A HARMONY OF THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS — CHAPTER TWELVE

Matthew 19–20, Mark 10, and Luke 12–19 (selections) Woven Into One Continuous Narrative

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2026

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Preface: Continuation of the Harmony

This volume continues the harmony through what is conventionally called the Perean Ministry and the journey to Jerusalem. Chapter twelve covers the rich body of teaching found in Luke 12–18, along with the parallel material in Matthew 19–20 and Mark 10, as Jesus moves steadily southward toward the city where he will die.

Luke's central travel section — often called the Perean Discourse or the Journey Narrative — is the most distinctive and Luke-rich portion of the entire harmony. It contains parables found nowhere else in the Gospels: the Rich Fool, the Great Banquet, the Lost Coin, the Lost Son (the Prodigal), the Unjust Steward, the Rich Man and Lazarus, the Persistent Widow, and the Pharisee and Tax Collector. It also contains the question on divorce from Matthew 19 and Mark 10, the blessing of the children, the Rich Young Ruler, and the third passion prediction.

Each section is identified by its source Gospel in brackets:

[Matt] = Matthew

[Mark] = Mark

[Luke] = Luke

[Matt / Mark], **[Matt / Luke]**, **[Mark / Luke]**, or **[Matt / Mark / Luke]** = parallel passages

The translation throughout is the **American Standard Version (ASV, 1901)**, a public domain text of high scholarly accuracy. No words are invented or paraphrased; all text is drawn directly from the ASV.

Chronological ordering follows the scholarly consensus of A.T. Robertson's *A Harmony of the Gospels* (1922), Kurt Aland's *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum*, and Orville Daniel's *A Harmony of the Four Gospels* (2nd ed., 1996).

Part Eleven: The Journey to Jerusalem — Teaching on the Road

Section 125 — Watch and Be Ready: The Rich Fool [Luke 12:13–21]

And one out of the multitude said unto him, Teacher, bid my brother divide the inheritance with me.

But he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? And he said unto them, Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he reasoned within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have not where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, be merry.

But God said unto him, Thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee; and the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be?

So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

Section 126 — Fear Not, Little Flock [Luke 12:22–34]

And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. For the life is more than the food, and the body more than the raiment.

Consider the ravens, that they sow not, neither reap; which have no store-chamber nor barn; and God feedeth them: of how much more value are ye than the birds!

And seek not ye what ye shall eat, and what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: but your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.

Yet seek ye his kingdom, and these things shall be added unto you.

Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

Sell that which ye have, and give alms; make for yourselves purses which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief draweth near, neither moth destroyeth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Section 127 — Faithful and Unfaithful Servants [Luke 12:35–48]

Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps burning; and be ye yourselves like unto men looking for their lord, when he shall return from the marriage feast; that, when he cometh and knocketh, they may straightway open unto him.

Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and shall come and serve them.

But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what hour the thief was coming, he would have watched, and not have left his house to be broken through. Be ye also ready: for in an hour that ye think not the Son of man cometh.

And Peter said, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even unto all?

And the Lord said, Who then is the faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall set over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will set him over all that he hath.

But if that servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and the maidservants, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he expecteth not, and in an hour when he knoweth not, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint his portion with the unfaithful.

And that servant, who knew his lord's will, and made not ready, nor did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. And to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required: and to whom they commit much, of him will they ask the more.

Section 128 — On Divorce and Marriage [Matt 19:1–12 / Mark 10:1–12]

And he arose from thence and cometh into the borders of Judaea and beyond the Jordan: and multitudes come together unto him again; and, as he was wont, he taught them again.

And there came unto him Pharisees, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?

And he answered and said, Have ye not read, that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh? So that they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

They say unto him, Why then did Moses command to give a bill of divorcement, and to put her away?

He saith unto them, Moses for your hardness of heart suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it hath not been so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery.

The disciples say unto him, If the case of the man is so with his wife, it is not expedient to marry.

But he said unto them, Not all men can receive this saying, but they to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs, that were so born from their mother's womb: and there are eunuchs, that were made eunuchs by men: and there are eunuchs, that made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.

Section 129 — Jesus Blesses the Children [Matt 19:13–15 / Mark 10:13–16 / Luke 18:15–17]

And they were bringing unto him little children, that he should touch them: and the disciples rebuked them.

But when Jesus saw it, he was moved with indignation, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me; forbid them not: for to such belongeth the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein.

And he took them in his arms, and blessed them, laying his hands upon them.

Section 130 — The Rich Young Ruler [Matt 19:16–30 / Mark 10:17–31 / Luke 18:18–30]

And as he was going forth into the way, one ran to him, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?

And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good save one, even God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not kill, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor thy father and mother.

And he said unto him, Teacher, all these things have I observed from my youth.

And Jesus looking upon him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me.

But his countenance fell at the saying, and he went away sorrowful: for he was one that had great possessions.

And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

And they were astonished exceedingly, saying unto him, Then who can be saved?

Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for all things are possible with God.

Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee. Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or mother, or father, or children, or lands, for my sake, and for the gospel's sake, but he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life. But many that are first shall be last; and the last first.

Section 131 — The Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard [Matt 20:1–16]

For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that was a householder, who went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the laborers for a shilling a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing in the marketplace idle; and to them he said, Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way.

Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing; and he saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard.

And when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the laborers, and pay them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a shilling. And when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received every man a shilling. And when they received it, they murmured against the householder, saying, These last have spent one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.

But he answered and said to one of them, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a shilling? Take up that which is thine, and go thy way; it is my will to give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? or is thine eye evil, because I am good?

So the last shall be first, and the first last.

Section 132 — The Third Passion Prediction [Matt 20:17–19 / Mark 10:32–34 / Luke 18:31–34]

And they were on the way, going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus was going before them: and they were amazed; and they that followed were afraid.

And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them the things that were to happen unto him, saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him unto the Gentiles: and they shall mock him, and shall spit upon him, and shall scourge him, and shall kill him; and after three days he shall rise again.

And they understood none of these things; and this saying was hid from them, and they perceived not the things that were said.

Section 133 — The Request of James and John [Matt 20:20–28 / Mark 10:35–45]

And there came near unto him James and John, the sons of Zebedee, saying unto him, Teacher, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall ask of thee.

And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you?

And they said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and one on thy left hand, in thy glory.

But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink the cup that I drink? or to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?

And they said unto him, We are able.

And Jesus said unto them, The cup that I drink ye shall drink; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized: but to sit on my right hand or on my left hand is not mine to give: but it is for them for whom it hath been prepared.

And when the ten heard it, they began to be moved with indignation concerning James and John.

And Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they who are accounted to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it is not so among you: but whosoever would become great among you, shall be your minister: and whosoever would be first among you, shall be servant of all. For the Son of man also came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Section 134 — The Parable of the Lost Sheep, Lost Coin, and Lost Son [Luke 15:1–32]

Now all the publicans and sinners were drawing near unto him to hear him. And both the Pharisees and the scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.

And he spake unto them this parable, saying, What man of you, having a hundred sheep, and having lost one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and his neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.

I say unto you, that even so there shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine righteous persons, who need no repentance.

Or what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a lamp, and sweep the house, and seek diligently until she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth together her friends and neighbors, saying, Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I had lost. Even so, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

And he said, A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of thy substance that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.

And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country; and there he wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that country; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

But when he came to himself he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight: I am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

And he arose, and came to his father. But while he was yet afar off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight: I am no more worthy to be called thy son.

But the father said to his servants, Bring forth quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat, and make merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.

Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called to him one of the servants, and inquired what these things might be. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.

But he was angry, and would not go in: and his father came out, and entreated him. But he answered and said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, and I have never transgressed a commandment of thine; and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: but when this thy son came, who hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou killedst for him the fatted calf.

And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that is mine is thine. But it was meet to make merry and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

Section 135 — The Rich Man and Lazarus [Luke 16:19–31]

Now there was a certain rich man, and he was clothed in purple and fine linen, faring sumptuously every day: and a certain beggar named Lazarus was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table; yea, even the dogs came and licked his sores.

And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and that he was carried away by the angels into Abraham's bosom: and the rich man also died, and was buried. And in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame.

But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things: but now here he is comforted, and thou art in anguish. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, that they that would pass from hence to you may not be able, and that none may cross over from thence to us.

And he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house; for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

But Abraham saith, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one go to them from the dead, they will repent.

And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, if one rise from the dead.

Section 136 — The Pharisee and the Tax Collector [Luke 18:9–14]

And he spake also this parable unto certain who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and set all others at nought:

Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I get.

But the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote his breast, saying, God, be thou merciful to me a sinner.

I say unto you, This man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

Appendix: Notes on Chapter Twelve

On the Journey Narrative

The section of Luke's Gospel from 9:51 to 19:44 is unique in the Synoptic tradition. Luke explicitly structures this material as a journey — Jesus moving steadily southward from Galilee toward Jerusalem — while Matthew and Mark present much of the same teaching in other contexts or not at all. The journey narrative contains more than thirty parables and discourses found only in Luke, making it the single richest source of distinctive Lukan material in the entire Gospel. Scholars have proposed various explanations for the origin of this material — Luke's own independent sources, a collection of Q-material not used by Matthew, or Luke's own arrangement of dispersed traditions — but its theological coherence is unmistakable: it is the sustained exposition of discipleship for a people who are following their Lord toward his death.

On the Rich Fool

The Parable of the Rich Fool (Section 125) is introduced by a request that Jesus does not grant: a man asks him to arbitrate an inheritance dispute. Jesus refuses the judicial role and instead addresses the desire behind the request — covetousness — with the parable. The rich man's monologue with his own soul is the most intimate portrait of self-deception in the Gospel parables: *"Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease."* The divine interruption — *"Thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee"* — dissolves every calculation the man has made. The parable does not address what happens to the soul after death; it addresses the folly of treating material abundance as the foundation of life's security when the soul itself is held on loan.

On Fear Not, Little Flock

The saying "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Section 126) is one of the tenderest addresses to the disciples in Luke's Gospel. It connects the anxiety teaching of Matthew 6 (covered in Chapter Six of this harmony) with the specific situation of a small, vulnerable community whose Lord is walking toward Jerusalem to die. The kingdom is not something they must achieve or defend; it is a gift the Father *delights* to give. The connection between this assurance and the call to sell possessions and give alms is deliberate: anxiety about material security and clinging to possessions are the same spiritual problem — a failure to trust the Father's provision.

On the Teaching on Divorce

The Pharisees' question on divorce (Section 128) is one of the most legally precise exchanges in the Synoptic tradition. The Pharisaic schools of Shammai and Hillel disagreed sharply on the interpretation of Deuteronomy 24:1 — Shammai limiting divorce to cases of sexual immorality, Hillel permitting it for virtually any reason a husband chose. Jesus bypasses both schools by returning to Genesis 1 and 2: God's original design was permanent one-flesh union. Moses's provision was an accommodation to the hardness of human hearts, not the divine ideal. The disciples' stunned response — "It is not expedient to marry" — suggests they heard Jesus as taking the stricter than strict position.

On Blessing the Children

The account of Jesus blessing the children (Section 129) is one of the most humanly vivid in the Synoptic tradition. Mark uses the word *eganaktēsen* — "was moved with indignation" — to describe Jesus's response to the disciples' rebuff of the children, one of the strongest expressions of displeasure toward the disciples in the Gospel narrative. He takes them in his arms — *enankalisamenos* — a word used only here and at Mark 9:36 in the New Testament, meaning to gather into one's embrace. The children are not merely illustrations of a teaching point; they are received as persons. The saying that follows — receiving the kingdom as a little child — is the necessary sequel: the child has no leverage, no achievement, no standing. It receives.

On the Rich Young Ruler

The account of the rich young ruler (Section 130) contains one of the most arresting details in the Synoptic Gospels, found only in Mark: *"And Jesus looking upon him loved him."* The love precedes the demand. The demand is not a general command to all disciples but a specific word to this specific person, whose wealth was the particular attachment that stood between him and following. The "camel through the eye of a needle" saying — likely a proverbial hyperbole for the impossible — produces the disciples' terrified question: *"Then who can be saved?"* The answer is not a softening of the requirement but an expansion of the frame: with men it is impossible; with God all things are possible.

On the Three Parables of the Lost

Luke 15 (Section 134) is the theological center of the entire Journey Narrative and contains what many regard as the greatest single parable in the Gospels: the Parable of the Lost Son, often called the Prodigal Son. It is preceded by the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin, which together establish the pattern — something lost, sought with costly effort, found with exceeding joy, celebrated with the community — before the third parable elaborates the same structure with persons rather than possessions.

The Lost Son parable alone would deserve extensive analysis. Three characters: the younger son who demands his inheritance (effectively wishing his father dead), wastes it in a far country, and returns in destitution; the father who sees him "yet afar off" and runs — an undignified act for a Middle Eastern patriarch — and falls on his neck and kisses him before a word is spoken; and the elder son who has been obedient all along and cannot comprehend why the returning prodigal should be celebrated.

The parable ends without resolution of the elder son's anger. The father's final word — *"This thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found"* — is both explanation and appeal. The Pharisees and scribes who murmured in verse 2 are the elder son; the parable ends with the father still outside the feast, still pleading with the one who stayed, still inviting the one who is angry to come in. The ending is open because the invitation is still open.

On the Rich Man and Lazarus

The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Section 135) is the only parable in the Synoptic Gospels in which a character is given a personal name — Lazarus — which may indicate that Luke intends it as a historical account rather than a constructed parable, or may simply reflect

the narrative convention of the parable form in this instance. The reversal at death is absolute and permanent: the great gulf fixed cannot be crossed. The parable's most devastating point comes at the end: the rich man's plea that Lazarus be sent to warn his five brothers is refused on the grounds that if they will not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded by someone rising from the dead. This is a statement about the sufficiency of Scripture for salvation and, implicitly, about the spiritual condition that prevents its reception.

On the Pharisee and the Tax Collector

The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Section 136) is one of the most structurally precise in Luke. The Pharisee's prayer is addressed not to God but to himself — the Greek *pros heauton* ("with himself") can modify either his standing or his speaking, but the content of the prayer makes the self-direction unmistakable: it is a recitation of his own virtues in contrast to lesser men. The tax collector's prayer is seven words in Greek: *Ho theos, hilasthēti moi tō hamartōlō* — "God, be propitious to me the sinner." The definite article is significant: not *a* sinner but *the* sinner, as if he is the representative sinner, the type specimen of all who need mercy.

The verdict is unequivocal and unqualified: this man went down to his house justified, not the other. The word "justified" (*dedikaiōmenos*) is the same word used by Paul in his great theological argument in Romans and Galatians for the forensic act by which God declares a person righteous. Luke's use of the term here is not accidental.

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