

## Profiles of Jesus

Roy W. Hoover, ed., *Profiles of Jesus* (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press, 2002),

Charles W. Hedrick. *Jesus of Nazareth in Profiles of Jesus*, Roy W. Hoover, ed., (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press, 2002),

### 5. **Jesus of Nazareth**

#### Sketching his personal vita (약력)

It appears probable that Jesus was born, and certainly raised, in Nazareth. The two birth narratives in Matthew and Luke, despite their many differences, agree that Jesus came from Nazareth. It was a city that apparently did not have a good reputation in the Hellenistic period (John 1:46), and was not mentioned in the Hebrew Bible. Growing up in Nazareth, in the "Galilee of the Gentiles" (Matt 4:15), many have contributed to Jesus' relaxed attitude toward Torah.<sup>1</sup>

Bethlehem was mentioned in the Hebrew Bible in connection with a specific messianic prophecy, or so the early Christians believed (Micah 5:2; Matt 2:4-6; John 7:42), and hence the early Christian association of Bethlehem with Jesus (Matt 2:1; Luke 2:4-6): it better fitted their faith than did Nazareth. The association of his birth with the reign of Herod the Great (d. 4 BCE) is a historical memory. Matthew and Luke independently agree in this regard (Luke 3:1, Matt 2:1), but neither relates it to the character of Jesus. His mother was Mary, and his family was unknown. This makes sense of the rabbinic traditions about Jesus and accommodates the fact that Joseph is completely missing in Mark and barely present in Luke. He had brothers and sisters (Mark 6:3=Matt 13:55-56; Gal 1:19).<sup>2</sup>

When John was arrested (Mark 1:14), Jesus began his own career of preaching and was followed by others. His association with Capernaum and Galilee is plausible (그릴듯한), but whether his activities extended beyond the general area of the Galilee is not certain. Mark restricts his activities to the region of Galilee, while John extends his area of influence to Samaria and Judea. The Romans crucified him during the time of Pontius Pilate was Prefect(장관, 지사) of Judea (26-36 CE).<sup>3</sup>

His ideas brought him into conflict with his own tradition. For example, he had the idea that the Sabbath was intended for the benefit for human beings, rather than imposed on them as an onerous [burdensome] religious obligation limiting their lives (Mark 2:27). This view competed rather dramatically with that of the Pharisees, for whom strict Sabbath observance was a major plank[원칙] of their teaching. He rather severely criticized the principal religious teachers of his tradition, the Pharisee (Luke 11: 43, Matt 23:5-7) and the scribes (Mark 12:38=Luke 20:46), as much for their insensitivity to the poor and other "outsiders," as for what he regarded as their self-centeredness and hypocrisy. His lax attitude about dietary practices (Mark 7:14-15=Matt 15:10-11) would also have thrown him into serious disagreement with these same leaders over Torah interpretation. He dismissed the entire temple cult with "God will forgive you as you forgive others" (Luke 6:37). His bold statement that "God's imperial rule belonged to the poor" (Luke 6:20=Thom 54: 1) could easily have been heard as a complete rejection of the Jewish religious establishment, a position that would not have endeared him to the priestly caste and the Sadducees, and made his isolation from the leaders of the religious tradition virtually complete. He clearly sensed the isolation (Mark 6:4-Matt 13:57=Luke 4:24-John 4:44=Thom 3:1).<sup>4</sup>

His interest in the welfare of the poor was matched by his censuring of the wealthy (Matt 19:23-24= Luke 18:24-25= Mark 10:23, 25). In fact, he seemed to regard the service of God and the accumulation of wealth as mutually exclusive (Matt 6:24=Luke 16:13), and he prohibited the lending of money at interest even to a Gentile (Thom 95:1-2), something permitted by the rabbis. He called on the wealthy to give away their wealth (Thom 95:1-2), even if it means that they themselves would be reduced to poverty (Thom 69:2; Matt 5:42). Such attitude, in general, would not have been shared by the wealthy and powerful.<sup>5</sup>

His cavalier attitude toward wealth and possessions in general (Matt 8:20 = Luke 9:58 = Thom 86), and his lack of concern about providing for the basic necessities of life (Matt 6:25-30 = Luke 12:22-25, 27-28 = Thomas 36) would have made his philosophy unrealistic even to farmers, who also lived life on the edge, always depending on God's blessing of

<sup>1</sup> Charles W. Hedrick. *Jesus of Nazareth in Profiles of Jesus*, Roy W. Hoover, ed., (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press, 2002), 66.

<sup>2</sup> Charles W. Hedrick. *Jesus of Nazareth in Profiles of Jesus*, Roy W. Hoover, ed., (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press, 2002), 66.

<sup>3</sup> Charles W. Hedrick. *Jesus of Nazareth in Profiles of Jesus*, Roy W. Hoover, ed., (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press, 2002), 68.

<sup>4</sup> Charles W. Hedrick. *Jesus of Nazareth in Profiles of Jesus*, Roy W. Hoover, ed., (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press, 2002), 68.

<sup>5</sup> Charles W. Hedrick. *Jesus of Nazareth in Profiles of Jesus*, Roy W. Hoover, ed., (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press, 2002), 68.

the fields for their livelihood. The practical-minded, as successful farmers tend to be, would no doubt have argued that some advance planning was necessary, but Jesus advocated simply asking God for whatever was needed (Matt 7:7-11) day by day (Matt 6:11; Luke 11:9-10). He apparently advocated a penniless, itinerant (Matt 8:20 = Luke 9:58) existence, and the acceptance of charitable gifts for daily sustenance from whoever offered them (Luke 10:7-8; Thom 14:4). In a sense he always depended on the kindness of strangers. Such an attitude may have been a bit naive, but it clearly reflects a strong trust in God and God's concern for the welfare of even the least significant person in the human family (Matt 10: 29-31) = Luke 12:6-7). In view of Jesus, God was a caring father (Matt. 6:9) who did not discriminate among his children in the human family on the basis of their morality or obedience to Torah, but showered his material blessings in the world indiscriminately, even to the evil (Matt 5:45). One could count on God to provide whatever was needed for daily sustenance. <sup>6</sup>

## 11. **Jesus as a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant**

In the straitened Mediterranean, the kingdom of Heaven had to have something to do with food and drink. (Peter Brown).

The heart of the original Jesus movement was a shared egalitarianism (democratic, equal, open) of spiritual and material resources. Its material side and its spiritual aspects, the fact of it and its symbolic representation, cannot be separated. <sup>7</sup>

**Ecstatic Vision** (elated, thrilled, overexcited, extremely happy) Vision

**Stories of Feast** (Thomas 63-64; Matthew 22: 1-10; Luke 14: 16-23)

Matthew 22: 1-10

22 Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying: <sup>2</sup>“The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. <sup>3</sup>He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. <sup>4</sup>Again he sent other slaves, saying, “Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet.” <sup>5</sup>But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, <sup>6</sup>while the rest seized his slaves, maltreated them, and killed them. <sup>7</sup>The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. <sup>8</sup>Then he said to his slaves, “*The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy.*” <sup>9</sup>Go therefore into the main streets, and invite **everyone** you find to the wedding banquet.” <sup>10</sup>*Those slaves went out into the **streets** and gathered **all whom they found, both good and bad**; so the wedding hall was filled with guests.*

Luke 14: 16-23

<sup>16</sup>Then Jesus\* said to him, “Someone gave a great dinner and invited many. <sup>17</sup>At the time for the dinner he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, “Come; for everything is ready now.” <sup>18</sup>But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, “I have bought a piece of land, and I must go out and see it; please accept my apologies.” <sup>19</sup>Another said, “I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please accept my apologies.” <sup>20</sup>Another said, “I have just been married, and therefore I cannot come.” <sup>21</sup>So the slave returned and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and said to his slave, “Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the town and bring in the **poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.**” <sup>22</sup>And the slave said, “Sir, what you ordered has been done, and there is still room.” <sup>23</sup>Then the master said to the slave, “Go out into the roads and lanes, and compel people to come in, so that my house may be filled.

**Point 1:** For the servant to execute that order they would have to create an **open shared table, a meal in which poor and rich, female and male, single and married, slave and free, gentile and Jew, might all end up eating together.** <sup>8</sup>

**Point 2:** In the first century, as in the twentieth, a person might give a feast for society's outcasts as a special event.

That could easily be understood in the honor/shame ideology of Mediterranean society as the act of a benefactor (sponsor, supporter), an event with high visibility. But if one gave such feasts persistently and exclusively, there would undoubtedly have been some very negative social repercussions (consequence, effect, impact, outcome, influence). To invite outcasts to a dinner as a special event is a less socially radical act than

<sup>6</sup> Charles W. Hedrick. *Jesus of Nazareth in Profiles of Jesus*, Roy W. Hoover, ed., (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press, 2002), 69.

<sup>7</sup> Charles W. Hedrick. *Jesus of Nazareth in Profiles of Jesus*, 161.

<sup>8</sup> Charles W. Hedrick. *Jesus of Nazareth in Profiles of Jesus*, 162.

to invite anyone found on the streets and to do repeatedly. It is the indiscriminate character of that "anyone" which negates the social function of the table, which is to establish a social ranking by what one eats, how one eats, and with whom one eats. It is the random selection of guests and the open table that is the most startling element of the meal depicted in the parable. At this feast, one could easily have classes, sexes, ranks, and grades all mixed up together.<sup>9</sup>

**Point 3:** The social challenge of an egalitarian table is the radical threat posed by the parable and is the content of Jesus' ecstatic vision. It is a story that focuses its challenge on the heart of society, the table, the place where persons meet to eat, the place where they establish and confirm the social order.<sup>10</sup>

**Point 4:** Healing is linked with eating. It is the reciprocal relationship between what is given and what is received, between magic and meal, curing and eating, free healing and open table that is important.<sup>11</sup> [Reference to 등지밥상의 의미].

**Point 5:** The disciples do not carry a bag because they do not beg for alms or food or clothing or anything else. They share a miracle and a kingdom and in return they receive a table and a house. Jesus' disciples bring with them a free, open, and shared healing. In return they are to receive a free, open, and shared eating.<sup>12</sup>

**Point 6: Sharing** was rather a strategy for building or rebuilding the peasant community on radically different principles from those undergirding an honor/shame society, a society based on patronage (investment and sponsorship) and clientage (user, consumer). Jesus' strategy was based on an egalitarian sharing of spiritual and material power at the most grassroots level.<sup>13</sup>

**Conclusion:** Jesus had both a vision and a program, which were designed originally to move from peasant to peasant among the houses and small villages of lower Galilee. .. We are not dealing originally with mere begging and almsgiving, but with a common table and open sharing. .. The heart of the original Jesus movement is a shared egalitarianism of spiritual and material resources. This author emphasizes this point as strongly as possible. He also insists that material aspect and spiritual aspect cannot be separated.

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<sup>9</sup> Charles W. Hedrick. *Jesus of Nazareth in Profiles of Jesus*, 164.

<sup>10</sup> Charles W. Hedrick. *Jesus of Nazareth in Profiles of Jesus*, 164.

<sup>11</sup> Charles W. Hedrick. *Jesus of Nazareth in Profiles of Jesus*, 165.

<sup>12</sup> Charles W. Hedrick. *Jesus of Nazareth in Profiles of Jesus*, 167.

<sup>13</sup> Charles W. Hedrick. *Jesus of Nazareth in Profiles of Jesus*, 168.





### 3. Rome and the world of Jesus

What did Jesus, a peasant from Galilee, know of Rome? Enough. Rome was not a distant, abstract reality to people like Jesus who lived in its provincial districts. Rome dominated Jesus' world. He lived and died about a century after Rome had taken Palestine by force and made it a province to serve its larger imperial aspirations. In the past, Western European historians have tended to give their cultural ancestors the benefit of the doubt on the question of how they came to control so much. It was, after all, such a gift, the great Roman Peace, the *Pax Romana*.<sup>21</sup>

Josephus, writing more than a century after the fact, provides evidence that Jew had not yet forgotten how, in 43 BCE, when the towns of Gophna, Emmaus, Lydda, and the Thamma were slow in paying their share of the Judean tribute, Cassius sold all their inhabitants into slavery. Or there was the time when the Roman general, Varus, quelled protests following Herod's death (shortly before the birth of Jesus) by sacking the great cities of Galilee and Samaria. Included among them was Sepphoris, just over the hill from Jesus' native Nazareth. Varus sold its inhabitants into slavery. The protest ended with a public crucifixion of 2000 of the ring leaders. And what became of all those slaves? Rome needed them - for the mines, the great Roman latifundia, the galleys [대형의 배]. Rome built its empire on the backs of the slaves. So someone like Jesus would have known about Rome, and its great *Pax*, but it may not have looked quite as good to him as it did to Horace. Jesus' sentiments might have been closer to those of Tacitus' fictitious Briton general, who has just experienced the *Pax Romana* at the end of a Roman lance [puncture]: " To plunder, butcher, steal, these things they misname empire; they make a desolation [unhappiness, despair) call it peace." <sup>22</sup>

The empire was his (emperor) to do with as he pleased. Romans subscribed to a proprietary [소유권] theory of the state, wherein the state is regarded as a piece of property. The wealth and produce of the empire, at least in theory, belonged to the emperor and to whom he delegated its benefits and privileges. The emperor controlled the means to life. [It is exactly like Korean King's system of government]. Below the emperor were his cubordinates, "retainers;" religious and military officials, local client kings, significant land holders, large scale merchants. They benefited directly from the emperor and in exchange, supported his claim to powers. [At the bottom] vast majority of persons who lived as peasants, that is, at a daily subsistence level. Most persons in the empire - perhaps 80% of the population - on the very margins of existence. That is how Rome managed it. Rome's purpose, especially in the provinces, was to suck up as many of a province's resources as it could without provoking it into revolt or killing it off altogether. It slowly siphoned [drain off 빨아들이가, 착취하다] the life out of places like Palestine. <sup>23</sup>

John Dominic Crossan describes this system in its totality as "the brokered Empire," wherein the means of life are always carefully brokered from the top down. Such a system works best for those near its apex [top]. But it works also for those vast crowds of peasants living just at the margins of subsistence. They get just enough - but enough - to live. <sup>24</sup>

But in a patronage system, there are always a few - sometimes quite a few - who do not have anything to offer a patron. In a patronage system, anyone who has nothing to offer someone above them gradually falls down through the social pyramid, and eventually out through the cracks in the bottom of the system. These persons are called "expendables." They are expendable because they have nothing to offer their culture that might be considered of value. These are the beggars and the homeless. These are persons who might do those jobs no one else would do, like tax collecting. These are persons counts for nothing, like prostitutes. With so many people living at the margins of existence, a significant number of expendables were always an inevitability, with persons moving in and out of that status all of the time. Take, for example, the situation of agricultural day laborers. If they are fortunate enough to get a full day's work, then they will receive enough to pay to eat for a day. That is what subsistence means. One can earn enough for one day's sustenance, but that is all. There is no savings account put away for a rainy day. When it rains, you beg or you starve. For a peasant living at a subsistence level, expendability is only one day away. <sup>25</sup>



<sup>21</sup> Charles W. Hedrick. *Jesus of Nazareth in Profiles of Jesus*, 199.  
<sup>22</sup> Charles W. Hedrick. *Jesus of Nazareth in Profiles of Jesus*, 200.  
<sup>23</sup> Charles W. Hedrick. *Jesus of Nazareth in Profiles of Jesus*, 201.  
<sup>24</sup> Charles W. Hedrick. *Jesus of Nazareth in Profiles of Jesus*, 201.  
<sup>25</sup> Charles W. Hedrick. *Jesus of Nazareth in Profiles of Jesus*, 202.

#### 4. **Jesus and Expendables**

Where did Jesus fit into this pyramidal system of patronage and brokerage? He did not fit. Jesus is recalled as living outside the system of brokered power and economy of Rome's Empire. He was an itinerant teacher who scrounged for a living and encouraged others to do so as well. On one hand, Jesus is depicted in the gospels as inviting people to give up their place in the web of brokerage and become a beggar like him.<sup>26</sup>

Jesus not only ask people to risk becoming expendable to the Empire, he seems to be constantly in the company of persons who already are expendable to it, like tax collectors and prostitutes.<sup>27</sup>

Jesus included all the expendables - tax collectors, prostitutes, lepers, beggars, the blind, lames, mute, mentally ill who were all expendables in the Roman Empire but he included them in God's empire. He was with them. We find him in their midst. Zacchaeus would have engaged subordinates to do the actual work of collecting [taxes]. Levi, whom Mark depicts as sitting in his toll booth when Jesus comes along and calls him away (Mark 2;14), is such a tax collector. .. These were persons who could find no other means of making a living. Frequently slaves were purchased 'tax collector' as the male equivalent to the female role of 'prostitute.' Tax collectors and prostitutes are both expendable in the Empire, but they are included first in the Empire of God. We may add to this list lepers, beggars, the blind, those who could walk or speak, the mentally ill -all of them expendables, in whose company we are apt to find Jesus in the gospels. Thus, "the last will be first, and the first will be last" (Matt. 20:16).<sup>28</sup>

##### **What about Jesus himself? Was he also an expendable? He may have been.**

Jesus was a tekton, a "carpenter," (Mark 6:3). .. The basic economic engine in an agrarian culture is the land. Peasants hold land, and can therefore participate in the economy. Without the land, they are nothing. In agrarian culture the artisan class was usually recruited from among those had been dispossessed of their land. A skill, a craft, a trade is all that stands between them and starvation. In an agrarian culture artisans generally rank below the peasant class, not above it. So if Jesus was in fact a carpenter , he would have occupied that tenuous narrow band of subsistence hovering just above expendability. On off days, weeks, months, Jesus, like others in his position, would have had to beg for a living.<sup>29</sup>

Jesus knew expendability, he knew expendables, and he invited those who had not fallen out of the Roman system of brokerage and patronage to step out voluntarily and to become part of a new thing, the Empire of God. Why? How Jesus' words and deeds address the condition of expendability. The experience of an expendable person in antiquity included three dimensions, each of which Jesus addressed directly: the experience of being unclean (not clean), the experience of shame (not honor), and the experience of being regarded as sinful (not righteousness).<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Charles W. Hedrick. *Jesus of Nazareth in Profiles of Jesus*, 202.

<sup>27</sup> Charles W. Hedrick. *Jesus of Nazareth in Profiles of Jesus*, 203.

<sup>28</sup> Charles W. Hedrick. *Jesus of Nazareth in Profiles of Jesus*, 204.

<sup>29</sup> Charles W. Hedrick. *Jesus of Nazareth in Profiles of Jesus*, 205.

<sup>30</sup> Charles W. Hedrick. *Jesus of Nazareth in Profiles of Jesus*, 205.





7. **Sin, not righteousness**

Expendables experience sin, or rather, they are regarded as sinful. In John 9:1-34, disciples come across a man who was born blind. The disciples instinctively ask Jesus: "Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind." Notice the automatic connection between the condition of expendability and the assumption that such a person must be deserving of their predicament.... Examples abound from our own modern American social landscape. Women who receive ADC [TANF] are not seen as persons for whom there is no place in our economy, but as lazy, dishonest, "Welfare Queens" robbing the rest of us our hard-earned dollars. Kids who deal in drugs to help support their families are not seen as desperate survivors, but as amoral criminals lusting after the latest designer tennis shoes. The governing assumption in such thinking is that if someone operates outside the boundaries of social acceptability, it is not because there is no place for them in the social economy, but because they are somehow deficient in themselves. They are sinners.<sup>38</sup>

[When Jesus had dinner at Levi's [tax collector] house, the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples: "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners? And when Jesus heard this, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician but those who are sick. I did not come to call righteous people, but sinners (Mark 2;14-17).<sup>39</sup>

[They called Jesus], "a glutton [식도락, 식충] and a drunkard [술고래], a friend of tax collectors and sinners" (Luke 7:34b). Notice how in both of these traditions a tandem term is created: "tax collector and sinner." expendables and sinners seem to be exchangeable term. Tax collectors are seen s traitors, unworthy of the company of respectable people. Jeremias identified shepherds, dung collectors, tanners, peddlers, weavers, bath attendants, gamblers with dice and bandits [as expendables] in the social world of Jesus [who]suffered under a similar stigma [of expendables and sinners]. They were all landless expendables. [In our modern day term, the landless is unemployed, jobless people]. These are sinners whom Jesus calls into his following. This is clean [from what he said]: "I did not come to call righteous people but sinners" (Mark 2:17).<sup>40</sup> Here he is not thinking of "sinners" as a moral category, but a social one. In calling sinners into his following, he recognized the structural nature of expendability in his social world and the illegitimacy of labeling expendables as "sinners."<sup>41</sup> [When Jesus used the term "sinners" he didn't think of them "as sinners but using the term Pharisees used, but to identify the social illegitimacy of using the term]. Jesus called sinners. He invited into his company those whose condition rendered them into a category: sinner, unclean, shamed. They all go together in Jesus' world; they are all categories of expendability. Jesus spent his time with sinners, lepers, people with physical disabilities, deaf people, blind people, people who could not walk or talk. He welcomed prostitutes, tax collectors - all manner of expendable people. And he proclaimed for them the Empire of God, in which the means of life are free and accessible by God's own gracious hand.<sup>42</sup>



<sup>38</sup> Charles W. Hedrick. *Jesus of Nazareth in Profiles of Jesus*, 216.  
<sup>39</sup> Charles W. Hedrick. *Jesus of Nazareth in Profiles of Jesus*, 217.  
<sup>40</sup> Charles W. Hedrick. *Jesus of Nazareth in Profiles of Jesus*, 217.  
<sup>41</sup> Charles W. Hedrick. *Jesus of Nazareth in Profiles of Jesus*, 218.  
<sup>42</sup> Charles W. Hedrick. *Jesus of Nazareth in Profiles of Jesus*, 218.

## 8. **The unbrokered Empire of God**

The Empire of God is that place where the means to life are offered freely. Jesus was an itinerant pundit, who by his word and deed called into question the structures of his social world that de-humanized and made expendable so many human beings of God's own making. Indeed, he brought these expendables back into the human community. He regarded the unclean as clean. He treated the shamed with honor. He declared sinners righteous and able to stand in the glorious presence of God. Together they created an empire. Not one in which the means to life are brokered from top down in a complex hierarchy, but unbrokered, freely offered, like God's own love to all God's children. Crossan has argued that this theology of unbrokered access is symbolized most clearly in Jesus' practice of eating with all manner of folk. His critics question, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners? (Mark 2:16b)." <sup>43</sup>

One may also point to the considerable reflection in earliest Christianity around meals and meal-time practices, such as one finds in Paul's letters (see, e.g., Gal 2:1-21; 1 Cor. 8-10; 11:27-34; Rom 14:1-23). All of these examples indicate that earliest Jesus movement engaged in table fellowship that inspired criticism and conflict over what, how, and with whom one ought to eat. Eating together is basic human activity, the significance of which can still be seen today if one thinks for a moment about all that goes into a common dinner invitation. Eating together is a social activity that establishes group identity and boundaries. What are the boundaries of a meal? Whom shall I invite? A meal is an act of social formation. <sup>44</sup>

In the ancient world, eating together was perhaps the most common form of social formation. Families, friends, associations of various sorts, religious and ethnic groups, all gathered around their respective tables. The rules, the etiquette, the menu, the company were all tightly managed. Gentiles ate with Gentiles; Jews with Jews. Men with men; women with women. Washing preceded eating. Clean hands are clean food. The host presided, the guests reclined, and the servants served. In the stories about Jesus and his participation in common meals, he is constantly depicted as tweaking these various conventions. He advises that most highly honored participants ought to prescind from claims to precedence (Luke 14:7-11), and that one's guest list ought not to include one's friends, but the destitute, who could never repay the hospitality (Luke 14:12-14). He and his followers do not wash before eating (Mark 7:1-8; Luke 11:37-41), and Jesus declares all foods clean (Mark 7:14-23; Luke 11:41). There are women at table with Jesus, and he does not chase them away (Mark 14: 3-9; Luke 7:36-50). He eats with the clean (Luke 7:36; 14:1) and the unclean (Mark 2: 15-17; 14: 3). And whether Jesus did so or not, many of his earliest followers felt authorized by his teaching to cross ethnic boundaries and to eat with Gentiles (Gal. 2:11-14; Acts 10). Jesus seems to have initiated a very peculiar, open practice of table fellowship. Crossan thinks that the significance of this very central aspect of Jesus' praxis is captured by the parable of the Great Feast. Here it is in its Lukan form: (Luke 14: 16b-24). <sup>45</sup>

Luke seems to entertain a special regard for "the poor." In fact, "the poor, the maimed, the blind, and the lame" in Luke 14: 21 echoes a Lukan phrase introduced in the story directly preceding this parable in Luke's gospel (see Luke 14:12-14). Thus, the instruction to "Go out right away into the streets and alleys of the city and bring in the poor, the maimed, the blind and the lame," represents a particularly Lukan way of drawing out the significance of the parable: One should practice charity in one's common meals. ... The peculiar and challenging thing about this parable is just this: the doors to the banquet hall are to be thrown wide open. 'Go out to the highways and bring in whomever you might find there.' Men and women, Friend and foe. The clean and unclean. Jews and Gentiles. Princes and thieves. Anyone who dares to respond to the invitation may come inside. This is a table without controls, a table without boundaries. It represents a community in which all are welcomed, into which all may come. This is an

open table, a table far less manageable and far more threatening than the charitable table of Luke. <sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Charles W. Hedrick. *Jesus of Nazareth in Profiles of Jesus*, 218.  
<sup>44</sup> Charles W. Hedrick. *Jesus of Nazareth in Profiles of Jesus*, 219.  
<sup>45</sup> Charles W. Hedrick. *Jesus of Nazareth in Profiles of Jesus*, 220.  
<sup>46</sup> Charles W. Hedrick. *Jesus of Nazareth in Profiles of Jesus*, 221.

9. **Basileia of God**

It is more than good teaching. Is it the Empire of God?

Some people said, "In this person's words and deeds I have experienced God's very own presence in my life." Around Jesus' table some said, "I experienced something I would claim as nothing less than the very love and acceptance of God. Is it God who calls us to such tables? The words I heard from Jesus were the Word of God." At such tables do we discover the very ground of all being? That is what early Christians risked believing: that what they learned from Jesus and experienced in his presence was not just good teaching or way of life, an ethic - though it was all of these. Rather, it was an expression of who they would claim God to be. To them, Jesus was a sign -act of who God is. It is God who offers everyone the means to life, unbrokered, freely given s a gift. Jesus' unbrokered empire is the Empire *of God*. This is what those who chose to follow Jesus experienced as good news, "gospel." The unbrokered Empire of God is the gospel of Jesus.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Charles W. Hedrick. *Jesus of Nazareth in Profiles of Jesus*, 222.