



COMPARING SYNOPTICS PARALLELS EXERCISE IONA SCHOOL FOR MINISTRY

Purpose

Most Sundays, the Eucharistic lessons will include a reading from a Synoptic gospel. This exercise is meant to give the student practice comparing the differences between the evangelists' parallel accounts. If we take the evangelists seriously as theologians, then these differences matter. A good preacher will pay attention to the *particular account* they have on a given Sunday—preaching not merely “The Transfiguration” but Matthew's account of the Transfiguration (or Luke's, or Mark's, depending).

Instructions

Imagine you are preparing to preach a service, and the Gospel reading is one of the following passages. [I've provided two examples: “Jesus Preaching at Nazareth,” and the Beatitudes]. Read each Evangelist's version of the passage. Then, take notes for your own reference as you reflect upon:

- 1. Source:** What are Matthew and Luke's main source for their account? Is it Mark, or Q, or a unique source which does not appear in the other Synoptic gospels? How can you tell?
- 2. Compare Passages:** Compare the two parallel passages directly. Are there differences in how the two evangelists tell relate this pericope? Is one version noticeably longer than the other? Is either version more detailed? Does the way each evangelist relates this story change what themes stand out? When there are small differences in phrasing or vocabulary, do these differences seem primarily stylistic in nature, or do they nuance the meaning of the verse in some way? Does either version include sayings not found in its parallel(s)?
- 3. Compare immediate literary contexts:** “Map” the location of your passage within the context of the Gospel of which it is a part. Where do these passages appear? Do they occur at roughly the same moment in Jesus' ministry, or at a different time? Does what precedes/follows each passage color how it might be read?—and are these different, for the two versions? Are they within significant “sections” within their gospel – one of Matthew's long speeches, for instance, or during a series of miracles, confrontations with the authorities, etc?
- 4. Compare wider literary contexts:** Do the differences between the accounts reflect *broader* theological emphases of the evangelists, which can be seen *throughout* their respective gospels (e.g., Matthew's interest in the scripture fulfilment; Luke's emphasis on mercy for the poor)? Do they use favored theological terms (e.g., Matthew's “kingdom of heaven”)? Do differences in how each evangelist has told their story of Jesus, *up to this point*, color how a reader might understand each passage --- even where the text itself is close to verbatim?
- 5. Synthesize observations for preaching:** Taken all together, notice the specific coloration and nuance each evangelist gives their account. How might you preach the specific gospel passage you have to work with? Do different homiletical possibilities suggest themselves, in the two accounts?

Remember, as Egon said in *Ghostbusters*: “*Don't cross the streams!*” Don't end up preaching John when you're actually reading Luke, or preaching Luke when you're reading Matthew. Allow each evangelist to be their own unique theological voice, a unique word of God entrusted to the Church.

EPIPHANY 1A
(omits verse 1)

78. The Beatitudes
(cp. no. 51)

ALL SAINTS - C
(through verse 30)

Matt. 5.3-12
(no. 51, p. 50)

Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are those who mourn,
for they shall be comforted.
Blessed are the meek,
for they shall inherit the earth.
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they shall be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful,
for they shall obtain mercy.
Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they shall see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they shall be called sons of God.
Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are you
when men revile you and persecute you and utter
all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.
Rejoice and be glad, for
your reward is great in heaven, for so
they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Mark

20b Blessed are you poor,
for yours is the kingdom of God.

[24a But woe to you that are rich,
for you have received your consolation.]

21 Blessed are you that hunger now,
for you shall be satisfied.

[25a Woe to you that are full now,
for you shall hunger.]

Blessed are you that weep now,
for you shall laugh.

[25b Woe to you that laugh now,
for you shall mourn and weep.]

22 Blessed are you when men hate you, and
when they exclude you and revile you, and cast out
your name as evil, on account of the Son of man!

23 Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold,
your reward is great in heaven; for so
their fathers did to the prophets.

[26 Woe to you, when all men speak
well of you, for so their fathers
did to the false prophets.]

John

Luke 6.20b-23
6.24-26 (no. 79, p. 66)

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Matt. Mark

Luke 6.24-26
6.20b-23 (no. 78, p. 66)

John

24a But woe to you that are rich, for you have received your consolation.

[20b Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.]

25 Woe to you that are full now, for you shall hunger.

[21a Blessed are you that hunger now, for you shall be satisfied.]

3

Matt. Mark

[Luke 6.24-26]

John

Woe to you that laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.

[21b Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh.]

26 Woe to you, when all men speak well of you, for so their fathers
did to the false prophets.

[22 Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you and revile you, and cast out
your name as evil, on account of the Son of man! 23 Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy,
for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.]

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25 Woe unto you, (+ ye R) that laugh A R || 26 when all men shall speak A R | for in the same manner did their fathers to R

24-26: cp. p. 66

[Matt. 3.1-2]

ing in the wilderness of Judea,
2"Re-
pent, for the kingdom of heaven is
at hand."

[Mark 1.4]

in the wilderness,
preaching a baptism of re-
pentance for the forgiveness of sins.

[Luke 3.2b-3]

3and he went into all the region about
the Jordan, preaching a baptism of re-
pentance for the forgiveness of sins.

John

42

45

FEAST OF
ST. JAMES OF
JERUSALEM

EPIPHANY 3C
(SUNDAY)

33. Jesus' Preaching at Nazareth

(cp. no. 139)

Matt. 13.53-58
(no. 139, p. 127)

53And when Jesus had
finished these parables, he went
away from there, 54and coming to
his own country

he taught them in their synago-
gue,

so that they were astonished,

Mark 6.1-6a
(no. 139, p. 127)

1He went
away from there and came to
his own country; and his
disciples followed him.

2And on the sabbath
he began to teach in the synago-
gue;

many
who heard him were astonished,

Luke 4.16-30

16And he came to
Nazareth, where he had been
brought up; and he went to the
synagogue, as his custom was, on
the sabbath day.

And he stood up to read; 17and
there was given to him the book of
the prophet Isaiah. He opened
the book and found the place
where it was written,
18"The Spirit of the Lord is upon
me, because he has anointed me
to preach good news to the poor.

He has sent me
to proclaim release to the captiv-
es and recovering of sight to
the blind,
to set at liberty those who
are oppressed,
19to proclaim the acceptable year
of the Lord."

20And he closed the book, and
gave it back to the attendant, and
sat down; and the eyes of all in the
synagogue were fixed on him.

21And he began to say to them,
"Today this scripture has been ful-
filled in your hearing." 22And

all spoke well of him, and
wondered at the gracious

John 7.15; 6.42; 4.44; 10.39

7.15 (no. 240, p. 206)

15The Jews marveled at it, saying,

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Matt.: 53 And it came to pass (+ that A) when A R | departed thence A R || 54 when he was come A

Mark: 1 went out from thence A R | he cometh into R | follow A R || 2 when the sabbath (+ day A) was come A R | many hearing A R

Luke: 16 he entered, R | to] into A R || 17 delivered A R | And when he had opened ... he found A || 18 has] - R | the gospel A ; good tidings R | sent me + to heal
the brokehearted, to preach deliverance to the A | bruised A R || 19 preach A || 20 back] again A | minister A | all them that were A | fastened A R || 21 This day A |
is this scripture fulfilled A | ears A R || 22 all bare him witness, A R

Matt.: 53: Mt. 7.28; 11.1; 19.1; 26.1

Mark: 2: Mk. 1.21; Mt. 7.28

Luke: 16-30: Acts 13.14-16 || 18-19: Is. 61.1-2

<p>[Matt. 13.53-58]</p> <p>and said, "Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works? ⁵⁵Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother call- ed Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? ⁵⁶And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all this?" ⁵⁷And they took offense at him.</p> <p>But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house."</p> <p>⁵⁸And he did not do many mighty works there,</p>	<p>[Mark 6.1-6a]</p> <p>saying, "Where did this man get all this? What is the wisdom given to him? What mighty works are wrought by his hands! ³Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense' at him.</p> <p>⁴And Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor, except in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house."</p> <p>⁵And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands upon a few sick people and healed them. ^{6a}And he</p>	<p>[Luke 4.16-30]</p> <p>words which proceeded out of his mouth; and they said, "Is not this Joseph's son?"</p> <p>²³And he said to them, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Physician, heal yourself; what we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here also in your own country.'" ²⁴And he said, "Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his own country.</p> <p>²⁵But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when there came a great famine over all the land; ²⁶and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. ²⁷And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian."</p>	<p>[John 7.15]</p> <p>"How is it that this man has learn- ing, when he has never studied?"</p> <p>6.42 (no. 149, p. 140) ⁴²They said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?"</p> <p>4.44 (no. 32, p. 29) ⁴⁴For Jesus himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country.</p>
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<p>[Matt. 13.53-58]</p> <p>because of their unbelief.</p>	<p>[Mark 6.1-6a]</p> <p>marveled because of their unbelief.</p>	<p>[Luke 4.16-30]</p> <p>²⁸When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. ²⁹And they rose up and put him out of the city, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw him down headlong. ³⁰But passing through the midst of them he went away.</p> <p>(no. 35 4.31-32 p. 34)</p>	<p>John</p> <p>10.39 (no. 257, p. 220) ³⁹Again they tried to arrest him, but he escaped from their hands.</p>
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Luke: 28 as they heard R | this] these things A R || 29 they] - A | thrust him out A ; cast him forth out R | cast A || 30 But he A R | went his way A R