethical striving, but instead paints a powerful image: the one who has received life through mercy responds by loving the one who extended it. It is an invitation—not to achievement, but to receive mercy, and to remain in the love of the One who drew near. Ultimately, eternal life does not begin with the ethical question, "What must I do?" but with the ontological answer: "Who extended life to me when I had none?" It is in the encounter with mercy—when one is helpless, broken, and near death—that eternal life begins to unfold.

2. Reading the Redemptive Narrative Through Images and Ontological Response

In response to the lawyer's question about the object of love, Jesus tells the Parable of the Good Samaritan. This parable is not a simple sequence of parallel events but unfolds as an image-based narrative embedded within an integrated symbolic structure of existence–redemption–

restoration–consummation.[22] Each scene visually evokes the drama of redemption, revealing how divine mercy breaks into the shattered reality of human existence.

The opening scene (Scene 1) portrays the human condition as one of existential ruin—waiting for death due to sin and deep wounds. This depicts a despair from which no one can rise apart from grace—a hopelessness beyond recovery. The priest and Levite passing by (Scene 1.5) expose the helplessness of human institutions and communities to provide rescue, thus intensifying the isolation of human existence. At this moment, a Samaritan appears (Scene 2)—an unexpected redeemer who overturns all conventional norms and expectations, embodying the light of salvation breaking into darkness. He does not merely assist but enters into the space of death, binding the wounds and lifting the dying man onto his animal (Scenes 3–4), initiating a journey of restoration. This is not simply a good deed, but a symbolic transition from death to life—a visual expression of the shepherding ministry of Jesus Christ. In the final scene (Scene 5), the Samaritan makes a promise to return and pay the full cost. This is not a mere follow-up act, but a symbolic foreshadowing of Christ's return, complete restoration, and the faithful love of God that never ends. Notably, the Greek verb "προσδαπανάω", used only here in the New Testament, expresses total self-giving and evokes the fullness of Christ's sacrifice—"It is finished."

The narrative arc formed by these scenes illuminates the meaning of "eternal life" not as a moral category, but as a redemptive journey that gradually reshapes existence. The Good Samaritan is not a mere model of humanitarian virtue; he is the visible embodiment of divine mercy, breaking into time and space and demanding an ontological response from the one who receives it.

Thus, the parable asks the reader profound existential questions:

> Am I aware of myself as one who stands at the edge of death? How do I respond to the grace that draws near? Can I pause in the path I am walking, receive His mercy, and love the One who gave me life?

Ultimately, the Parable of the Good Samaritan must be reread through the lens of theological literacy. That is, Scripture should not be approached merely as a collection of moral teachings, but as a redemptive narrative in which divine self-revelation and human existential response intersect. In the face of an existence awaiting death, the "neighbor"—the one I am called to love—is Christ the Shepherd, who gives me life and takes responsibility for me to the very end.

3. The Meaning of the Parable of the Good Samaritan and Jesus' Closing Question

The central focus of the Parable of the Good Samaritan lies in the existential condition of the

22. While Sun Wook Kim surveys the parable from several modern perspectives, this study reorients the focus toward a redemptive flow of narrative-based image scenes grounded in the parable's structural foreshadowing. Sun Wook Kim, "A Multidimensional Understanding of the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37): Focusing on the Theological, Social, Racial, Ethical and Economic Perspectives," *Canon & Culture* Vol. 18 No. 1 (2024): 159–161.

man who fell among robbers. He is a person utterly incapable of restoring himself and cannot attain life apart from the mercy that comes from outside himself. After telling the parable, Jesus asks, "Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among robbers?" (Luke 10:36), thereby inviting the hearer to identify themselves with the man who was robbed. This is not merely a matter of "defining one's neighbor" but an existential shift that awakens the recognition of one's own need for redemption.

Luke intentionally places the words "σπλαγχνίζομαι" (to have compassion) and "ἔλεος"(mercy) in such a way as to shift the focus—not so that the hearer stands in the position of the Samaritan, but rather in that of the one who fell into the hands of robbers. The hearer participates as one who must receive the Samaritan's compassion and mercy, recognizing that the neighbor whom the one who fell into the hands of robbers must love is precisely the one who has shown him mercy.[23]

Therefore, the command, "Go and do likewise" (v. 37), is an invitation to (1) recognize oneself asone who fell into the hands of robbers, (2) receive the compassion of the one who shows mercy, and (3) respond by loving that person. This is not the outcome of legalistic deeds, but a present and eschatological way of life in response to the grace of God.

Thus, "Go and do likewise" is not merely an ethical injunction for the present, but a summons into the eschatological reality of the Kingdom of God—a life already inaugurated in Christ yet awaiting its consummation. It calls the hearer to live in the tension of the “already” and the “not yet,” embodying mercy now as a foretaste of the final restoration. In the gap between the “already” and the “not yet,” those who have received life are called to render a life-risking love of loyalty specifically toward the One who has shown them mercy unto life (cf. Matt 19:27; Mar 10:28; Luk 18:28).

IV. The Formation of Redemptive Imagery Through Hapax Legomena

In the previous chapter, we examined the Parable of the Good Samaritan through a scene-image structure, illuminating the redemptive narrative as it takes shape in the reader's imagination. In this chapter, I argue that the formation of such redemptive imagery is not generated solely by narrative structure or scene progression, but is also significantly intensified and symbolically

23. Young-Chool Oh, *The Parable of the Good Samaritan Connected to Two Stories*, (Seoul: U-Paper, 2024), 133–160. E-book(PDF). Luke places two signposts—σπλαγχνίζομαι and ἔλεος—to guide readers into participating in the parable according to his intention. Readers outside the Hellenistic cultural sphere often fail to recognize that these terms are never applied to humans, and thus may easily make the mistake of identifying themselves with the Good Samaritan. However, by deliberately juxtaposing σπλαγχνίζομαι and ἔλεος, Luke blocks such identification and instead positions the hearer in the place of the one who receives mercy—the man attacked by robbers. Consequently, once Luke’s literary device is understood, it becomes clear that the hearer must enter the parable as the one who fell into the hands of robbers. Therefore, only by participating in the parable as such a person can the hearer fully embrace Luke’s intended meaning.

condensed through certain lexical choices—namely, hapax legomena, words that appear only once in the entire New Testament.[24]

These singular words do more than carry grammatical or semantic weight; they serve as theological and rhetorical devices that reinforce the parable's central themes—"a single act of intervention," "a single gift of grace," "a single redemptive event." Beyond their lexical meaning, these hapax legomena act as catalysts, shaping images and emotional resonance in the reader's imagination and heightening the parable's redemptive message.[25]

The goal of this chapter, therefore, is to bring together the visual flow analyzed in Chapter III and the linguistic structure embedded in the text, in order to expose more fully the theological depth of the redemptive narrative within the parable. By examining how these uniquely employed words generate metaphorical truth and symbolic coherence, this chapter will demonstrate how the parable's overarching message is upheld at both the imagistic and linguistic levels.

1. Hapax Legomena That Uphold the Redemptive Narrative

1) Hemithanēs (ἡμιθανής) – "Half Dead" or "Near Death"

The Greek adjective "ἡμιθανής"(hemithanēs), rendered in the accusative as "ἡμιθανῆ"(hemithanē) in the text, is used to describe the man who "was half dead." The term denotes more than a severe injury—it signifies a condition on the verge of death, an existential crisis in which life is fading and death is imminent. This description functions not merely as a narrative detail, but as a symbol of existential peril, evoking the theological truth of Genesis 3:19: "For dust you are, and to dust you shall return."

The man who fell into the hands of robbers, lying helpless, is in a condition from which no recovery is possible through his own effort. Without the intervention of external mercy, life cannot be restored. In this way, the parable linguistically compresses the absolute necessity of redemption, using this rare word to awaken in the reader an acute awareness of human frailty and the urgency of divine compassion. This moment marks the starting point of the redemptive narrative, confronting the reader with the ontological helplessness of human existence apart

24. The term hapax legomenon is a linguistic designation referring to a word that occurs only once in a given body of literature. In biblical interpretation, it is often regarded as a marker of theological emphasis or literary distinctiveness. This chapter investigates ten unique terms that appear only once in the New Testament, based on their root forms (lemma) rather than their grammatical inflections in the passage. Lexical frequency was verified using the Greek text of the Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece (28th ed.) via BibleWorks 10, and semantic analysis draws on A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (3rd ed.), by Frederick W. Danker.

25. While these hapax legomena bear powerful theological and rhetorical weight in the Greek text, their significance may not be immediately apparent to readers of translations. However, if translators have preserved the unique diction or tone of these terms with care, the intended emphasis can still resonate with the reader.

from grace.

2) Singkyria (συγκυρία) – "By Chance" or "At the Right Moment"

The Greek noun "συγκυρία"(singkyria), translated as "by chance" or "at just the right moment," refers to a convergence of events that may appear coincidental on the surface. In the parable, Luke describes the moment when the priest "happened" to be coming down the same road as the man who fell into the hands of robbers. While this might seem accidental, the term functions as a rhetorical device that exposes the limits of human power and existential incapacity.

The priest is physically present near the man who is near death, yet he never stops. This moment reveals not only the limitations of institutional systems or religious law, but the deeper existential inability of humanity to remain with those who are dying. The use of συγκυρία forms a deliberate contrast with the term "ὁδεύων"(hodeuōn)—used of the Samaritan—which implies a purposeful journey. Through this contrast, the parable emphasizes that redemption is not accomplished by those who encounter need by accident, but by those who approach with intention and mercy.

Ultimately, what the dying man needs is not someone who happens to pass by, but someone who willingly stops—a figure who comes as a deliberate agent of grace. This moment powerfully underscores that salvation does not arrive through coincidence, but through the intentional approach of the Redeemer who draws near.

3) Antiparerchomai (ἀντιπαρέρχομαι) – "Passed by on the Other Side"

The Greek verb "ἀντιπαρέρχομαι"(antiparerchomai), translated as "passed by on the other side," is used for both the priest and the Levite in Luke 10:31–32. This verb goes beyond the simple meaning of "passing by" and implies a deliberate turning away or consciously maintaining distance. It is a rare form, appearing only twice in the entire New Testament, both times within this parable—a hapax-style usage. By choosing this verb, Jesus emphasizes that both the priest and the Levite clearly perceived the man's condition, yet willfully avoided his suffering. This act functions not merely as a sign of personal indifference but as an indictment of the structural incapacity of religious institutions and communities to stop in the face of existential suffering. Moreover, such avoidance symbolizes not just moral numbness but also the profound human fear of confronting death. The priest and the Levite are portrayed as those incapable of engaging death, revealing the theological limitation of the Law—it cannot give life (cf. Rom 3:20; Gal 2:16). This scene quietly exposes the helplessness of human existence in the face of ontological collapse.

4) Hodeuō (ὁδεύω) – "On a Journey"

The Greek verb "ὁδεύω"(hodeuō), translated as "on a journey," is derived from the noun "ὁδός"(hodos) , meaning "road" or "way." It does not indicate mere physical movement but rather a purposeful journey. When describing the appearance of the priest, Jesus uses the term συγκυρία ("by chance"), portraying his arrival as coincidental and mundane. In contrast, when referring to the Samaritan, Jesus deliberately uses "ὁδεύω" to highlight that he is not simply passing by, but is walking with intentionality, as one on a redemptive mission. This contrast is not merely a stylistic variation but functions as a literary-theological device of foreshadowing. It resonates with Jesus' own declaration in John 6:38–39: "I have come down from heaven not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me." Thus, the Samaritan's journey becomes a symbolic representation of Jesus' redemptive path. Ultimately, "ὁδεύω" evokes the image of Christ walking the way of redemption through the figure of the Good Samaritan, functioning as a key rhetorical cue that frames the entire parable from a salvation-historical perspective.

5) Trauma (τραῦμα) – "Wound"

The Greek word "τραῦμα"(trauma), meaning "wound," conveys more than a physical injury; it symbolizes existential pain marked by death, despair, and separation from God. Jesus, as the narrator, intentionally selects this term as a rhetorical device to theologically expose the fundamental rupture of the human condition. It represents the ontological fracture introduced after Adam—the severance from eternal life and the disruption of humanity's original state of being. Dominick LaCapra interprets trauma as a concept that explains ontological separation at a transhistorical and structural level, summarizing it with the notion of "absence."[26] In contrast, H. Norman Wright reinterprets trauma theologically, identifying the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden as the origin of trauma. He defines this severance from God as a "spiritual wound."[27]

Within this framework, the scene in which the Samaritan pours oil and wine on the trauma is not simply a case of first aid. It is a healing prescription wherein divine mercy intervenes redemptively—a metaphor of God's compassionate care toward the wounded. The anonymity of the man who fell into the hands of robbers underscores that his trauma is not merely a private event but represents a universal condition of the human experience. Ultimately, trauma functions as a theological symbol—a shared language of spiritual wounding across all humanity—and it is only through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ that such wounds can be fully healed.

26. Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 43–85.
27. H. Norman Wright, *The New Guide to Crisis & Trauma Counseling* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2003), 191–92.

6) Epicheō (ἐπιχέω) – "Pouring"

The Greek verb "ἐπιχέω"(epicheō), translated as "to pour," is formed by the combination of "ἐπί"(epi), meaning "upon," and "χέω"(cheō), meaning "to pour." It describes the Samaritan's deliberate act of pouring oil and wine upon the wounds of the injured man. This action goes beyond mere hygienic care; it functions as the initiation of healing and a declaration of restoration.

In comparison with similar healing scenes, ἐπιχέω demonstrates unique expressive power. For instance, in John 11:2, where Mary anoints Jesus' feet with perfume, the verb "ἀλείφω" (aleiphō) is used. In John 9:11, where Jesus applies mud to a blind man's eyes, the verb "ἐπιχρίω"(epichriō) is employed. Unlike these verbs, ἐπιχέω emphasizes a stronger dynamism and penetrating intervention. It does not merely suggest an anointing or application, but rather portrays grace flowing directly into the center of pain.

The Samaritan's act, then, is not one of mere charity; it is a visible event of God's redemptive care revealed within concrete and physical reality. It symbolizes the active nature of God, who does not turn away from suffering but intervenes decisively. As such, this act becomes a visual representation of divine intervention that leads the despairing back to the place of healing.

7) Katadeō (καταδέω) – "Bandaging"

The Greek verb "καταδέω"(katadeō), translated as "to bandage," means "to bind," "to wrap," or "to secure." It refers to the act of protecting and sustaining the healing process of the wounds inflicted on the man who fell into the hands of robbers. This verb is used in the Septuagint (LXX) translation of Ezekiel 34:16 for the Hebrew word "חבש" (ḥābash, "to bind"), evoking the image of God as the Shepherd who seeks out and binds up the injured sheep. Jesus' deliberate use of this verb is a theological cue meant to bring to the lawyer's mind the image of the divine Shepherd in Ezekiel 34. It elevates the Samaritan's act from a mere medical response to a symbol of God's ongoing redemptive care, functioning as a theological device to reveal the continuity of divine mercy throughout Scripture.

● The Redemptive Progression: Trauma (τραῦμα) – Epicheō (ἐπιχέω) – Katadeō (καταδέω)

These three terms are not merely descriptive; they constitute a rhetorical structure that articulates the stages of the redemptive narrative. Trauma (τραῦμα) represents the existential wound inherent in all humanity after Adam—a rupture signifying separation from eternal life. Epicheō(ἐπιχέω) depicts the moment Gods grace enters into that wound, symbolizing the beginning of redemption. Katadeō(καταδέω) indicates the ongoing protection and healing of that grace, signifying the trajectory of redemption toward restoration.

The arrangement of these terms illustrates a redemptive rhythm Jesus intentionally weaves

into the parable: Wound → Grace's Infiltration → Ongoing Restoration. This is not merely a narrative, but an interpretive mechanism designed to guide readers into a theological response to divine mercy. Furthermore, it constitutes a narrative architecture that invites the reader into theological literacy—an understanding and reception of Scripture as a structured, symbolic, and redemptive story.

8) Pandocheion (πανδοχεῖον) – "The Inn"

The Greek noun πανδοχεῖον (pandocheion), translated as "inn," refers to a public lodging place for travelers—a space of open hospitality accessible to all. By stating that the Samaritan brought the man who fell into the hands of robbers not to a private home but to a public inn, Jesus symbolically reveals the universality and openness of redemption.

This narrative movement is not merely a rescue sequence but a symbolic prefiguration of Christ's redemptive journey. In Luke's theological framework, this image amplifies the motif of the "public space" as a locus of divine restoration, a theme that recurs throughout the Gospel.

The site of crucifixion—outside the gates of Jerusalem, on Golgotha—is likewise a public place where death and redemption intersect on behalf of all humanity (John 19:20). Furthermore, John 19:41 describes the site as a "κηπός" (garden, kēpos), implying that this was not simply a burial ground but the beginning point of new life. While "κηπός" differs from the Greek "παράδεισος" (paradeisos) used for the Garden of Eden, John seems to intentionally evoke Edenic memory, projecting a vision of eschatological restoration. This intertextual echo prompts the reader to recall Genesis and anticipate the narrative of final healing.

In this scene, Luke uses the verb "ἐπιβιβάζω" (epibibazō) to describe the Samaritan's act of placing the man who fell into the hands of robbers onto his own animal. This verb appears only in Luke's Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles, and it is employed when someone unable to move on their own is brought by another's hand to a place of salvation. For example, when Jesus entered Jerusalem, He was placed on a colt by His disciples (Luke 19:35), and the same verb is used when Paul was escorted to Governor Felix to escape an assassination plot (Acts 23:24).

Such repetition suggests that the movement of the man who fell into the hands of robbers is not merely a rescue action but a scene within the drama of redemption, guiding the reader to see the Samaritan's act as a foreshadowing of the redemptive journey of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the pandokeion is not simply a shelter but the pivotal point of redemption—where the transfer from death to life takes place—and the man who fell among robbers becomes one who experiences God's restoration and care in that place.

9) Pandocheus (πανδοχεύς) – "The Innkeeper"

The Greek noun "πανδοχεύς"(pandocheus), meaning "innkeeper," is distinct from "οἰκοδεσπότης"

(oikodespotēs), which refers to the master of a household or private space (cf. Matt. 10:25; Mark 14:14; Luke 12:39). While "οἰκοδεσπότης" signifies the owner of a domestic domain, pandocheus denotes the steward of a public space—one who welcomes and tends to strangers in an open setting. Jesus' intentional use of this term highlights that redemption is not confined to private structures but is a communal and universal mission.

In this context, the innkeeper is not merely a passive helper but a co-worker entrusted with the mission of restoration, actively participating in the Samaritan's redemptive work. He symbolizes the church and the community of believers who are called to partake in and carry forward God's redemptive ministry. As the "mediator and steward of redemption," the pandocheus represents an earthly structure that receives and extends divine grace. His mission is sustained by the promise, "When I return, I will repay you," linking his role to eschatological care and entrusted theology. Therefore, he emerges not just as a character in the story but as a symbolic figure encapsulating the call to faithful stewardship until the Redeemer returns.

10) Prosdapanaō (προσδαπανάω) – "To Spend in Addition"

The Greek verb προσδαπανάω (prosdapanaō), meaning "to spend further" or "to incur additional cost," conveys the Samaritan's wholehearted and forward-looking commitment to assume responsibility for any future expenses on behalf of the man who fell into the hands of robbers. In Luke's narrative context, this rare word functions as a rhetorical device that highlights the total responsibility and sacrificial love of the redeemer.

This expression goes beyond a mere "deferred payment"—it resonates deeply with the theological significance of atonement through the cross. The declaration, "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45), is the theological counterpart to the meaning embedded in "προσδαπανάω."

Its significance becomes even clearer when read in conjunction with the two preceding terms: "πανδοχεῖον" (the space of redemptive transition), "πανδοχεύς" (the steward who participates in the redemptive mission), and "προσδαπανάω" (the pledge of infinite love). Together, these three expressions form a threefold theological structure, demonstrating that the Parable of the Good Samaritan is not merely an ethical teaching, but a theologically integrated narrative—encompassing Christ's act of redemption, the Church's vocation, and the eschatological consummation of divine love.

2. Hapax Legomena That Form Redemptive Imagery

The Parable of the Good Samaritan contains as many as ten Greek words that appear only once in the entire New Testament—known as hapax legomena. The concentrated use of such semantically rich vocabulary within a short narrative suggests that the speaker, Jesus, intentionally crafted a symbolic structure around the concept of "once." This emphasis on "once"

operates not merely as a literary device but as a redemptive image—symbolizing the singular opportunity for eternal life, the once-for-all atonement accomplished on the cross, and the decisive moment of redemptive intervention. Jesus' deliberate selection of these unique words to signify "once-for-all redemption" can be interpreted on four theological levels.

1) A Medium of Self-Revelation

The fact that ten words—each appearing only once in the entire New Testament—are concentrated within this brief parable reveals a structural precision that surpasses ordinary human literary composition. This suggests that Jesus constructed this parable not merely as a parable, but as a linguistic design for the purpose of revealing His identity and mission. These hapax legomena function as theological instruments, deliberately evoking the Shepherd-God imagery of Ezekiel 34 and portraying Jesus Christ as the Redeemer who seeks out the wounded and binds up their injuries.

2) The Once-for-All Redemptive Work

The fact that ten hapax legomena—words used only once in the entire New Testament—appear within this brief parable highlights its intentional literary design and underscores the singular, once-for-all nature of Christ's redemptive work. Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on a donkey from Bethany (Luke 19:28–40) is not merely a journey, but the climax of an intentional redemptive path. As emphasized in Hebrews 7:27 and 10:10, His ministry culminates in a once-for-all atoning sacrifice. The deliberate use of unique vocabulary in this parable metaphorically embodies the singularity, permanence, and unrepeatable nature of this redemptive act.

3) The One Opportunity Given While Breath Remains

The man who fell into the hands of robbers was in a state of existential crisis, standing at the threshold of death. Yet in the moment when he still had breath, a hand of mercy drew near, and through it, he received life. This scene reveals that God offers the opportunity for redemption even to those bearing the wounds of death, making clear that redemption is not merely a declaration but a concrete event that enters even the space between life and death. Though God's redemptive grace is universal in scope, for each individual it comes as a singular opportunity—one given only while breath remains. This message confronts the reader as both an existential warning and an invitation of grace, leaving behind the pressing question: "How am I responding to redemption—right now?"

4) The Particularity of Salvation and the Object of Love

In the Parable of the Good Samaritan, the man who fell among robbers is portrayed in the singular, emphasizing not only the universality of redemption but also its deeply personal nature. Redemption is not merely a collective declaration; it is an event that each individual must personally encounter. The fact that there is only one man who fell into the hands of robbers in the narrative serves as a narrative device, pointing to the truth that salvation, before God, is always a uniquely individual event.

Furthermore, Jesus' response to the lawyer's question—"Who is my neighbor?"—moves beyond a call for ethical action within human relationships and ultimately points to Himself as the true object of love. Within the parable, the only one who gives life is the Samaritan, who prophetically prefigures the image of Christ. Thus, the parable reveals that the one we are called to love is not merely a conceptual "neighbor," but the One who gave us life—Jesus Christ Himself. The hapax legomena—words used only once in the New Testament—further reinforce this symbolism, highlighting both the singularity and the personal dimension of divine redemption.

V. Conclusion

The Parable of the Good Samaritan has long been interpreted as a moral exemplar or a call to ethical practice. However, this study has sought to interpret the parable not as a simple moral text, but as a theological continuum composed of visual scenes within a redemptive narrative. Luke strategically places this parable within a chiastic paragraph structure, inter-narrative structure, and intertextual flow, framing the lawyer's question about the "way to eternal life" as a theological foreshadowing and organizing the entire narrative with intricate theological intentionality.

This structural design draws the reader beyond superficial moral instruction, guiding them to interpret the parable's scenes as redemptive stages and each word and action as theological symbols. It reveals the density and depth of the redemptive narrative embedded in Scripture. Each scene in the parable functions not merely as narrative progression but as an image of "human existence," "redemption," "divine intervention," and "eternal life," shaping a hermeneutical flow that is theologically imprinted in the reader's mind.

The six scenes—arranged around semantic images—permit an image-centered reading, while the ten Greek hapax legomena used only once in the entire New Testament reveal that this narrative is more than literary craft; it is a symbolic structure of redemption. These words symbolize "a once-for-all redemption," "a singular grace," and "a single opportunity," functioning as vehicles of Christ's self-revelation as the divine Shepherd and Redeemer. Simultaneously, this language presents the reader with an existential appeal, asking how one

responds to the singular opportunity of eternal life.

Thus, this parable transcends the ethical question, "Who is my neighbor?" and raises deeper ontological and theological questions such as, "Can I receive God's mercy?" and "Can I, a being facing death, respond to the redemptive intervention of God?" This approach opens a new interpretive direction—reading Scripture not merely as information or moral instruction, but as a living story where the redemptive act of God calls for a response.

Ultimately, the Parable of the Good Samaritan is a theological narrative that reveals God's redemptive mercy drawing near to a life awaiting death—through images and structure. The capacity to interpret and respond to this narrative constitutes what we call theological literacy. This study presents such interpretive capacity as a model, paving a way for theological reading that engages with the structure, symbolism, narrative, and redemptive flow of Scripture in a multidimensional manner.

Today's readers and communities stand before this parable confronted with two questions. First, have I, as the one who fell into the hands of robbers, received God's mercy and thereby gained life? Second, having received that mercy, am I living as one who loves the One who showed me mercy and who allows that mercy to flow through me to others? This is not a matter of mere ethical choice, but a question concerning the present mode of existence of one who has experienced redemption. In today's world, this means approaching those still lying on the roadside, waiting for death—those who continue breathing in places where the light of God has not yet reached—and reorienting one's life so that the mercy I have received may flow toward them. The mercy in view here is not the moral compassion of the Samaritan, but the grace by which one who has received life lets that mercy flow onward (Matt. 5:7). This reveals that Jesus' command, "Go and do likewise," is an invitation to bring the eschatological kingdom of God into the present. This, indeed, is where theological literacy is made visible in life.

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